

P R I M E V A L

# THE WILDE

CAMPAIGN SETTING



BAKER • NOONAN • SCHUBERT



P R I M E V A L

# THE WOLF

C A M P A I G N S E T T I N G

**RICHARD BAKER • DAVID NOONAN • STEPHEN SCHUBERT**

# PRIMEVAL THULE

## CREDITS

**Design:** Richard Baker, David Noonan, Stephen Schubert

**Additional Design:** Ed Greenwood, Mike Shea, Scott Rehm

**Development:** Stephen Schubert

**Editing:** David Noonan, Cal Moore

**Front Cover Art:** Todd Lockwood

**Back Cover Art:** Klaus Pillon

**Interior Illustrators:** Jason Engle, John Kaufmann, Justin Mayhew, Lee Moyer, Klaus Pillon, Claudio Pozas, Lee Smith, Patricia Smith

**Cartography:** Christopher West, David Noonan

**Art Direction:** Richard Baker

**Graphic Design:** Mackenzie Schubert, Corey Macourek

**Production Specialist:** Nissa McCormack

**Special Thanks:** Angie Lokotz, Larry Weiner

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**B**efore the great glaciers covered the northern world for the last time, there was an age of legends now forgotten in the modern world. Cities of barbaric splendor and brooding ruins from prehuman times were scattered across the great isles of the north. This was the land of Thule, savage and spectacular, a world of wonders and terrors. And it lives now only in the darkest depths of prehistory and half-remembered glimmers of myth.

Thule is an alternate Earth, a world in which legendary places and creatures once existed and magic, dark and mysterious, held power over young and superstitious humankind. Its civilizations arose in a warm and lush northern world, but were erased from history by the ten-thousand year reign of the vast ice sheets. This is the age of Atlantis and Lemuria, of serpentmen and savage beasts, of star-demons and sorcery. From this mythical time we draw our oldest stories of deadly monsters and bold heroes.

## SEVEN QUALITIES OF THULE

The world of Thule is home to a distinctive set of cities, dungeons, monsters, and tribes. Its landmarks and history tell a vivid story of a world full of riveting adventure and deadly danger. But, more importantly, Thule also possesses its own unique characteristics or personality that sets it apart from the typical fantasy world.

### THULE IS BARBARIC

Humans and demihumans are young races, and civilization is not well established. Many people live in tribal societies close to nature—and its dangers. Even within the walls of the city-states, life is often violent and unforgiving. The so-called civilized peoples entertain themselves with bloody arena fights, and practices such as robbery, dueling, and assassinations are commonplace. Life is all too often nasty, brutish, and short, whether one lives in a jungle village or an opulent palace.

Engineering, knowledge, and technology are likewise not very advanced. Writing is known only to sages, scribes, and those few people wealthy enough to afford an education. Arms and armor are usually made of copper or bronze. The great temples and monuments of the cities are raised by hordes of laborers using the simplest of tools and techniques.

### THE WILDERNESS IS SAVAGE

Leave the city and you're taking your life in your hands. There are few roads, and the jungles are teeming with bloodthirsty predators. The flora and fauna of Thule belong to a crueler and more primitive age. This

is the time of the giant predators, beasts such as cave bears, giant vipers, and saber-tooth cats. Even the herbivores are huge and short-tempered—mammoths and giant sloths can be every bit as dangerous to humans as the big predators.

The tribal peoples of the wilderness are just as savage as the beasts whose home they share. The best are simply warlike and territorial. The worst tribes are unspeakably vicious and bloodthirsty—headhunters, cannibals, or degenerate primitives who worship inhuman monsters and eagerly torture or sacrifice any who fall into their hands.

### CITIES ARE WICKED PLACES

The wilderness is dangerous, but civilization is little better. The city-states are dens of greed, crime, and callousness. Powerful thieves' guilds dominate many of Thule's cities and struggle endlessly with rival guilds for territory and influence. Slavery is widespread, and secretive cults dedicated to forbidden gods lurk in the shadows. The rich and powerful constantly pursue intrigues to move closer to the throne, while the underclass simmers in unrest and resentment. Heavy-handed oppression is the typical response from the civic authorities.

### THE WORLD IS MYSTERIOUS

Thule and its neighboring islands are largely unexplored. Vast jungles and forbidding mountains and glaciers deter all but the hardiest and most determined travelers. Consequently, people don't know what is more than a few days' travel from their homes.

The stark mountains and brooding jungles hide many secrets: Abandoned cities, the strongholds of inhuman powers, foul temples, degenerate tribes, and hidden lands ruled by obscene monstrosities. Any of these dangers might be waiting in the next valley over. Many of these places are unique and unrecorded—cities belonging to peoples that no one else knows about, ruins whose builders are lost to history, terrors that exist nowhere else in the world. One should be ready for anything in the wilderness of Thule.

### MAGIC IS A SECRET MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW

Humans dabble in supernatural powers at their peril. Occult learning is fantastically ancient, predating the rise of humankind; arcane lore comes from prehuman civilizations. This ancient lore is dangerous in the extreme, and the most likely outcome of taking up arcane studies is a horrible and grisly doom. Few wizards die of old age.

Priestly magic is not quite as dangerous, but it is still rare. Most priests and acolytes have no magical training at all and master only the doctrines and everyday prayers of their faiths. Priests initiated into the secrets of their god's magic are rare individuals who belong to a secretive and mysterious cabal. The gods are inscrutable, and priests jealously guard access to their power.

Because magic is such a dark and esoteric field of study, users of magic are rare. Even the largest cities are home to no more than a handful of adepts, and those individuals are feared and whispered about far and wide. Enchanted swords and magical treasures are similarly rare—the great majority of Thuleans have never seen a magic item and would likely fear and shun anyone they knew to possess one.

## ANCIENT EVILS THREATEN MANKIND

The reign of humanity is new and fragile; older races such as serpentmen, rakshasas, or troglodytes lurk in many places. Their realms and kingdoms have fallen into ruin, but these ancient creatures dream of reclaiming what was once theirs. They hate and resent humankind.

Worse yet, the old races were not the first to inhabit Thule. The further back one travels, the more horrible and aberrant the ruling powers of the world become. Before the serpentmen and the demonic rakshasas, the world was dominated by horrible monstrosities such as moon-beasts, star-things, and mi-go. A handful of Great Old Ones—entities as old as the Earth itself, or even older—lie dormant or imprisoned in the desolate places of the world. Some of these prehuman beings are utterly indifferent to the existence of humans, but others crave human minions and worship. Human tribes and cities that stumble into contact with these ancient powers are often destroyed in horrific ways.

## FREEBOOTERS, MERCENARIES, OPPORTUNISTS

This is an age of bold, brawling, larger-than-life heroes. Adventurers are defined by their ambitions; they hunger for gold, glory, and power. Great causes or noble crusades are all very well, but most of Thule's itinerant adventurers are in it to get paid. If there are no rumors of treasure waiting to be found and opportunities seem thin on the ground, a Thulean hero is likely to move on in search of brighter prospects—or concoct a scheme to win wealth from someone who isn't worthy of it. Of course, adventurers sometimes find themselves in dangerous situations that offer no particular reward other than survival. Even the most jaded mercenary recognizes that fighting her way out of a beastman stewpot or fending off a slaver raid is necessary, even if there's no gold to be had.

## INSPIRATIONS OF THE PRIMEVAL THULE SETTING

PRIMEVAL THULE is a world that draws deeply on the pulp fantasy tradition of writers such as Howard, Leiber, Burroughs, and Smith. These stories feature larger-than-life heroes vying against unrepentant villains and savage monsters. They are lurid, action-driven, sometimes a little salacious, and unapologetically episodic in nature; you can be sure that another evil wizard is waiting for the hero in the very next story. But these wild yarns have given us some of the most iconic and unforgettable characters of the 20th century.

At its core, PRIMEVAL THULE is a lost world built around wandering freebooters, savage beasts, sinister villains, and flashing swords. If you're planning on running a PRIMEVAL THULE campaign, a great first step would be to brush up on pulp adventure classics such as the Conan stories, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser tales, or the Pellucidar, Tarzan, or Mars novels. Those were our inspirations for the setting, and they should be yours too!

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The PRIMEVAL THULE *Campaign Setting* is a supplement for your roleplaying campaign. A world of barbaric adventure awaits; your journey into the primeval continent now begins!

**Chapter One: *The Primeval Continent*** serves as an introduction to Thule's peoples, landscapes, and secrets. We recommend beginning your exploration of Thule by reading through this chapter first.

**Chapter Two: *Heroes of Thule*** introduces the Atlantean character race and describes how more familiar races play new roles in this age. Nineteen heroic narratives are provided to offer you ready-made backgrounds and themes for your Thulean character.

**Chapter Three: *Atlas of Thule*** describes the primeval continent and the neighboring lands. In addition to serving as a gazetteer of the setting, this chapter also presents several potential adventure sites with maps and descriptions.

**Chapter Four: *The Thule Campaign*** offers a wealth of advice for gamemasters on how to present and run games set in the PRIMEVAL THULE setting.

**Chapter Five: *Quodeth, City of Thieves*** describes the city-state of Quodeth, an excellent place to begin your Thule campaign. Included in this chapter are three ready-to-play adventures presenting several iconic Thule experiences.

**Chapter Six: *Monsters and Villains*** provides a bestiary of more than forty Thulean beasts, monsters, and villains to challenge the player characters.

**Chapter Seven: *Magic and Spells*** presents a selection of Thulean magic items and spellbooks. Magic may be rare in Thule, but heroes walk strange paths and often encounter arcane mysteries.



# I: THE PRIMEVAL CONTINENT

*It is a land of deep jungles and golden seas, mysterious and unexplored.*

*It is a land of knife-edged mountains and deadly glaciers, trackless and forbidding.*

*It is an age when humankind is a young race, newly arisen on an ancient and monster-haunted Earth. Mighty cities and sprawling empires rise and fall, weaving a tale of great deeds and epic tragedies that will be lost and forgotten by the peoples who came later. Even the land itself is fated to fall beneath the numbing cloak of endless winter, burying the triumphs and defeats of this vanished age beneath miles of ice.*

*But for this glittering moment in the slow dream of time, Thule lives—and it is a fierce, cruel, splendid, and marvelous moment indeed.*

**S**alutations, Mighty King! As you have commanded, so have I done; within this codex lies all that I could discover of the lost land of north, the primeval continent of Thule. This manuscript is the summation of the Atlantean scrolls that still remain to be read, the scryings and divinations of your seers, and the accounts and tales of a dozen far-wandering travelers. I must tell you that much that was once known is now forgotten. The libraries of Atlantis lie under the waves, and we live in a darker and more ignorant world than our noble ancestors. I have done what I can; may my unworthy writings prove illuminating and sate your royal curiosity.

At your instruction, I begin with what all know, assuming nothing.

Thule lies far in the northern reaches of the Earth, but these lands are still kissed by the long centuries of summer. It is a wide and wild land, stretching more than two thousand miles from the Shields of Sunset in distant Nar to the shores of the Boreal Sea. North and west from this untamed continent lie the mighty islands of Hellumar and frozen Nimoth, and beyond those, the strange and untraveled isles of the polar seas where no man goes. To the south lies the great Atlantean Ocean, whose distant shores touch on scores of lands, including your own enlightened realm.

It is also a land of mysterious cities, wicked and decadent, home to proud warriors and sly thieves. It is a land of savagery and splendor, grim heroes and prehuman monsters, wonders and terrors enough to fill the ebon scrolls of Katagia or the council-fires of the Narthan tribes with a thousand incredible tales. This is Thule, beautiful and deadly, primal and untamed. And, whatever else it may be, it is above all a land of adventure—and terror.

## **BOLD HEROES, DEADLY DANGERS**

In Thule, deadly peril and glittering opportunity walk hand-in-hand. A brave hunter from a savage tribe goes single-handed to face an evil from beyond the stars that threatens her people; a sly thief from the teeming markets of Quodeth hatches a scheme to pillage the tower of a dread sorcerer; a wandering sellsword stumbles across the ruins of a lost city and battles brutal beast-men for a ruby the size of a man's fist. It is a land of mystery, wonder, and danger, a place where a man or woman with nerves of steel and a strong sword-hand—or perhaps mastery of forbidden lore—can carve his or her name in the annals of fate.

In this grim and brutal setting, some heroes fight for tribe or city, and some fight simply to survive. But it must be said, Majesty, that most adventurers are sellswords and freebooters with no higher ambition than to carve out their fortunes however they can. The prospect of gold and glory is all they need to draw them on, and even though most will die terrible deaths in far-off places, a few may make themselves princes...or even kings.

## **SAVAGE WILDERNESS**

To find deadly adventure, all a native of Thule need do is strike out into the continent's untamed wilderness. Civilization clings to the edges of the continent in tiny pockets and footholds surrounded by vast unexplored lands. The great majority of Thule is unsettled, and roads or trails are few and far between. A few old Atlantean highways link some of the larger cities in and around the Inner Sea, and swift merchant galleys create tenuous lines of communication across these uncharted waters, but most of Thule's civilized folk never leave the safety of their cities. Even the hardest barbarian tribes are hesitant to wander far from their familiar territory.

You must understand, O king, that the sheer ruggedness of Thule's wild landscape is a daunting obstacle in its own right. The coasts are ringed by towering mountain ranges with few passes. The interior is a steaming basin of jungles and swamps, trackless and home to countless dangerous beasts. And the northern marches of this primeval land are under assault by a deadly and terrible foe, the implacable glaciers that every year creep closer to the verdant jungles and opulent cities of Thule's heartland. Already a quarter of the continent lies in the grasp of unending winter, and an ever-widening band of dying forest and windswept tundra marks the malevolent influence of the merciless ice. Mountains, jungles, swamps, tundra, glaciers—these are hard and dangerous lands, and they swallow many a traveler without a trace.

Terrain and weather are certainly dangerous enough, but the true peril of Thule's wilderness lies in the savagery and bloodthirstiness of the beasts and monsters that roam the wild. Many terrible creatures long since vanished from the gentler lands of the world still linger in Thule: saber-tooth cats, huge vipers, hulking mammoths, and ill-tempered giant sloths. In Thule, nature is most definitely red in tooth and claw...and if savage beasts were not enough, the wilderness is also home to many warlike barbarian tribes. Outside the dubious safety of the city walls, a traveler can expect to find the hands of all other men and women turned against him—along with the fangs and claws of ferocious beasts, ancient horrors, and degenerate half-human savages.

## **RUINED CITIES AND LOST LANDS**

Because Thule is both ancient and largely unexplored, many strange and forgotten things lie hidden in the depths of its wilderness. Dozens of cities have risen in its green hills or deep valleys, flourished and prospered, then fallen into ruin through ages of decay or sudden horrible catastrophe. Remote

## 25 ADVENTURES IN PRIMEVAL THULE

What sorts of adventures are especially appropriate for the primeval continent? Characters in Thule face a world of savage wilderness, corrupt villains, and things that should not be. In Thule, adventurers might...

- Loot the ruined temple of an elder god.
- Become pirates and prey on merchant galleys.
- Rescue the daughter of a tribal chieftain from a party of beastman raiders.
- Fight in the arena of a decadent city.
- Assault a slaver fortress.
- Steal a ruby of fantastic value from a noble's monster-guarded treasury.
- Explore the ruins of a cursed city.
- Challenge a tyrannical wizard-king.
- Kill the icy heart of a living glacier.
- Hunt mammoths to prove their worth to a barbarian tribe.
- Slay a demon in the tower of a sorcerer.
- Battle star-things preying on human cattle.
- Root out a foul cult threatening to take over a city.
- Sail to strange islands with unknown perils.
- Plunder the tombs of barbarian kings.
- Break the power of a thieves' guild.
- Depose a weak or foolish king and seize the throne for themselves.
- Seek the wisdom of a monstrous oracle.
- Read books of sorcery written by inhuman wizards who lived before mankind existed.
- Search for the lost ruins of an Atlantean city.
- Venture into a frozen monastery claimed by deadly polar cold, then perform a ritual of binding to imprison a demon prince before it escapes to torment the world.
- Defend a village against a beastman horde.
- Steal the secret of iron from a dwarven priest.
- Unmask a rakshasa impersonating a high nobleman.

jungles or isolated mountain valleys are home to all sorts of wonders—and evils—whose existence is not even guessed at in the wider world. A stretch of trackless jungle might be home to terrible beasts such as chimeras, hydras, or lamias that are supposed to exist only in legends and fables; an unscaled plateau might harbor the ruins of a city whose people died in a plague of vampirism; a forbidden gorge might be the homeland of a degenerate tribe of cannibals ruled over by the bloated spawn of Tsathoggua.

Most Thuleans are happy to let lost cities remain lost, but every now and then a bold barbarian or arrogant sorcerer stumbles across fantastic wealth in the depths of black peril. Treasuries filled with ancient gold, scrolls holding secrets of power, artifacts of magical might—many such things have been recovered from the world's forgotten lands. The most adventurous heroes seek out these places, risking life, limb, and sanity for the chance to strike it rich.

## TYRANNY AND CORRUPTION

Given the many dangers and dark secrets of Thule's wilderness, your Supreme Majesty would doubtless deem it wise to remain well within the shelter of the continent's civilized regions. Unfortunately, Thule's cities are all too often wicked places indeed. Decadence, cruelty, tyranny, corruption, slavery, oppression...the ills of civilization are too many to easily number. At best, Thule's cities are hard, heartless places where the poor lead lives of desperation and want. More often, cities are built on oppression, injustice, and wanton cruelty, celebrating social evils of one sort or another.

Warfare is commonplace—most city-states are intense rivals, and open fighting is never far from breaking out. The sheer distances involved and the difficulty of marching through Thule's wilderness means that conflicts tend to devolve into years of raiding and counter-raiding, with relatively few decisive battles. No great conquering power has arisen to take the place of Atlantis, destroyed centuries ago, although cities such as Katagia and Lomar harbor aspirations of conquest. Thule's cities are also beset by numerous barbarian tribes that resent the city's efforts to control territory they regard as their own, or that see the people of the cities as rich, soft, and ripe for plunder.

While cities are rife with intrigue and murder, they also offer individuals with ambition and talent the opportunity to go far indeed. Politics and power are in constant play in most Thulean cities; one's station is determined by personal wealth and influence, not the accident of high birth. Many high lords and merchant princes began their days as slaves or street thieves—and more than a few monarchs were once wandering sellswords.

## INHUMAN EVILS

As your Supreme Majesty knows, humans are a young and brash race; the oldest human civilizations rose only a few thousand years ago. But some civilizations in Thule are vastly older, predating man's appearance on the planet. Before the first humans found their way to Thule's shores, rude kingdoms of cyclopes and beastmen sprawled over the wild continent, perpetually at war with each other and with the decadent realms of the elves. They in turn found empires of cold-blooded serpentmen and cruel rakshasas dominating much of the continent when they arrived. Before the time of the serpentmen and the rakshasas, primordial races such as elder things, mi-go, moonbeasts, and the monstrous Great Old Ones reigned over this ancient land. Each of these inhuman, sometimes alien, cultures left their own abandoned cities or forgotten strongholds for human scholars to puzzle over in later years.



In general, these survivors of ancient civilizations are slowly passing from the world. The prehuman races are in decline, withdrawing to deeper and more remote sanctuaries or dreaming away the ages in deathlike slumber. They often resent the presence of humankind in their old places of power, and a few (the rakshasas and serpentmen especially) scheme to bring ruin to the human race by whatever means are necessary. Even those that are unconcerned with human encroachment in Thule represent an age-old baleful influence that still poisons the world today, leaving behind terrible ruins haunted by creatures older and stronger than humankind, dreadful secrets of magic and power that harbor the potential for untold destruction, and vile cults worshiping things that should not be.

## HEROES OF THULE

Deadly wilderness and wicked foes are only part of what makes Thule savage, O King. The heroes who call this primeval land home are just as distinctive—and dangerous—as the land they live in. This is not a world of chivalrous knights, scholarly wizards, and noble quests. Thule's champions are made of different stuff, and they often have more self-serving motivations than the shining heroes of less savage lands. The typical warrior in Thule is a hot-tempered barbarian

roaming the world in search of loot and glory, or perhaps a steely-eyed mercenary constantly searching for a prize worthy of her ambitions; the wizard is a master of forbidden lore for whom commoners and nobles alike step aside, shaking in dread.

The cruel cities and the deadly wilderness have a thousand tales to tell, but they all begin with a character driven to attempt great things. Thule's heroes, like those of any land, are unique individuals who have the right combination of fighting skill, a powerful drive or motivation, and the opportunity to excel. You have specifically commanded me to tell you of the heroes and villains of this lost land, Majesty; what follows is a selection of the narratives I have perused.

**Atlantean Noble:** Throughout Thule's teeming cities, the oldest and most honored noble houses claim descent from the royalty of vanished Atlantis. Even though the island empire was destroyed more than three hundred years ago, its learning and culture still shape Thulean society today. In fact, nobles without a drop of Atlantean blood often lay claim to this ancient lineage, simply to bask in the respect it brings.

Many Atlantean nobles lead lives of pampered luxury, which would seem to be poor preparation for a life of adventure. But long ago, the people of Atlantis were bold and confident explorers. Those in whom

## THE HERO'S NARRATIVE AT YOUR GAME TABLE

The narratives presented in this section represent only a handful of the stories you might choose to tell with your character. They are uniquely Thulean, chosen for their distinctiveness and rooted in the story of this savage world.

Choosing a heroic narrative is an important part of creating a character for the *PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting*, because it anchors your character in the setting much in the same way that choosing a character race or character class does.

Rules and benefits for choosing a heroic narrative are presented in the *PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting*.

the old blood runs true are often driven to seek out new places and new adventures.

**Bearer of the Black Book:** Arcane magic is not a simple matter of study and practice in Thule. Humans are born with no supernatural powers, of course, and there is no tradition of arcane scholarship among the human cultures of the continent. To master supernatural powers, a human mage or warlock must turn to non-human traditions, which involves seeking out a suitable tutor or deciphering the occult writings of some earlier race...such as the writings found in the Black Book.

The Black Book is a forbidden grimoire of terrible age, passed down through the years from one adept to another. Some say the Book is alive and aware, a demonic entity with a sinister purpose. Others say that the Book exists in many times and places at the same time. Whatever the truth, the mage who possesses it is well on his or her way to becoming one of the most powerful wizards of Thule.

**Beastfriend:** Thule's ferocious animals are an everyday threat to a hunter of the tundra or jungle—but for a few warriors with powerful intuition and keen understanding of the natural world, Thule's beasts are allies, not foes. Beastfriends possess an uncanny ability to communicate with beasts both mighty and small, and frequently befriend the most fearsome predators. A warrior jogging along with a dire wolf or a saber-tooth cat at his side is almost certainly a beastfriend. Beastfriends are extremely self-reliant, but they rarely feel comfortable among other people and do not stay in one place for long.

**Dhari Hunter:** Natives of Thule's deepest and most dangerous jungle, the Dhari people are renowned as warriors, guides, trackers, and hunters. Most Dhari hunters are suspicious of civilized folk and have no interest in a softer life, but others are drawn to see the great cities of the coastlands by curiosity or simple wanderlust. Fighting skills and uncanny stealth honed by lethal tribal warfare provide the typical wandering hunter with all he or she needs to earn a living in the city-states.

The Dhari are only one of Thule's many barbarian tribes, Mighty King, but they are strong, numerous, and respected throughout the continent. They are known to be tough and trustworthy—and fierce enemies when crossed.

**Free Blade:** Freebooter, mercenary, sellsword—Thule is home to many a bold adventurer looking to earn his fortune with the edge of a sword. The free blade often takes service as an ordinary mercenary if nothing else presents itself, but an adventurer of this stripe is not just a sword for hire. Instead, the true goal of the free blade is to find fame, fortune, or a place in the world, to strike it rich or win a title through some bold masterstroke. Until that opportunity presents itself, the free blade moves from place to place and keeps her nose to the wind.

**Golden Sea Corsair:** Piracy is all too common in the dangerous waters of Thule. The corsairs of the Kalayan Sea—the great central lake of Thule—are a violent and quarrelsome brotherhood who recognize no law save their own bloody code. It's not unusual for corsairs to serve as seagoing mercenaries, taking the gold of one city-state to plunder the trade of another. Unfortunately, corsairs are notoriously fickle and untrustworthy, and are quick to change their colors. Individual pirates are free to follow any captain they choose or jump ship when a better opportunity comes along, so a single corsair may over the course of a few months serve as a crewman on half a dozen different galleys; in some ways, the Golden Sea corsairs are a single great horde of marauders who happen to be split up between a score of ships.

**Guardian of the Nine:** Most people in Thule, both city-dwellers and wilderness tribes, are thankfully ignorant of the alien races and cosmic evils that lurk in the world's hidden places. The society known as the Guardians of the Nine, however, is not. These priests and scholars constantly shore up the world's age-old defenses against forces from beyond the Earth, fighting a secret and never-ending war against unthinkable calamity.

**Ice Reaver:** The fiercest and most warlike barbarians of Thule's wilderness are those who make their homes in the shadow of the encroaching glaciers. Driven from their once-green homelands by the relentless advance of the ice, these hardy warriors frequently turn to a life of raiding and plunder, pillaging the peoples who live in less harsh climes. The sight of their dragon-prowed longships sweeping down on the coastlands is enough to panic all but the strongest and best fortified cities.

While the northern reavers are feared and hated with good cause, not every barbarian from the icy realms comes to pillage. Individual ice barbarians often seek work as mercenaries or guards in the rich southern cities and are highly valued for their strength and ferocity.

**Initiate of Mysteries:** The priesthoods of Thule's cities represent a wealthy and powerful social class that jealously guards its prerogatives and secrets—especially the secrets of priestly magic. Those individuals who are initiated into the inner circles of a temple hierarchy gain access to powers that few others understand, but in return they are expected to use their status and their command of magic to advance the interests of the priesthood...and, if possible, the deity they profess to serve.

**Jungle Trader:** Suspicions run deep between the people of the cities and the tribes of the jungle, but a few intrepid merchants set out to make their fortunes by trading for the ivory, hides, gemstones, and other treasures the jungle offers. Part explorer, part diplomat, and part thief, jungle traders have a reputation as sly, double-dealing cheats and scoundrels, but this notoriety is somewhat undeserved. To survive and thrive in their chosen trade, they must carefully cultivate relationships with dozens of potentially hostile tribes. As a consequence, jungle traders are rumor-mongers of the first degree, and seem to be the first to hear about anything new in the wilds of Thule.

**Katagian Pit Fighter:** Most cities in Thule host arenas of one kind or another, but none are so pitiless or bloody as the fighting pits of Katagia. Some pit fighters are free men and women who battle for the rich purses offered by the arena owners, but many more are slaves or convicts doomed to die for the entertainment of the masses. Pit fighters who survive their time in the arena are usually highly sought after as bodyguards and enforcers by various underworld figures—there are few people more intimidating than someone who has killed frequently and publicly for sport.

**Myrmidon:** Loyal soldiers sworn to fight for city or master, myrmidons are the most disciplined and well-trained warriors to be found in Thule. Every city-state (and most noble houses) retains elite formations of myrmidons for defense against the threats of a savage world. Most myrmidons are naturally expected to stay close to their barracks and serve alongside their fellows, but some are trusted with more freedom of action or retained to act as agents or assassins at large for their masters.

**Occult Scientist:** Thule is a land mired in ignorance and superstition. Most people see magic in the workings of anything they don't understand, which includes both supernatural and scientific phenomena. The occult scientist brings a reasoned and deliberate approach to the study of all sorts of matter and energy, seeking understanding of the deepest secrets of the universe. The occult scientist often enjoys a somewhat better reputation than most arcane spellcasters in Thule, since he seeks out knowledge for its own sake. In fact, the occult scientist may even attract the support of wealthy patrons interested in his research.



**Panjandrum:** Most cities are governed by a despot of some kind or another, and any effective despot builds a loyal base of civil servants to enforce his or her rule. A panjandrum might be a military commander, a magistrate, a vizier, or some other important bureaucrat who wields power in the name of the sovereign. Low-ranking panjandrams are often used as spies, investigators, and diplomats, traveling widely and looking after their city's interests, while high-ranking panjandrams are usually among the most powerful and wealthy figures in the city.

**Quodethi Thief:** Thieves' guilds are a fact of life in any major city, but the city of Quodeth is home to guilds numbering hundreds of thieves. These huge organizations are stronger than all but the richest and most powerful noble houses of other cities, and Quodethi guildmasters think nothing of giving orders that will be obeyed by men and women a thousand miles away. To belong to a guild of Quodeth is to belong to an army of vicious, conniving cutthroats, an army in which one can climb through the ranks by one's wits, daring, and record of success. While guildmembers constantly scheme for influence and position, they are quick to close ranks when some external foe insults the guild or damages its operations.

**Sacred Slayer:** Temples are rich and politically influential, which means that most priesthoods acquire many powerful enemies. Sacred slayers are the guardians and avengers of Thule's temple hierarchies. Serving as bodyguards, agents, and assassins of the priesthoods, sacred slayers are expected to be fanatically loyal and obey the orders of their priestly masters or die in the attempt. The most capable sacred slayers are given dispensation to work as free agents, spying on behalf of the temple and acting in its interests wherever they find themselves.

**Soothsayer:** Thuleans see hidden meaning in many things—the movements of the stars, dreams, prophecies, and scores of everyday omens and signs. Soothsayers serve barbarian chiefs or civilized nobles as advisers, interpreting the will of the gods and offering guidance in supernatural matters. Many soothsayers are capable practitioners of magic, but not all; some are simply wise, insightful advisers valued for their counsel alone.

**Star-Lore Adept:** Wizards of any sort are rare in Thule; each city is home to only a handful of true mages, and these individuals are regarded with awe and fear by the people around them. Wizards who dabble in the lore of the Great Old Ones and the antediluvian races of the primordial earth are rarer still. There is no doubt that the star-lore adept's path to power can be shockingly swift, but the risks they accept would make lesser mages blanch in horror. Few dare to meddle in the business of a wizard who masters such dark and dangerous lore.

**Tribal Outcast:** Many barbarians leave their native tribes to seek their fortunes in the rich city-states. Naturally, warriors who are held in high honor by their people or who are content with tribal life are not likely to seek their fortunes elsewhere, so a large proportion of the barbarians who find their way to the cities are outcasts of one sort or another. Unable or unwilling to fit in with the tribes of their birth, they are wanderers and exiles in search of a new place in the world.

## A SAVAGE WORLD

Perhaps the single most salient feature of Thule, Mighty King, is the brooding, primal wilderness that virtually covers the continent. Even the most urban and domesticated city-states lie no more than an easy day's walk from true wilderness where terrifying beasts and hostile tribes of savages hold sway. The civilized folk of Thule fear the wilderness and do their best to wall it out, huddling within well-defended cities or fortified towns. Barbarians do not fear the jungles and forests the way civilized people do, but they certainly hold a healthy respect for the dangers that surround them, and learn at an early age to remain keenly aware of their surroundings at all times.

## WILDERNESS DANGERS

People unfamiliar with the wilderness assume that death in a dozen different forms waits to pounce the instant one leaves the narrow belt of relative safety around a town or city. Like many fears, this is based more on imagination and inexperience than actual threat. Thule's wilderness harbors many dangers, my King, but it is also lush, rich with game and forage, and in many cases spectacularly beautiful. Travelers who exercise some very basic precautions—for example, choosing campsites carefully or hiring experienced guides—rarely run into trouble they can't handle. The problem is that, from time to time, disaster can strike even the largest and best-prepared expeditions. In Thule's wilderness, help is rarely close at hand.

As long as one avoids the glaciated regions of the continent, there are few landscapes in Thule that are innately hostile to life; there are no deserts, climates are moderate, and food and water can usually be found. But the terrain of Thule is extremely rugged—f forbidding mountains, knife-edged ridges, and sheer gorges seem to conspire to delay and divert travel on foot. Physical exhaustion from marching up and down steep hillsides can leave inexperienced travelers too tired to guard themselves properly against hungry beasts or hostile tribes. Only a fool strikes out into Thule's jungles or mountains without a trail to follow or a very knowledgeable guide. Getting lost in the forest is no mere inconvenience—it is a situation with potentially lethal consequences. The wild lands of Thule are literally trackless, offering travelers few landmarks or references once a party leaves a known trail.

Thule's terrain is rarely lethal, but its animals, on the other hand, pose a very significant danger to travelers. The forests and tundra are home to countless large and aggressive beasts, many of which are dangerous to humans. Predators such as dire wolves, cave bears, crested eagles, and saber-tooth cats are obviously threats to life and limb, but many of Thule's herbivores are equally dangerous, O King. The foul-tempered ground sloth is a monstrous beast the size of an African elephant with foot-long claws that can rip a warrior in half, while the Thulean elk sports antlers that stretch a dozen feet tip to tip. Many of Thule's creatures are simply the most gigantic and fierce examples of their kind to be found in any age, and by quirks of history or climate they happen to be native to this land at this time.

While Thule's giant beasts are impressive, one creature is still indisputably the most dangerous alive: Man. The wilderness is home to tribes of fierce barbarians and bloodthirsty savages who spend their days in a constant state of war against all other people. Blundering into the territory of a hostile tribe is quite often a fatal mistake. Warnings are

rare—usually the first sign of impending attack is a volley of poisoned arrows from the shadows, or a wave of screaming berserkers bursting out of the brush. Worse yet, tribes found in especially remote regions are often cannibals, headhunters, or fanatics dedicated to the worship of monstrous or demonic gods. Swift death in battle would be far preferable to the sort of torments that would follow after capture by such degenerates.

## A PRIMEVAL LANDSCAPE

Newcomers visiting Thule for the first time soon learn that this is one of the most rugged and inaccessible lands in the world. Steep mountains virtually ring the island continent, creating a daunting barrier against travel to the interior. The great central plain of Thule is much flatter than the mountains and highlands of the coast, but it presents an even more difficult obstacle: Dense, trackless jungles and swamps that are home to countless large, hungry predators.

## FJORDLANDS

The first part of Thule that greets new arrivals are its spectacular fjordlands. The great majority of the continent's coastline is mountainous, my King, plunging steeply to meet the sea in a veritable maze of narrow inlets and steep-sided islets. Some of these inlets stretch more than a hundred miles into the interior, ringed by ever-higher peaks.

Fjordlands teem with life. The steep slopes are covered with light forest where game animals abound, while the cold, deep waters are home to dense shoals of fish and beds of shellfish. Fjordlands also offer easy travel by sea, since these waterways and inlets comprise the best roads one could hope for. On the other hand, moving overland from one fjord to another is often impossible. Sometimes two villages on the same island or cape may only be four or five miles apart as the crow flies, but sailing fifty miles around the point is a much easier and faster way to travel from one to the other than trying to climb the mountain ridge separating them.

Given their moderate climate and access to the sea, fjordlands would seem to be ideal for settlement, but they generally lack arable ground. Fjordlands are anything but flat, and only a few ideal spots can support towns or cities of any size.

## FORESTS

Between the sweltering jungles of the interior and the bare shoulders of Thule's mountains lie magnificent broadleaf forests. These mixed woodlands are dominated by ancient oaks, beech groves, maples, and silver-trunked birch trees. As one travels north, the beech and oak forests give way to taiga—the pine

## A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THULE'S TOPOGRAPHY

Thule is a vast, mountainous island-continent that stretches more than fifteen hundred miles end to end. Nearby lie the great islands of Hellumar and Nimoth, with stranger lands yet beyond their shores. All three lie in the northerly reaches of the Atlantean Ocean, but in this age, they are warm and verdant. The ice is only just beginning its relentless advance.

The dominant feature of Thule is the rampart of mountains ringing its coasts. The Shields of Sunset guard the high plains of Nar in the west. To the south, the mighty Starcrowns reach elevations of more than 10,000 feet and shelter a maze of fjords and inlets known as the Claws of Imystrahl. In the east, the volcanic Zinandar Mountains smolder and fume. In northern Thule, the highlands and peaks are covered by the great glacier known as Kang, the Pale Death. This ring of mountains forms a gigantic basin or lowland in the center of Thule. A great lake known as the Kalayan Sea lies here, surrounded by deep jungles and trackless wilderness.

As one might expect from a land of such extremes, each region of Thule has its own rugged beauty. The Claws of Imystrahl are majestic fjordlands, home to Thule's oldest cities—seaports with their faces turned toward the Atlantean Ocean. The mighty Starcrowns virtually wall off these steep islets and peninsulas from the rest of Thule. The Nar Highlands in western Thule are wide, rolling plains and hills where fierce nomads roam. Kalayan the Golden is the region around the inland sea, home to the jungles of Dhar Mesh, the swamps of Phoor, and the richest and most powerful cities of the continent, great powers such as Quodeth and Lomar.

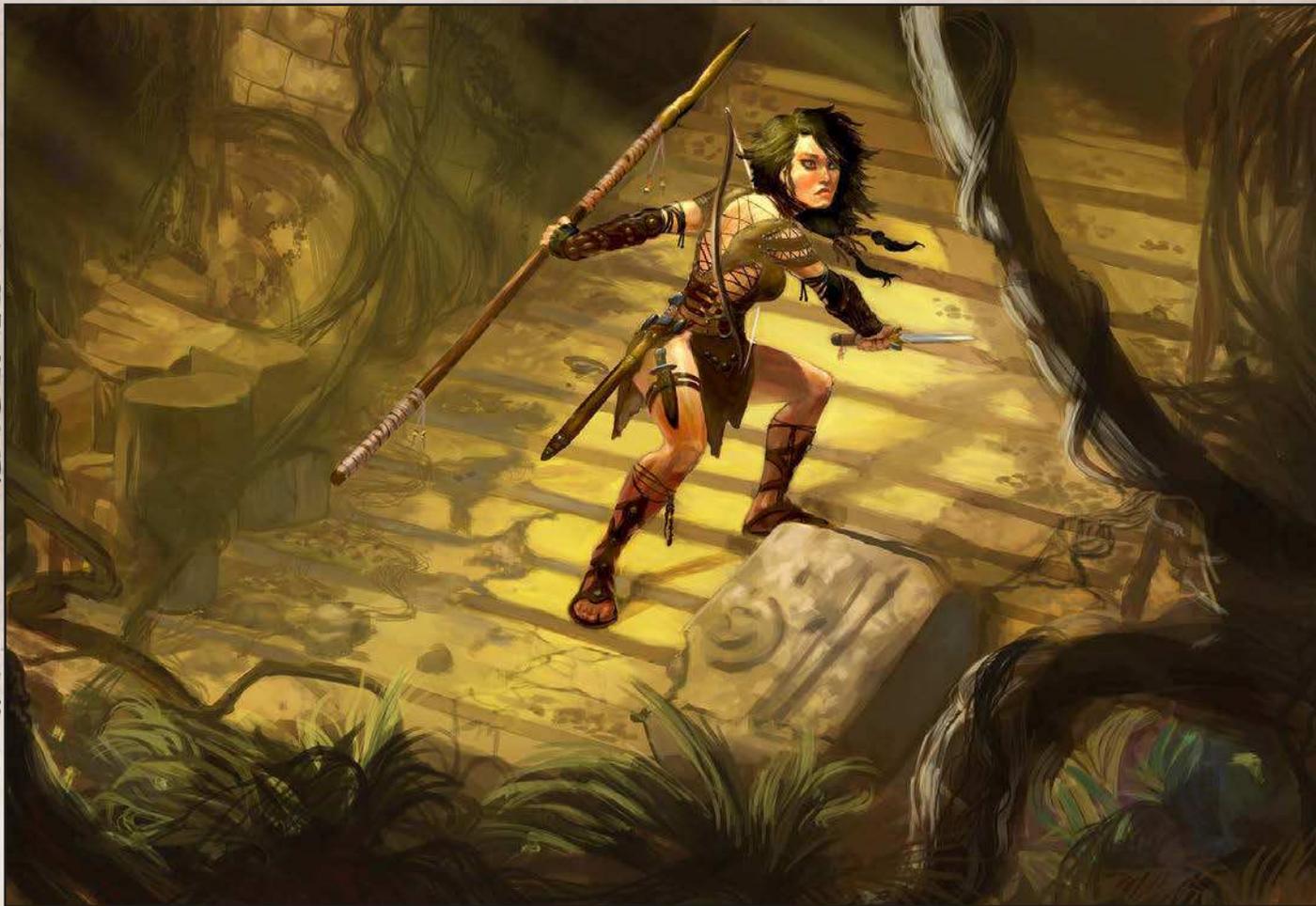
The northern coasts are known as the Thousand Teeth, after the countless rocky islets and spires that dot the Sea of Mists. These are barbarian lands with few cities. Finally, Thule's northeastern reaches are known as the Lands of the Long Shadow. Vast tundra plains and barren, windswept hills mark the creeping onset of everlasting winter, with the grim expanse of the glaciers looming on the northern horizon. Here the secret of Thule's wonders and majesty is made plain: This is a doomed land, and its beauty will not last.

forests of the northern world, vast and desolate.

Like the fjordlands of the outer coast, the forests are among Thule's kinder climes, rich with game and forage for those who know them well. The woodlands are also home to a variety of large and aggressive beasts—Thule's forests are dangerous places to wander carelessly. Worse yet, Supreme Majesty, they are the hunting grounds of barbarian tribes, some of which are quite fierce. These hardy folk have little use for intruders and are prone to defend their territory with sudden violence. In the wilderness, one should assume that all other people are enemies until proven otherwise.

## INLAND SEA

The central lowlands of Thule are dominated by a chain of vast freshwater lakes. The largest of these is known as the Kalayan Sea, and it stretches almost seven hundred miles from end to end. The Kalayan is often called Kalayan the Golden, or simply “the



Golden Sea,” for the striking hues of its surface during the long northern dawn and dusk.

The inland seas of Thule offer the best means of traveling any distance across the rugged landscape, but they are far from safe. Storms on the Kalayan can raise waves every bit as large and dangerous as those of the Atlantean Ocean, it is said, and many ships have been wrecked in these waters by sudden squalls. Corsair galleys lurk in the Kalayan’s jagged coasts, eager for the opportunity to fall on a passing merchantman. Finally, large and hungry predators swim these waters—the Kalayan (and other sizable lakes) are home to freshwater crocodiles, giant gars and pike, vicious eels, and a few atavistic survivors such as plesiosaurs and mosasaurs. It’s not a good idea to swim unarmed, O King!

## JUNGLE

The jungle is in many ways the single defining landscape of Thule. Dark, deadly, mysterious, and impenetrable, it forms a vast green world within a world, a place where savage beasts and feral barbarian tribes struggle against one another in a never-ending battle for survival. Here the illusions and pretenses of civilization are stripped away, leaving raw and fierce nature as the ultimate arbiter of whether one lives or dies. Death lurks only a few heartbeats away, ready to claim the careless or unlucky.

True rainforest actually has relatively little undergrowth, as your Supreme Majesty no doubt knows. However, Thule’s rugged topography provides lots of hillsides where dense understory growth can develop—the jungles of this primeval land are usually jungle, not just canopy forest. A fecund collection of life in all forms thrives in this lush environment, including an unbelievable number of venomous or predatory beasts that can kill humans. In fact, Thule’s jungles are often home to creatures that died out ages ago in other parts of the world; more than a few dinosaurs still lurk in these verdant retreats, it is said.

Naturally, there are no human cities or civilizations to be found in the interior jungles of Thule. There aren’t all that many barbarians or savages, for that matter; most people look for less hostile places to make their homes. But the tribes that dwell in this fearsome environment are some of the toughest and most fierce warriors in Thule.

## GIANT CAVES

In addition to its spectacular vistas of ice-capped mountains and vast forests, Thule is also home to a number of caves and caverns of tremendous extent. The vast interior basin of the island-continent combines limestone hills with heavy rainfall—the perfect

recipe for the formation of truly gigantic cavern systems. The hilly reaches in the Land of Long Shadows and the northerly lands of Hellumar and Nimoth are likewise riddled with caves—even if these regions are now too cold and dry for huge caves to form, they were tropical until just a few centuries ago.

There is no true “underworld” system of continent-spanning caves miles below the surface in Thule, my King, but the natural caverns accessible from the surface are quite impressive in their own right. Some of these include huge chambers hundreds of feet across, while others are sprawling networks of passages and chambers dozens of miles in extent. Strange ecologies of cave-dwelling creatures develop in the larger cave systems—and some hold hidden strongholds of monstrous beings, or dark temples dedicated to the worship of forbidden gods. Unspeakable powers such as Great Cthulhu, Shub-Niggurath, or Yga-Ygo were once strong in these lands, and many of their followers—or possibly the Great Old Ones themselves—may lie dormant in the deepest of these caves.

## MOUNTAINS

The story of Thule’s mountains is written in fire and ice. Mountain ranges in the northerly portions of the continent (and in the great islands of Hellumar and Nimoth) are desolate, inhospitable places mantled in mighty glaciers and snowfields. Huge icefields fill the valleys and choke the passes, rendering travel nearly impossible. The mighty Starcrowns of Thule’s southern coast are so lofty that they, too, have fallen into the grip of endless winter, even though they are many hundreds of miles south of the creeping glaciation that is conquering the northern lands. But the ranges in eastern Thule smolder and smoke with their own subterranean fires, my King, creating a barrier of volcanic heat against the encroaching ice. Lush and verdant compared to the icy ramparts of the other ranges, they are only marginally less impassable—frequent eruptions, constant tremors, and deadly fumes can close off passes with no warning whatsoever.

Between glaciers, volcanoes, or sheer elevation, the mountain ranges of Thule (and the great islands of Hellumar and Nimoth, which lie close by) form a nearly impassable barrier blocking travel between the coastal fjords and the interior jungles. As one might expect, few people live in these regions. A few hardy tribes of human barbarians make their homes in these high vales, fortifying the narrow passes against intruders, and the Zinandar Mountains are home to the city of Kal-Zinan, where the dwarven masters guard the secrets of iron and steel.

There is one thing more that must be said about Thule’s mountains: There are many places in the high peaks where men should not go. Black temples buried in the snows and terrible ruins of prehuman

monsters are often found on the higher slopes, and not all of these are abandoned. Star-things and mi-go lurk in the remote heights, blasphemous survivors from an earlier age.

## SWAMPS

The coastal plains of Thule’s inland seas are home to dense, tangled swamps—huge stretches of flooded forest that can stretch for dozens or hundreds of miles. Gigantic cypress trees mantled with hanging moss loom over the shadowed waterways, and the rare patches of dry ground are overgrown with underbrush covering every hummock or islet. Countless meandering creeks, lakes, and sloughs further impede travel on foot; swamps are almost impossible to navigate without a local guide or an uncanny sense of direction.

Much like jungles, swamps teem with a vast number of large and dangerous beasts. Huge reptiles such as giant vipers, crocodiles, pythons, and monitor lizards seem especially common in these humid areas, and a few dinosaurs that should have gone extinct millions of years ago still lurk in some places. Worse yet, Mighty King, the tribes of the swamps are some of the most primitive and degenerate people to be found anywhere in Thule. The vile headhunters of Phoor are perhaps the best example; masters of stealth, ambush, and poison, these murderous savages are fanatically devoted to the worship of terrible prehuman gods and regard all other humans as potential sacrifices.

## TUNDRA

As one travels farther north, the trees grow sparser and more stunted until finally they give out altogether. This is the tundra, a vast arctic plain that lies between the taiga and the advancing glaciers. Sometimes referred to as the Lands of the Long Shadow, the tundra plains of northern Thule are a harsh and forbidding environment—but in summer and fall, they teem with big game. This is the domain of the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, the muskox, and the caribou. Vast herds roam these lands, migrating with the seasons.

Like the taiga forests, the tundra is home to tribes of nomadic hunters who follow the great herds. Hunting mammoths or rhinos is no small feat; these giant beasts have thick hides and fight aggressively, trampling any hunter that gets too close. Taking down a mammoth is a long and dangerous game of luring the beast into charge after charge by hunters who show themselves and suddenly retreat, while dozens of arrows and thrown spears slowly wear down the mighty animal until it can be goaded into a reckless charge against a thicket of grounded spears or lured over a cliff.

## GLACIERS

A grim and implacable enemy is at the gates of the northern world. Year by year, the summers grow shorter and the northern glaciers creep steadily closer to the lands of humankind. Already the great island of Nimoth lies trapped in endless winter, the ice thickening over its abandoned cities with each passing winter. In the mountainous spines of Hellumar and Thule, new glaciers are marching on the surrounding lands. Already the glacier known as Kang the Pale Death holds the northeast quarter of Thule in its icy grasp, and lesser icefields are slowly spreading too.

As your Supreme Majesty might expect, Thule's glaciers are cold and inhospitable. Nothing grows here, and few animals can find food on the ice. Without grazing or game, there is nothing to eat unless one is near enough to the sea to get by with sealing or fishing. Even that meager existence is impossible during the months when the seas are frozen over. In addition to the lack of food and the bone-chilling cold, glaciers are treacherous terrain to cross. Crevasses, sometimes hundreds of feet deep, can be completely concealed by a thin crust of snow that gives way when an unfortunate traveler unwittingly walks over it. Avalanches, toppling ice boulders, or outbreaks of meltwater can also threaten life and limb. A few bold caravans cross an arm of a glacier when necessary, but no one lingers in these desolate places.

Worst of all, my King, Thule's glaciers seem to possess an active and malign intelligence. They sometimes exhibit supernatural powers, surging forward to cut off the retreat of trespassers or changing course to climb over and crush towns that should be out of their reach. Some cold and hateful spirit animates these titanic masses of ice, willing them onward to crush the lands of civilization and blanket the world in never-ending winter.

## TYRANNY AND WICKEDNESS

The wilderness of Thule may be majestic and deadly, but so too are the continent's civilized regions. Thule's city-states are ancient and often magnificent in their monumental architecture and barbaric splendor. Golden palaces and rich gardens sprawl behind towering walls manned by proud warriors in jeweled harness, while mysterious temples and the minarets of astrologers and sages soar to the sky. Yet for all their wealth and beauty, it must be told that the civilizations of Thule are frequently cruel, warlike, and oppressive. Despotism overlords rule by whim and caprice, showering rich rewards on their favorites and ruthlessly laying low any foes or rivals who attract their suspicions.

By their very nature, despots come and go swiftly in most places. An influential nobleman, a high captain in the army, or an unscrupulous high priest manages to secretly gather the support needed to topple the old ruler, and takes the throne for a few years—or perhaps a decade or two—until someone else successfully deposes the deposer. The nature of this transition varies from city to city and culture to culture. In martial Lomar, the road to the throne lies in leading legions to victory abroad. In mercantile Quodeth, wealth is the way to power; the queen is a figurehead, and those who seek to rule the city vie to claim the position of High Vizier through bribery, extravagance, and the occasional assassination. Thran, city of the Black Circle, belongs to the most powerful wizard of that dark order, who holds it until a challenger defeats him in a battle of spells. In Thule, my King, might confers legitimacy.

Unfortunately, the brutal politics of power are not the only problems Thulean civilization faces. In this age, the social compact is rough and incomplete. Cities are hard and heartless places where the strong oppress the weak, corruption runs rampant, and the most wicked entertainments and practices are simply routine. Each of Thule's cities seems to harbor its own fatal flaw, an injustice or social ill that cries out for redress. For example, Quodeth is beset with thievery, usury, and fraud, all the problems of a society in which gold reigns unchecked. The crimson-walled city of Marg is little better than a giant slave market where human life is bought and sold for a handful of coins, while the people of Imystrahl are mired in the waking dream of “the black milk” and hardly care whether they live or die.

To put it another way, my King, every city-state in Thule is marked by its own brand of wickedness. Travelers who blunder into strange cities unprepared might soon have reason to wish they had remained in the monster-hunted jungles.

## WEALTH AND SOCIAL STATION

In Thule, personal ambition and ability are the final arbiters of how high one might rise. Thulean society can be surprisingly meritocratic, and it offers many chances for upward mobility—if one defines “meritocratic” as permissive of advancement to anyone who can bribe, strong-arm, or assassinate their way into the upper classes. People with ability (and perhaps a little personal ruthlessness) acquire the means by which they can buy their way upward. In fact, many mercenaries and freebooters take up their dangerous profession in the hope of someday winning a high appointment or noble title.

At the top of the social ladder, naturally, stands the monarch, although the exact title might be king, queen, overlord, warlord, or tyrant—your peers, Majesty, in title if not in lineage. There is no such

## THE CITIES OF THULE

The island-continent of Thule is mostly wilderness, and cities are few and far between. While there are a great number of small settlements, barbarian villages, and trading posts scattered throughout the land, true cities—or anything that can even claim to be a city—are not common at all. Most scholars would name perhaps thirteen to fifteen cities in Thule and the surrounding lands, depending on whether one would call a place like Ur-Ghom a “city” or not.

The cities of Thule include:

- **Akal-Amo, City of Temples.** A distant and mysterious city on the great island of Hellumar.
- **Droum, City of Tusks.** The people of Droum are abandoning their city in the face of the approaching glaciers, leaving behind a plague of restless dead.
- **Ikath, City of Serpents.** Built upon the ruins of a great serpentman city, Ikath is the gateway to the Dhari jungles and their rich trade in ivory, gems, and hides.
- **Imystrahl, City of the Black Lotus.** An elven city, Imystrahl is falling into ruin under the influences of the opiate known as the Black Milk and a pernicious cult of Nyarlathotep worshippers.
- **Jomur, Place of Chiefs.** The meeting-place of many tribes in northern Thule, Jomur is virtually abandoned for three-quarters of the year.
- **Kal-Zinan, City of the Iron Gate.** The city of the dwarves, where stern ironmasters jealously guard the secret of iron working.
- **Katagia, Last Bastion of Atlantis.** A strong city of the southern coast where the last vestiges of Atlantean culture and learning are preserved.
- **Lomar, City of Triumphs.** A warlike city in the Kalayan Hills, Lomar’s legions represent the strongest army to be found in Thule.
- **Marg the Crimson, City of Slavers.** Home to the Crimson Slavers, Marg is a cruel and oppressive place whose slave markets are filled with wretched captives.
- **Nim, City of Reavers.** A lawless and brutal harbor on the northern coast, Nim is the refuge of the Reaver Kings of the boreal seas.
- **Orech, City of Mazes.** Cloaked in mystery and madness, Orech is a city under the influence of reclusive priests of Hastur the Unspeakable.
- **Quodeth, City of Merchants.** Largest and richest of Thule’s cities, Quodeth is overrun by thieves’ guilds; in fact, some name it the City of Thieves instead of the City of Merchants.
- **Rime, City of Ice.** A hidden haven under the very snout of Kang, the Pale Death, Rime is a secret pirate haven where the Golden Corsairs of the Kalayan Sea hold power.
- **Thran, City of the Black Circle.** Remote and forbidding, Thran’s black walls conceal the strongest and most wicked cabal of magicians in all of Thule.
- **Ur-Ghom, City of the Beastmen.** Hardly a city at all, Ur-Ghom is the seat of the brutal beastman khur-za-khur, or Chief of Chiefs. Folk of other races enter at their own peril.

There are rumors of hidden cities concealed in Thule’s vast jungles or in the trackless mountains, but these places remain undiscovered for now and have no dealings with the known cities of the continent.

thing as a constitutional monarchy in Thule; the monarch wields power without limit. With a word, the monarch can sentence any person to execution, send a city to war, strip titles and wealth from a rival, or decree a month-long festival. The only check on the monarch’s power is what the city’s nobles or officials permit—a monarch who rules capriciously or ineffectively becomes too dangerous to leave on the throne, and therefore ripe for deposing.

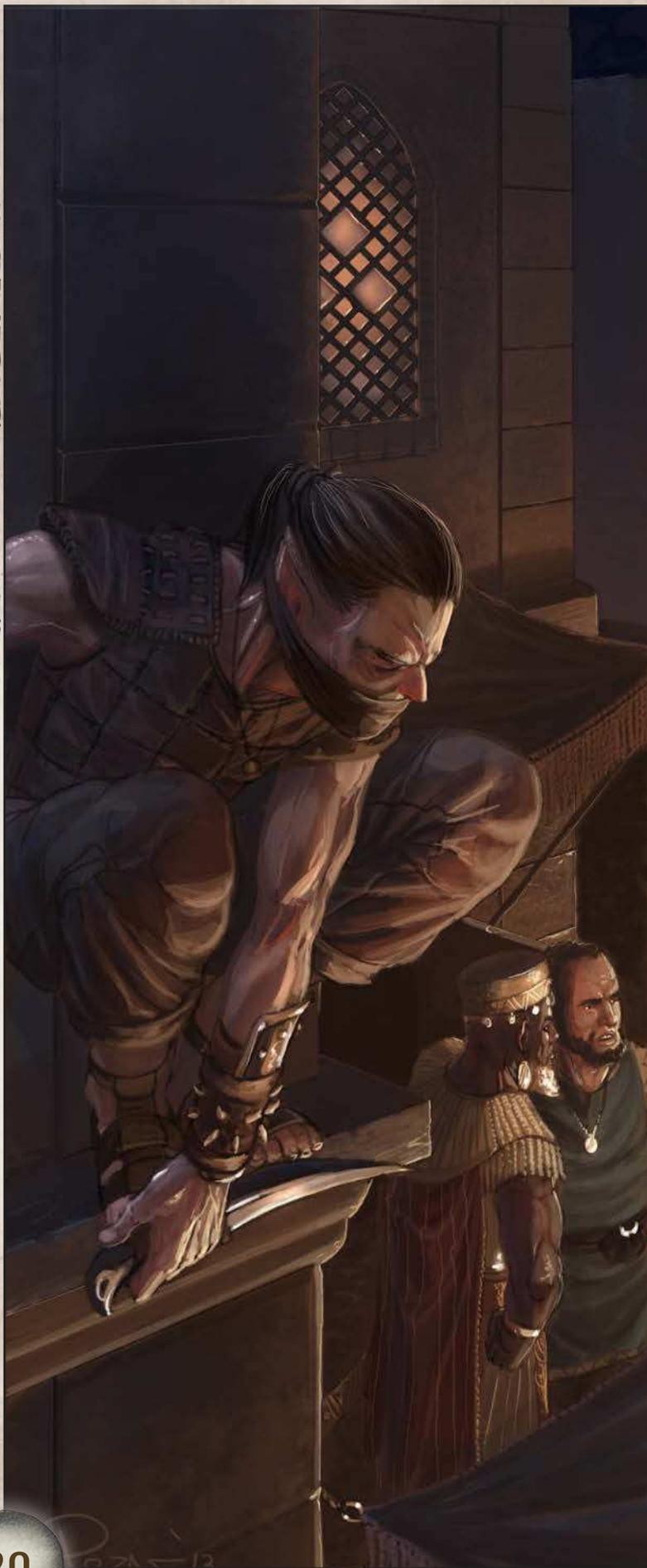
Beneath the monarch are the nobles. These families control hereditary offices, monopolize rich trades or commodities, or own vast estates in the surrounding lands. The qualifications of nobility vary from city to city; for example, in Lomar, “nobility” refers to whether one can trace descent from great heroes of old. Nobles have vast reserves of wealth and live in opulent palaces. They command personal armies in the form of their household troops, keep hordes of loyal retainers and advisors, and own hundreds or even thousands of slaves who work their fields, labor in their quarries, or crew their galleys. Nobles often enjoy virtual immunity to the laws of their home cities and need only fear the censure of their peers or the direct action of the city’s ruler.

Nobles wield great power, but the monarch who holds the ultimate power in a city does so by maintaining the loyalty of the next social class: The

officials. They hold titles such as vizier, magistrate, general, consul, or panjandrum. Your humble scribe would of course be counted among this class, my King. In the name of the city’s ruler, they enforce law, command the army, supervise public works, and regulate taxes and duties of all kinds. High-ranking officials are every bit as powerful and influential as the great nobles of a city, and often vastly wealthy—control of an important office gives an official plenty of opportunities to become rich. Many viziers and panjandrums are, of course, quite corrupt, but others are honorable and forthright civil servants.

Most cities in Thule are also home to large and influential orders of priests. Temples are rich and powerful institutions, O King, and often control estates and troops that rival those of the strongest noble houses. Like noble houses, temples can often be quite jealous of their privileges and position. Cloaked in mystery and ancient traditions, temple hierarchies serve as a balancing force of sorts, countering the most oppressive practices of monarchy or nobility, but also defending the status quo against the resentment of the lower classes.

The merchants are a large middle class in most Thulean cities. In fact, in some cities, there is very little distinction between a wealthy merchant and



a wealthy noble, my King, as unfortunate as it is to relate. Merchants include shipowners and caravan masters who engage in trade with distant cities, moneylenders, shopkeepers, and even skilled artisans and craftsmen. Anyone who owns a place of business and practices a trade for himself or herself—even independent landowners with rich vineyards or orchards—is counted as part of this class.

Soldiers and servants make up the lower classes. They are free men and women, but they work for whoever can pay them. In many cases, the “pay” is simply the privilege of belonging to a household and having room and board provided to them; warriors often take service with a noble house and serve loyally for decades with no expectation of pay beyond a few silver pieces every now and then to gamble away or spend on drink and revelry. The best masters look after servants who grow too old to continue their labors. It’s not unusual for a noble to reward an old and faithful servant or guard with an easy retirement and a gift of enough money to make the servant comfortable. Regrettably, not all who employ servants are so kind-hearted.

As one might expect, slaves are near the bottom of the social ladder—but they are not quite the bottom, my King. The conditions of slavery vary widely from owner to owner. Slaves may be kept in wretchedness and misery, put to hard labor and discarded once they are no longer useful, or they might simply be tenant farmers who live on the land they work for their owner, enjoying lives not all that different from a poor member of the servant class. Beggars are regarded as the lowest of the low, beneath even slaves. After all, if someone is a slave, it’s because someone else thinks they’re worth owning and feeding. Beggars, on the other hand, are so wretched that no one cares if they starve or not.

Thieves, smugglers, assassins, and other scoundrels occupy a curious position in Thulean society. Thievery is considered a trade of sorts even in the face of the sternest laws against theft and extortion, Mighty King, as unlikely as it may seem. Therefore, guildmasters, and master assassins are generally regarded as members of the merchant class, while the average guildmember holds a position similar to a laborer in an artisan’s workshop and is considered a servant of the guildmaster. Only the most vile murderers and criminals are truly outside Thulean society.

## DARK DELIGHTS

These are cruel times, and the entertainments and diversions of Thule’s cities would shock the sensibilities of a different day. Civilized Thuleans think nothing of watching men and women die in arena fights or seeing criminals put to death in spectacular and grisly executions. Gambling dens, brothels, fighting pits, opium houses, and hidden shrines where forbidden deities are worshiped with debauched rituals can all be found in the crowded precincts of the typical city-state.

The wantonness and hedonism of the typical city-dweller are one of the primary reasons why the people of the barbaric tribes dislike and distrust civilization. A bloody-handed ice reaver might hurl himself into battle against a hundred foes without a moment's hesitation, but blanches at the wicked displays that are all too common in Thule's cities.

Naturally, the basest forms of entertainment tend to collect in the poorest and most desperate neighborhoods. Some sort of thieves' quarter—a crowded, crime-ridden district of extreme poverty—can be found in almost every city. Some are ghettos walled off from the more prosperous districts nearby, some are bad neighborhoods that anyone might wander into by mistake, and some are actually buried streets built over and forgotten by the city officials, but these impoverished districts are all riddled with crime and thievery, and every city has one.

The thieves' quarter of a Thulean city is a world of its own, a city within a city. Here the city guards do not venture. Vicious gangs of ruffians, bands of slavers, beggar brotherhoods, and of course thieves' guilds rule over each street or block. It's no place that anyone with a better choice would willingly choose to live, but the wretched masses have few other options—a life of poverty and desperation within the city walls seems preferable to a swift and certain death in the wilderness.

## LAW AND ORDER

Systems of law and law enforcement are not very well developed in most Thulean civilizations. There are no constables, police, or city watch officers in Thule's cities, Mighty King. Instead, laws are kept by the city's soldiers, who only enforce whatever laws the monarch wishes enforced, and only in those districts the monarch bothers to protect. Justice is often for sale, and a noble or wealthy priest can bribe magistrates or guards to take action against anyone who offers offense, whether the charges are legitimate or not.

In general, simple vices are ignored—peddling exotic drugs or establishing a brothel are not against the law in most places, although trying to avoid the taxes and gratuities city officials and guard-captains collect can bring down the heavy hand of the authorities. City guards only step in when a crime is especially serious or when they catch the perpetrator in the act. Crimes that generally provoke the attention of the city guard include:

- Murder (although dueling or consensual fights do not count as murder).
- Assault or theft (when the victim belongs to the higher classes).
- Arson, rioting, or general mayhem.
- Rebellion or resistance to the monarch's soldiers.
- Practice of dark magic (although few guards would dare hinder a known wizard).
- Worship of forbidden deities.

Punishment for crime tends to be swift and harsh. Prisons are unknown in Thule's cities, although most garrison buildings and magistrate courts have cells for holding accused criminals until the authorities can determine punishment and see it carried out. These punishments include flogging, fines, maiming or marking, enslavement, exile, or death.

## WARFARE AND RIVALRY

As your Supreme Majesty can surely appreciate, relations between one city and another are even more tense than the relations of the various factions and powers within a city. Distrust, suspicion, and vicious rivalry is the typical state of affairs between Thule's civilized states. The warriors of Lomar despise Quodeth's naked mercantilism; Quodeth resents Katagia's celebration of Atlantean heritage and superiority; Katagia is repelled by the snake worship of Ikath. The cultural divides are deep and difficult to bridge.

Despite these differences, open warfare between cities is rare, simply because most cities are so far apart that it is nearly impossible to attack one another directly. Lomar lies three hundred miles from Quodeth, with rugged mountains and deep jungles covering most of the intervening terrain—any Lomaran legion that set out for the City of Merchants would be decimated by starvation, disease, and the endless attacks of jungle tribes by the time it arrived. Quodeth's mighty fleets could bring a Quodethi army to Lomar's shores more easily, but they would be outnumbered three to one by Lomar's matchless phalanxes once they landed. For now, these two enemies can only watch each other and wait for some turn of events to change the basic strategic considerations. Similar difficulties challenge most of the other civilizations, and limit their ambitions.

Since long marches across Thule's wilderness are so difficult, cities find other ways to compete with each other. My King, you will find that proxy warfare is quite common in this land; when a city falls into civil warfare or disorder, its neighbors eagerly funnel arms, gold, and mercenaries into the fighting, hoping to pick the winning side and gain influence over their neighbor. Likewise, cities in the same region vie with each other to win the allegiance of the stronger barbarian tribes in the area, in the hopes that they can goad hordes of wilderness warriors into taking the fight to their rivals. Competition between merchants of different cities is absolutely ruthless, as various cities compete to control especially valuable or strategic trades—skirmishing, raiding, and piracy are common mercantile activities.

While Thule's cities spend a good deal of time and effort interfering with each other, they also keep a wary eye on the rise of barbarian tribes in the wilderness. Barbarians have no love for civilization, especially civilizations as corrupt and hedonistic as those

of many Thulean cities. The combination of rich treasuries and decadent ways is an irresistible lure to barbarian hordes, my King. Over the centuries, more than a few cities in the Kalayan or the Lands of the Long Shadow have been laid to waste by waves of berserk warriors. Pragmatic cities simply bribe strong tribes to trouble somebody else, while more hostile cities such as Lomar or Thran viciously punish any incursions in their lands.

## THE ATLANTEAN CALENDAR AND TIMEKEEPING

The civilizations of Thule use the old Atlantean calendar with which you are familiar, O King, dividing the year into twelve months of 30 or 31 days each. The Atlantean calendar is an observational system based on the transit of the sun against the various constellations of the zodiac. Since these transits may vary by a day or so from year to year, the length of the months is not fixed—priests or official astrologers in each city generally issue an official calendar every year, predicting the length of each month. By tradition, the new year begins on the spring equinox, and the months are named after the sign that “houses” the sun throughout the year.

Naturally, the Atlanteans had their own ideas of what constellations stood for, and in different ages the constellations stood in different parts of the Earth’s sky than they do now. The months of the Atlantean calendar are:

Atlantean Month	Sign	Equivalent
Tebon	The Chariot (Capricorn)	March
Sana	The Slave (Aquarius)	April
Adar	The Dragon (Pisces)	May
Nidon	The Ram (Aries)	June
Taru	The Bull (Taurus)	July
Samon	The Throne (Gemini)	August
Dumet	The Messenger (Cancer)	September
Abron	The Lion (Leo)	October
Ulon	The Warrior (Virgo)	November
Tisra	The Mammoth (Libra)	December
Samnu	The Scorpion (Scorpio)	January
Kislon	The Chimera (Sagittarius)	February

Astrology is taken very seriously in Thule’s civilizations, and the upper classes frequently pay lavish sums to have detailed horoscopes cast to commemorate noteworthy events such as a marriage or the birth of a child. It seems a prudent and commendable practice, my King.

Barbaric peoples lack the ability to do precise observations or calculations, but they can certainly note the length of the day and tell when a new year begins. Likewise, they know their winter stars from their summer stars and can estimate the month with a good deal of accuracy. If a barbarian has to plan a date in the future, he or she is likely to say something such as, “I will meet you here on the first new moon in the month of Adar,” and won’t miss by more than a day or two.

## LIFE IN THULE

Thule may be a cruel and hard land of many dangers, but it is not a hell on earth. Many people lead decent lives and enjoy their share of ordinary pleasures in their due season—feasts and revels, family and children, the satisfaction of work well done—whether they are illiterate barbarians, simple craftsmen, or great nobles. Adventurers, on the other hand, are far from ordinary. The stories of their lives are written on a broader canvas, Supreme Majesty, for good or for ill. But they arise from the same common clay as all other men and women in Thule, and grew up amid the same traditions and ways as the people around them. The ordinary details of life in Thule are part of who they are.

## CITY-DWELLERS, BARBARIANS, AND SAVAGES

People in Thule fall into one of two broad categories: tribesfolk and city-dwellers. In general, these two cultural groups distrust and dislike each other. The uncivilized jungle hunters or tundra nomads regard the people of the cities as corrupt, decadent, unworthy, and greedy beyond all reason. In return, the citizens of Thule’s city-states think of the barbaric peoples of the continent as ignorant, lawless brutes, all too ready to meet any obstacle or setback with senseless violence.

City-dwellers, naturally enough, are the people of Thule’s civilized realms. Only the upper classes are literate, but all are subject to the laws and customs of the city in which they live. A large number of city-dwellers are farmers or frontier-folk who actually live outside the protection of city walls, tending the fields and groves that feed the masses.

Barbarians are not far behind civilized folks in some areas, particularly the crafting of weapons and armor. Some are nomadic or semi-nomadic, moving from place to place to follow food sources such as migrating herds or to seek milder lands for the winter months. Others, Mighty King, are settled, and keep herds and tend fields much like civilized people. The chief differences between these settled barbarian tribes and civilized folk are the lack of written laws and records, and the simplicity of the social hierarchy. In a typical tribe, a barbarian answers only to his or her own conscience, serving no lord or master. Chiefs and elders are respected and listened to, but they do not rule—they lead.

Savages, on the other hand, are significantly less advanced than barbarians. Your Supreme Majesty might naturally think the terms “barbarian” and “savage” interchangeable, but they mean different things. The people of a savage tribe use only those tools and weapons they can find in the world immediately around them; they know nothing of

metalworking, writing, or commerce, and very little of magic or other secret lore. Despite the preconceptions of civilized folk, savages aren't stupid. After all, surviving in Thule's wilderness with nothing but stone, wood, and fire requires a good deal of planning and inventiveness, and any savage warrior is quick to appreciate the value of a bronze or iron blade. They are simply wary of change and suspicious of different cultures.

The most well-traveled individuals from all three groups (adventurers, for example) soon learn that there are good and bad people wherever one goes. Many tribal wanderers find their fortune in one city or another, and plenty of civilized merchants and mercenaries form fast friendships with people of the tribes they meet.

## COIN AND TRADE

Precious metals are relatively common in Thule, my King. Every major city—and a few noble houses, temples, or especially prosperous merchant enterprises—mints coinage in copper, silver, gold, and occasionally bronze, electrum, or platinum as well. In general, the value of the coin is dependent on the weight of its metal; denominations aren't widely used, simply because the intense rivalry and competition between cities means that coinage marked with a value higher than its physical worth may not be honored outside the boundaries of the city where it was struck.

Some of the more notable coinage that circulates in Thule includes:

- **Atlantean sunburst.** Made from orichalcum, the red gold of Atlantis, a sunburst features a many-rayed sun emblem. It is valued at 20 gold pieces in most large cities.
- **Quodethi double peacock.** A gold coin of twice the normal weight, the double peacock is stamped with the royal emblem of the city. It is worth 5 gold pieces in Quodeth, or 2 in another city.
- **Margish kraken.** These large silver coins are emblazoned with the image of a many-tentacled kraken. In Marg, their value is fixed at one healthy field slave, fifteen to twenty-five years in age, and they can be redeemed for such at any civic auction. For a slaver, the kraken's value is about 10 common gold pieces.
- **Nesskian fang.** These small, triangular gold coins occasionally turn up in forgotten serpentman hoards and date back to the serpentman empire of Nessk. They are accepted in some cities, but in Quodeth they are known as "snake's gold" and regarded as bad luck.

While a purse heavy with gold pieces can see to many needs in civilized regions, not all the peoples in Thule care about money. Savages have little use for coins; they can't be eaten, they aren't tools, and

they can't be used to make clothing or shelter. No matter how many coins a merchant offers, a savage won't part with something tangible and useful such as a pelt that might keep one warm or a hunting spear. However, coins are pretty, and many savages are happy to trade pretty things of their own such as uncut gemstones or ivory carvings. Your Supreme Majesty may find that savages are more than happy to trade their trinkets for civilized goods that are clearly useful, such as bronze spearheads or warm garments.

Barbarians have a better idea of what coins are worth, even if they rarely use them. They are more likely to measure wealth in terms of the livestock they own, the houses and halls they build, or the weapons and tools they craft. Bartering with one's neighbors for goods or services is more common than paying in the coins of the cities. Most barbarian tribes have at least occasional contact with civilized traders or encounter trading posts during their travels, so they tend to save what coins they do collect for the occasions when they'll be useful in trade.

## DAYS OF THE WEEK

In addition to the months and days of the Atlantean calendar, Thuleans also count seven-day weeks tied to the phases of the moon. This is only used to provide weekdays and provide a more convenient schedule for regular commerce and observances, which otherwise would have to be fixed to specific dates ahead of time. The days are named after major deities as follows:

- Asura's Day
- Tarhun's Day
- Kishar's Day
- Nergal's Day
- Tiamat's Day
- Mithra's Day
- Ishtar's Day

The middle of the week is considered inauspicious in some cities, and people avoid beginning new enterprises or conducting important business on Nergal's Day and Tiamat's Day. Thuleans have little notion of a weekend, but in most places Ishtar's Day is a day of light work; many festivals or revels are planned to fall on the last day of the week.

## RECORD OF YEARS

Most people in Thule count years from the beginning of their monarch's reign. For example, a merchant might boast that she bought an olive grove "in the third year of Queen Nalyani's reign," or promise to pay a loan "by the eleventh year of the queen's reign." If the queen's reign happens to end before eleven years, people understand that the date means eleven years from the year in which Queen Nalyani assumed the throne. In the course of a single human lifetime there are rarely more than half a dozen rulers to keep track of in any given city, so it is not very confusing.

## LANGUAGES IN PRIMEVAL THULE

You can assume that all player characters can speak Low Atlantean and their own native language. Characters of Intelligence 9 or less have fairly limited vocabularies in Low Atlantean and may suffer circumstance penalties to interaction skill checks if that is the only language they share with the person they are interacting with (GM's discretion).

Common Language	Spoken by	Script
Atlantean, Low	Most humans, elves, and dwarves	Atlantean
Atlantean, High	Atlanteans, scholars, wizards	Atlantean
Dhari	Humans (Dhari)	Draconic
Dwarven	Dwarves	Dwarven
Elven	Elves, wizards	Elven
Kalayan	Humans (Kalayan)	Elven
Lomari	Humans (Lomari)	Atlantean
Nimothan	Humans (Nimothans)	Dwarven
Urgan	Beastmen, gnolls, winged apes	—
Uncommon Languages	Spoken by	Script
Benthic	Aboleths, deep ones, cultists	Pnakos
Draconic	Serpentmen, troglodytes, kobolds, sorcerers	Draconic
Giant	Cyclopes, giants, minotaurs	Dwarven
Rakshasan	Rakshasas	Infernal
Rare Languages	Spoken by	Script
Abyssal	Demons, ghouls	Abyssal
Celestial	Angels, gods, priests	Celestial
Infernal	Devils, warlocks	Infernal
Mi-Go	Moonbeasts, mi-go, star things	Pnakos

Characters can learn additional languages in the normal manner, although wizards should know at least one of the following languages: Draconic, Elven, or High Atlantean.

From time to time truly villainous or despised monarchs are stricken from history by their successors, which can introduce some uncertainty for later scholars.

Tribal peoples follow a similar custom, but they tend to date years from notable events—battles, natural disasters, or heroic deeds of great renown. For example, a barbarian might count “the seventh year since we fought the Lomarans at the River Klal,” or “the ninth year after the Great Comet.” On occasion the beginning of the rule of a well-loved (or much-hated) chieftain counts as a notable event, but not often. Finding common references by which two barbarians can agree on when something happened can be challenging at times.

Scholars and sages make use of the Evenoran dating system (or Atlantean Reckoning), which counts years from the foundation of Atlantis by Evenor, the first king of that realm. Since the destruction of that realm, the Evenoran dates have become less and less well known throughout Thule (and your own realm, Supreme Majesty), but no other universal measure exists. In this system, Atlantis was destroyed in 1906 AR, and the current year is 2213 AR.

## COMMON LANGUAGES

Most people in Thule are bilingual to a greater or lesser extent. They know the language of their home city or tribe and converse fluently in that tongue. They also know some amount of “Common” or “Low” Atlantean, a simple version of the High Atlantean language. Speakers of Common Atlantean get by with a couple of thousand words and some standard phrases, but can converse well enough for all but the most complicated or nuanced concepts. The more isolated barbarians have little use for a common language, and it's not unusual to find that particularly reclusive or hostile tribes don't understand any Atlantean at all.

Languages commonly encountered in Thule and the surrounding lands include:

**Low Atlantean:** The “common tongue” of Thule and nearby lands.

**High Atlantean:** When Atlantis reigned as the supreme power in the lands of the Atlantean Sea, its language was known by all but the most isolated and backwards savages. The waning influence of Atlantis in the current day means that Atlantean is slowly falling out of use throughout Thule. It is still a language of scholarship, science, and many occult studies.

**Dhari:** The language of human tribes and cities of Dhari ethnicity. The written form is based on the language of the serpent-people.

**Dwarven:** The language of the dwarf race. Its runes are used (rarely) as the basis for writing in Nimothan and Giant.

**Elven:** The language of the elven people. It is important in arcane studies.

**Kalayan:** The language of humans of Kalayan ancestry, most notable the city of Quodeh. Kalayan was strongly influenced by Elven and still uses the Elven alphabet.

**Lomari:** Humans of Lomar speak this tongue. It is unrelated to any other languages in Thule.

**Nimothan:** Human tribes and cities of Nimothan descent speak this language. The written form is based on dwarven runes.

**Urgan:** The primitive language of the beastmen, gnolls, and the more intelligent beasts and apes. There is no written form.

**Benthic:** A prehuman language spoken by the ancient civilizations of the seas. The written form is a fantastically ancient glyph system referred to as Pnakos, known principally for its appearance in the Pnakotic Manuscripts.

**Draconic:** The language of the serpentmen. Debased forms of this tongue are spoken by troglodytes and kobolds.

**Giant:** An old and almost forgotten language, rarely encountered in the current day.

**Rakshasan:** The proud and cruel race of rakshasas do not teach their language to people of lesser races, but a few libraries in Thule hold examples of their writings.

**Abyssal and Infernal:** Not native to the Earth, and known only because demons, devils, and other creatures from parallel dimensions sometimes find their way into the world.

**Celestial:** The language of the gods and their servants. The holiest tomes and scrolls in existence contain passages written in Celestial.

**Mi-Go:** Known to only a handful of scholars and cultists, most of whom are not entirely sane. The strange and sinister mi-go are among the most widely traveled of the extraterrene races that visit the Earth, and their language—generally unpronounceable by humans—serves as a common tongue among the alien races that occasionally visit Thule.



## CHARACTER ARMS AND ARMOR IN THULE

Unless stated otherwise, you can assume that any metallic armor your character encounters is made from bronze scales, rings, or plates, and that any metallic weapon your character finds is likewise made of bronze. Since the great majority of Thule's warriors are armed and armored in bronze, there is no special penalty or bonus in most combat situations.

## STONE, BRONZE, IRON AND MORE

The Atlanteans were masters of metallurgy and machines, Mighty King, but their influence did not penetrate to the deepest jungles of Thule. In general, the savage peoples of this land make do without metal arms or armor, while the peoples of the city-states are skilled in working copper and bronze. Barbarians who have any regular contact with civilized folk are able to equip themselves with bronze arms and armor too, whether through trade, tribute, or pillage.

People (and intelligent monsters) who have little contact with civilization generally wield weapons of stone, bone, and wood. In many cases, these inferior materials are still quite sufficient to do the job—an arrow with an obsidian point is nearly as lethal as one with a hard metal point, as long as the target isn't wearing armor made from better materials. Naturally, few adventurers insist on using primitive weapons when better weapons are available, so even the most savage hero usually gets his hands on a bronze spear or sword early in his career once he begins interacting with more civilized folk.

Weapons and armor made from iron are rare. The only people in Thule who know the secret of working iron are the dwarves, and they do not simply sell their prized arms. In fact, most dwarves assume that anyone carrying an iron weapon murdered a dwarf and stole it, and treat the bearer accordingly. When dwarves do make a gift of an iron sword or shield to a worthy recipient, they usually put a "mark of iron" on the recipient—a small tattoo or brand of the smith's rune, indicating that the bearer has the right to carry that weapon. Of course, many raiders and marauders carry iron weapons looted from dead heroes and don't have any such mark. But dwarves are not above hiring thieves or assassins to get these weapons back when they learn of one.

The mages and craftsmen of Atlantis also knew the secret of working iron, of course, and a number of stranger and more mysterious alloys as well—steel, mithral, adamantine, orichalcum, and others. It is possible that these secrets may still survive in some Atlantean ruins, but for the most part this knowledge has vanished from the world. A small amount of Atlantean weapons and suits of armor can be found in the treasuries and vaults of Thule, and they are generally regarded as priceless. Only the greatest of princes or kings own such marvels.

## GODS AND CULTS

There are many gods in Thule, my King: Protectors of cities, patrons of merchants, spirits of forests or beasts, and dark things remembered only by a few savage tribes or vile cults. This is a superstitious age, and humankind is surrounded by mysterious powers. In such a world, people naturally seek to understand the forces around them by giving them names and seeking to win their favor or avert their displeasure. Whether the gods take note of such things or not, few indeed could say, for the gods of Thule are inscrutable.

Gods and other divine entities of this land fall into one of three broad groups: The Nine Powers, a pantheon of mythological figures who are the gods of the civilized peoples; the Forest Gods, myriad spirits of beast, wood, and weather that are worshiped by many of the savage and barbarian tribes; and the Other Gods, dreadful prehuman entities that are venerated only by the most degenerate cultists and tribes.

## ASURA

*Goddess of Dawn, Messenger of the Gods, Flame of Atlantis*

**Symbol:** A crown or tiara with rays of sunlight

**Alignment:** Neutral good

**Portfolio:** Dawn, fire, beginnings, inspiration

**Favored Weapon:** Spear

The goddess of dawn, Asura is said to begin each new day by kindling the sun with divine fire. She is a figure of glory and hope, dispelling darkness and driving away evil things with her coming. Her holy texts teach that people are meant to live free of oppression and realize their potential, doing good works and aiding those less fortunate than they. She was once considered the special patron of Atlantis, and her radiant glory symbolized the progress and enlightenment of Atlantean civilization.

Temples of Asura commonly greet each sunrise with ringing gongs, and keep a sacred fire burning at the altar all year round. The priests of Asura lost a great deal of wealth and influence when Atlantis was destroyed, but after centuries of decline, Asura's faith is now gaining strength again as her priests champion the cause of Thule's lower classes. The priests of Asura oppose the worst excesses of the slave trade, calling for laws to ensure that slaves are treated well, and a few of the most radical even go so far as to call for the abolition of slavery altogether—a position that puts them at odds with the elites of Thule's cities.

**HERUM***Lord of Beasts, the Ape-God***Symbol:** Broken bones**Alignment:** Chaotic evil**Portfolio:** Beasts, savagery, rage, destruction**Favored Weapon:** Greatclub

An old and brutal god, Herum represents the violence and bloodthirstiness that lurks inside the human heart. He was one of the first gods of humankind, a suitable deity for naked savages who were barely more advanced than apes themselves. Herum teaches that humans are no more than beasts that can think, and that the true man is one who rids himself of his delusions and false morals, giving himself over to the beast that lurks within.

Few civilized folk still worship Herum. His message of primitive rage and brutal impulse repels the more advanced cultures of Thule, and his temples sit forgotten (or shunned) in the older quarters of Thule's ancient cities. But here and there Herum's crude altars stand in the wild places of the world in jungle clearings or on windswept hilltops, stained with the blood of the sacrifices the ape-god demands from his worshipers. His worshipers include the most savage warriors, murderers, and lycanthropes.

**ISHTAR***Goddess of Love, Luck, and War***Symbol:** Eight-pointed star**Alignment:** Chaotic neutral**Portfolio:** Love, beauty, art, fortune, passion**Favored Weapon:** Scimitar

Ishtar is the goddess of love and beauty. She is legendary for fickleness and fits of jealous rage, but this same passionate nature also drives her to fight fearlessly to protect those she loves and boldly confront foes. Ishtar therefore possesses an important aspect as a goddess of war. While Nergal is the god of warmaking and conquest and Tarhun is the god of battle, Ishtar represents war as the ultimate expression of unchecked emotion. Her dogma can be reduced to one simple idea: Live passionately, in all senses of the expression.

Ishtar is one of the most widely worshiped of the Nine, and her temples can be found in almost every city. Consequently her priestesses tend to be rich, powerful, and influential. Many of the rites and festivals associated with Ishtar's temple are orgies of one kind or another, which goes a long way toward explaining Ishtar's popularity with the masses. Clerics of Ishtar are also seekers of beauty, defenders of art, and protectors of their cities.

**KISHAR***Goddess of Grain, Mother of Rivers, Queen of the Gods***Symbol:** A sheaf of grain**Alignment:** Lawful neutral**Portfolio:** Agriculture, the earth, rivers, motherhood**Favored Weapon:** Light flail

Goddess of agriculture and growing things, Kishar is the consort of Mithra and the mother figure among the Nine. She is the mother of Tarhun, and held in some reverence by followers of that faith as well as her own. Kishar teaches that all things come in their own season, and that people should give thanks for the bounty of the earth.

Few temples are dedicated specifically to Kishar. She is more commonly worshiped in conjunction with Mithra, and in many places the highest-ranking priestess in a temple of Mithra also serves as the city's high priestess of Kishar. Kishar's clerics observe the seasons of the year, declaring the times for planting and harvest and seeking Kishar's blessings of rain and sunshine in good measure.

**MITHRA***God of the Sun, Lord of the Sky, King of the Gods***Symbol:** A sunburst and eagle**Alignment:** Lawful good**Portfolio:** Sun, justice, sky, rulership and dominion**Favored Weapon:** Heavy mace

The ruler of the Nine, Mithra is the god of the sun and sky. Kishar is his consort, and headstrong Tarhun is his son. He is a just and benevolent king, ordering all things so that his followers can enjoy justice and prosperity in their lives. Mithra is also a stern and vigilant judge who checks the wicked ambitions of gods such as Set, Nergal, and Tiamat, ensuring that they fulfill their role in the scheme of things without exceeding their lawful authority. He teaches that order and justice are the instruments by which the most good can be done for the most people.

Mithra's temples are often the grandest and most powerful in a city, and his priesthood is rich and influential. They are usually strongly aligned with the city's monarch, and the support of Mithra's priests is often one of the chief pillars on which a city's king or queen bases his or her rule. Few rulers can keep their thrones for long if Mithra's priests determine that Mithra no longer blesses the monarch's reign.

**NERGAL***God of the Underworld, Lord of War, King of the Dead***Symbol:** A black lion with a mane of flame**Alignment:** Neutral evil**Portfolio:** War, death, avarice, the underworld**Favored Weapon:** Longsword

## THE NINE POWERS

Most civilized Thuleans recognize a distinct pantheon of greater powers with wide influence and temples in the more important city-states. This group of major deities is sometimes known as the Nine Powers. Not all of the Nine are known in all cities; different priesthoods wield different amounts of influence from city to city. In fact, many Thuleans would argue about which deities are properly numbered among the Nine Powers, usually substituting a civic patron, a legendary hero, or (in some cases) an anthropomorphized version of one of the Great Old Ones.

The Nine Powers are generally held to include:

Deity	Alignment	Description
Asura	NG	Goddess of dawn, fire
Herum	CE	God of beasts, rage
Ishtar	CN	Goddess of love and luck
Kishar	LN	Goddess of the earth, agriculture
Mithra	LG	God of sun, sky, lordship
Nergal	NE	God of war, the underworld
Set	LE	God of night, secrets, snakes
Tarhun	CG	God of storms and battle
Tiamat	CE	Goddess of the sea, chaos

A grim and implacable figure, Nergal is the god of the underworld, war, and death. He represents war as the drive for power, dominion, and triumph, the desire to subjugate enemies and claim what is theirs. Nergal is also the stern and final judge of the dead, sentencing souls deserving of punishment to ages of penance in his hell of black flames. Nergal's philosophy teaches that the strong rule over the weak, and people are meant to seize the things they want in life—a creed that often casts the lord of the underworld as a sullen and resentful being who believes Mithra's place as the ruler of the pantheon belongs to him.

While Nergal is a dark and demanding deity, his temples are found in many cities and are firmly established in Thule's civic life. War comes to all lands sooner or later, and warriors seek Nergal's favor in the struggles they face. His priesthood urges a strong hand in dealing with the wretched masses and rival cities, and they also sponsor spectacular (and bloody) games to celebrate the anniversaries of triumphs and conquests from past wars.

### SET

*God of Night, the Great Serpent*

**Symbol:** Twin serpents

**Alignment:** Lawful evil

**Portfolio:** Night, secrets, treachery, poison, snakes

**Favored Weapon:** Short sword

Set is ancient beyond measure. According to some stories, the lord of snakes actually arose during the long ages when serpentmen ruled over Thule and was first worshiped as a god by that ancient and wicked race. He is the eternal enemy of Mithra, and a bitter rival to Nergal and Tiamat. Set teaches that free will is illusion, and that the only path to understanding is to surrender oneself to him in body, soul, and mind.

While the worship of Set is unwelcome in many cities, none can deny the power and influence of his temples. As much as the priests of Mithra and Asura rail against the sinister machinations of Set's priests, few would dare to move openly to ban Set's worship or desecrate his altars. Over the years, zealous crusaders have tried to do just that in cities such as Katagia and Quodeth, but sudden mysterious deaths and various other disasters invariably ensue, bringing these ill-considered campaigns to an end. Set's worshipers consist largely of the downtrodden and the defeated, people who think so little of themselves that they surrender their all to the Lord of Night in the hope that he will reward faithful devotion with the comforts and power that have eluded them. Many other people simply hope to propitiate the Lord of Serpents and avert the misfortunes and catastrophes at his command.

### TARHUN

*God of Storms, Lord of Battle*

**Symbol:** A three-forked lightning bolt

**Alignment:** Chaotic good

**Portfolio:** Storms, sky, battle

**Favored Weapon:** Battle axe

Brash and headstrong, Tarhun is a god who confronts his foes and tries his strength against them without hesitation. The son of Mithra and Kishar, Tarhun is a warrior-hero, a figure that battles scores of dreadful monsters in various myths and tales. He celebrates battle as the true test of manhood (or womanhood), the strife in which a warrior can show his or her true merit, and teaches that people with courage and honor can make the world a better place by challenging wickedness and crushing it underfoot.

Tarhun's temples are common in the more martial cities of Thule, especially Lomar, Katagia, and Nim. He is increasingly seen as a god of strength and valor, a war deity who rewards courage (unlike Nergal, who rewards only triumph). Many warriors take Tarhun as their patron and seek his favor before battle. Tarhun's priests frequently sponsor athletic games, tournaments, and gladiatorial contests to celebrate the virtues of physical hardiness and valor.



## TIAMAT

*Mother of Dragons, Goddess of the Sea, Queen of Chaos*

**Symbol:** A dragon skull with five horns

**Alignment:** Chaotic evil

**Portfolio:** Chaos, destruction, monsters, vengeance, the sea

**Favored Weapon:** Morningstar

Goddess of the sea, Tiamat is a capricious and wrathful deity that supposedly gave birth to many of the more terrible monsters plaguing the world today. Long ago she warred against the other gods and was subdued only with the greatest of difficulty, and she still hates all the others to this day. Tiamat teaches that the world is without order, and that those who serve chaos and beseech her favor will be rewarded with power and riches.

While temples dedicated to Set and Nergal can be found in many Thulean cities, Tiamat's worship is not quite as common. At best, those who have to hazard life and livelihood on the seas—fishermen, sailors, and merchants—are careful to pay their respects to the dragon goddess, hoping to avert her wrath with suitable offerings. People who feel they have been wronged also have been known to seek out Tiamat's shrines and pray for disaster to befall their enemies. Tiamat's priests often seek out monsters wherever they lurk, providing them with treasures and sacrifice to honor the “children of the Queen.”

## THE FOREST GODS

The idea of gods with human representations and human concerns is relatively new to the people of Thule, my King. Before the time of Atlantis, no one knew of gods such as Mithra or Asura. Even the old, primal deities—Herum, Set, and perhaps Tiamat—had no priests or houses of worship. In those years, humans worshiped only the unseen spirits of hill and field, beast and tree. The people of the cities may have forgotten their names, but the tribes of the jungles and the plains remember the Forest Gods, and they still pay homage to them.

Those who worship the Forest Gods are not priests or clerics. They are druids, shamans, or totem warriors of one kind or another. Their magic is derived from the spirits of nature, not the power of faith or the divine intercession of the gods. In fact, tribal people are mystified by the rites and doctrines of the city gods; to the typical barbarian, gods don't want anything from humankind—they just are. Honoring the natural spirits is simply good sense, since angering the spirit of the deer by failing to express gratitude for a successful hunt might lead the spirit to keep game away from the hunter in the future, while angering the spirit of the mammoth is a good way to get oneself killed.

Civilized travelers are sometimes inclined to treat druids and shamans with skepticism—after all, they have their own explanations for the mysteries of nature and do not look at the world in the same way more primitive peoples do. But there is no doubt that shamans and other practitioners of nature magic deal with powers every bit as real and capable as the mystic forces harnessed by a wizard's spells or a cleric's prayers. It seems that for the wilderness tribes, believing is seeing. They perceive a world where every animal, every tree, every rock, and every stream possesses its own living spirit, and for them, it is so.

## WORSHIP, BELIEFS, AND DEVOTION

The gods of Thule are more secretive or aloof than those of many places. This is not a land where gods move mortals like chess pieces or appear in shining visions to direct their followers to take on quests or launch crusades. A priest in Thule is generally left to his own devices and determines the nature of his service on his own.

## THE GREAT OLD ONES

The Nine Powers are the gods of Thule, but they are not the only gods in Thule. Long before the gods of the human pantheon or even the myriad spirits of the natural world came into existence and assumed their places, primordial powers—evil, ancient, inhuman—came to the young planet and established their alien dominion over land, sky, and sea. Only the most fearless (or foolhardy) of sages study these creatures, but from these scholars a few terrible names are known. These Great Old Ones include:

Deity	Alignment	Description
Cthulhu	CE	The Caller in the Deep
Dhuoth	CE	The Giver of Eyes
Hastur	NE	The King in Yellow
Ithaqua	CE	The Wind-Walker
Lorthnu'un	NE	Lord of the Golden Chalice
Nyarlahotep	CE	The Crawling Chaos
Shub-Niggurath	CN	Black Goat of the Woods
Tsathoggua	NE	The Sleeping God
Yga-Ygo	NE	The Dweller in Dreams
Yog-Sothoth	CE	Opener of the Way

Driven into hibernation in the desolate places of the world or exiled to the far reaches of time and space, the Great Old Ones hunger to return and reclaim what was once theirs. Some who bargain with these beings do so in search of power, some are degenerate tribes that cling to their monstrous gods, and some are vile cultists who pray for the end of all existence. Few indeed dare to name these Other Gods aloud, but that does not mean they are not worshipped. It is better not to pry into these matters, Majesty.

In the beliefs of Thule, gods have little to do with mortal souls or the afterlife. Most city-dwellers are not terribly religious; the idea of seeking eternal salvation through faithful service to a deity simply isn't a part of most cultures. Instead, pious citizens observe rituals and make minor sacrifices more as a matter of participating in civic culture (and perhaps invoking a little good luck) than as a matter of seeking favorable treatment in the hereafter. Piety and moderation are the virtues of good people, and good people need fear nothing that awaits after death.

Some holy texts state that gods can reward their loyal servants or punish the very wicked, but these are usually portrayed as bounded fates—a great traitor may be sentenced to spend an age in Nergal's black hells, or a courageous hero may be chosen to feast at Tarhun's table the day she falls in battle. But if the writings of Thule's priests are to be believed, most souls simply depart the world on death, and the gods have limited power or interest in decreeing otherwise.

## CLERICS AND MAGIC

Clerical magic is rarely seen, and is every bit as secretive and mysterious as arcane magic. In Thule, clerics don't pray for spells. Instead, they gain their magical powers when they are initiated into the deeper mysteries of their chosen deity's worship. To put it another way, once a priestess of Ishtar is initiated into the secrets of Ishtar's priesthood and invested with power, she gains the ability to use spells. What she does with those powers after that point is up to her.

Because priests can only be judged by the observable actions they take, it is far from certain that any given cleric is serving his or her deity faithfully. Priests, like all other mortals, are fallible and corruptible, and their magic has no special divine imprimatur that makes it holy or good. Magic in Thule is mysterious and not well understood, and Thule's priesthoods are nothing if not mysterious.

## SECRET LORE

The great majority of Thule's people, both barbarian and civilized, go about their lives in blissful ignorance of the world's vast age and dark secrets. For them, history is little more than a handful of garbled stories handed down over a handful of centuries from savage ancestors who had barely mastered the making of fire, and the world is as it has always been. This is as true in Thule as it is in your Supreme Majesty's own realm.

Most barbarians and lower-class city folk know only the most basic facts about things they haven't personally experienced—for example, "there was once an empire called Atlantis," or "shamans gain magic powers from spirits of nature." Well-educated people such as the officials or nobles of a city can trace the broad outlines of events or "big picture"



truths, such as, “Atlantis reigned from two thousand years ago to just a couple of hundred years ago, and they colonized many lands around the Atlantean Ocean,” or “sages say there are five kinds of magic, including animism, the magic of shamans and druids.” Only the most dedicated scholars would be able to create a detailed history of Atlantis, or describe each form of magic and its practitioners. Getting them to share that knowledge—and ensuring that it’s not colored by a scholarly or sinister agenda—is no easy task.

While there are many things that are forgotten or misunderstood in this superstitious age, the biggest and most important secrets fall into a few broad categories: history, magic, cosmology, and the existence of the Great Old Ones.

## HISTORY OF THULE

Most people are familiar with the broad history of their own city or tribe. They know the foundational myths of their culture and the more important events that have taken place during their own lifetimes, and possibly during the lifetimes of their parents and grandparents. Unfortunately, Thulean learning is parochial in the extreme; a Quodethi knows next to nothing about the history of Kataghi or the tales of

the Dhari people. And it is not unusual for powerful kings or priesthoods to create new versions of old myths in order to cement their own authority and place in history. Only the most diligent and widely traveled of sages possess any real glimmer of historical understanding, and in many cases, they fear to share what they have learned.

Those sages who have pieced together an account of Thule’s history begin their tale in the Primordial Age. This is the vast span of time stretching from the beginning of things to the first appearance of humankind. While humans did not yet exist, the earth was not empty; ancient prehuman races held sway over the world. The stories of their wars and triumphs are mostly lost in time, with only a few cryptic ruins or crumbling scrolls left to record these times. No one knows for certain who or what might have lived upon the Earth in these distant years, but toward the end of this time, Thule was dominated by two prehuman empires: the serpentmen and the rakshasas.

The Age of Dawn marked the coming of mankind. It is difficult to give a precise beginning to this age since no one knows how long primitive men roamed the African plains before wandering out to the rest of the world; it may have been anywhere between 50,000 and 10,000 years before the current age of

## A TIMELINE FOR THULE

- 100,000 AR? **The Primordial Age.** No human civilizations anywhere in the world.
- 35,000 AR Serpentman empire of Nessk conquers eastern Thule.
- 30,000 AR **Age of Dawn.** The first humans appear and begin to migrate outward.
- 8800 AR Primitive humans arrive on Thule's shores.
- 7500 AR Guardian menhirs erected around Thule by a secret druid order.
- 4200 AR First Dhari tribes begin settling southern Thule. They eventually move westward into Dhar Mesh and Nar.
- 2955 AR **Age of Myth.** Elves arrive in Thule through world gates.
- 2700 AR War breaks out between the elven realms of Imystrahl and Sersidyen and the serpentman empire of Nessk. Intermittent wars continue for centuries.
- 1950 AR Rakshasas of Jhi Anool gate in a demon horde to destroy the elven realm of Mesildyar in northern Thule.
- 1420 AR Elven legions, reinforced by the warriors of their subject human tribes, drive the rakshasas from Thule. The rakshasas retreat to Hellumar.
- 1124 AR Imystrahl's legions besiege and raze the Nesskian fortress of Bhnaal Pruth at the mouth of the River Quosa.
- 655 AR A foul orange rain falls over the Inner Sea; the alien being known as Dhuoth takes root in a remote valley and begins to grow.
- 500 AR The Kalay tribes begin their settling of Thule.
- 240 AR The barbarian chief Jal Dror founds the city of Quodeth.
- 0 AR **Age of Atlantis.** The warlord Evenor unites Atlantis and establishes his capital, creating the Empire of Atlantis.
- 16 AR Quodeth's armies defeat the elven kingdom of Sersidyen.
- 99 AR The cities of Quodeth and Hurhun combine forces to destroy the troglodyte kingdom of Vhaug.
- 307 AR An Atlantean fleet raids Imystrahl, causing great damage.
- 429 AR Dwarves arrive in Thule, migrating from the eastern continent.
- 495 AR Atlanteans found the colony of Katagia.
- 566 AR First Nimothan explorers begin settling northeast Thule and the island of Nimoth.
- 616 AR The Atlantean colony of Orech is established on Thule's northern shores.
- 833 AR Dwarven city of Kal-Zinan is founded in the Zinandar Mountains.
- 1114 AR Vanadar, the Crimson Prince, fails to seize the Atlantean Throne. He is exiled to Thule and founds the city of Marg.
- 1178 AR Vanadar, King of Marg, sacks the elven city of Imystrahl.
- 1215 AR Ghedrar the Necromancer rises to power in Ikath and builds an army of mummy warriors, seizing much of central Thule for his kingdom.
- 1451 AR Atlantean legions conquer Quodeth, adding the city to their empire.
- 1511 AR Dwarven schism leads to civil war and the ruin of Kal-Zinan. The victorious clans vow to rebuild, and the losing clans are exiled.
- 1673 AR Atlantean general Nemruth leads a fleet across the Inner Sea to attack Ikath. He defeats the undead armies of Ghedrar the Necromancer and withdraws after installing a puppet king. Ghedrar's body is never found.
- 1744 AR The Yellow Priests assume power in Orech after a plague of madness ravages the city.
- 1817 AR War breaks out between Atlantis and Lemuria. Most of the fighting takes place in northern Africa.
- 1906 AR Atlantis is destroyed and sinks beneath the waves.
- 1980 AR Invaders from across the sea, a lost tribe of Lemuria, found the city of Lomar.
- 2000 AR Glaciation renders much of the Kingdom of Nimoth uninhabitable. Beginning of the Nimothan migrations.
- 2011 AR Kal Keor the Terrible becomes chief of the Jandar tribes, and crushes Thran.
- 2016 AR The Jandar horde defeats Droum. Kal Keor names himself King of Droum.
- 2022 AR The Jandar hordes attack Quodeth and are repelled.
- 2035 AR Kal Keor is assassinated by sorcery; the Jandar hordes disperse, and Kal Keor's empire crumbles.
- 2040 AR Bayod Naz, the Black Wizard, reveals the existence of the Black Circle and seizes power in Thran.
- 2087 AR Lomar defeats the city of Hurhun in a sudden war. Hurhun is sacked, its people scattered, its walls pulled down, and its fields salted.
- 2096 AR The glacier Kang overruns the small realm of Lendosk in a single winter.
- 2104 AR Beothoe, capital city of Nimoth, is engulfed by glaciers.
- 2112 AR Wandering tribes driven from Nimoth found the city of Nim on Thule's northern coast.
- 2155 AR Legions of Lomar defeat Droum's army. Droum sues for peace and is forced to pay a ruinous tribute.
- 2168 AR Princess Jara Boh is exiled from Lomar. She founds the city of Rime in an abandoned stronghold of Lendosk.
- 2176 AR The Black Milk is introduced in Imystrahl.
- 2183 AR Cult of Great Cthulhu spreads widely and grows dangerously influential as star alignments bring a season of dark dreams and whispers of doom.
- 2209 AR Deyane Hazeda becomes Quodeth's queen at age 15. Grand Vizier Ibland Posk rules as the power behind the throne.
- 2213 AR **Age of Ice/Age of Man.** Current year.

Thule. Humans were savages, without writing or metal or numbers, but they were a young and vigorous race. Serpentmen and rakshasas regarded these new arrivals as mere pests and wiped out tribes that blundered into their territory—but these elder races were already in decline, and humans found many of their old cities and strongholds empty.

The Age of Dawn gave way to the Age of Myth 5,000 years ago, when a new race arrived in the world: the elves. A proud and warlike people, elves came to Thule from a parallel earth, fleeing through dimensional portals to escape some dire danger in their native world. Armed with learning and magic equal to those of the serpentmen and the rakshasas, the elves carved out kingdoms of their own. Many human tribes swore fealty to elven rulers, serving as warriors in elven armies battling against the remaining serpent kingdoms and rakshasa realms.

The founding of Atlantis, the first and greatest human empire, 2200 years ago marked the turn of a new age. The Age of Atlantis saw humankind equal and then surpass the learning of the older races; armed with powerful sorcery and advanced science, the Atlanteans created many great wonders and brought a vast portion of the world under their sway. Several of Thule's great cities—Katagia, Orech, and Marg, for example—had their beginnings as colonies of Atlantis. Later, as the empire's power grew, the Atlanteans turned to conquest and subjugated lesser cities such as Quodeth and Droum.

Atlantean lords ruled much of Thule for a dozen centuries or more...but at the height of its power, Atlantis was laid low by a terrible cataclysm. The cause of this disaster is not known; some believe the Atlanteans were dabbling with a new and uncontrolled source of energy, some say the gods struck down Atlantis for its overwhelming hubris, and still others familiar with the secrets of the Great Old Ones believe that the some baleful alignment of the stars awoke one of these monstrous powers, which then destroyed the Atlantean civilization. Whatever the cause, most of the island-continent of Atlantis sank beneath the waves 300 years ago, marking the end of an age.

The current age has earned no particular name yet, although some sages refer to it as the Age of Man, while others—taking note of the glaciers slowly devouring the northern world—refer to it as the Age of Ice. In this day, the old races are waning quickly; the serpentmen and rakshasa empires are long dead, the elves are sliding into decadence and decline, and the few remaining outposts of Atlantis are losing their power and influence over the younger city-states of Thule. Mercantile Quodeth and martial Lomar are the great powers of the northern continent now, even if they wield only a tiny fraction of the power that Atlantis (or the earlier, prehuman empires) once possessed.

## SOURCES OF MAGIC

The history of Thule amply illustrates that the world's ancient empires were founded on occult learning and lore. Yet your Supreme Majesty is certainly aware that magic is something humans were not meant to wield. Humans, for all their learning, are creatures of the natural world, and magic in any form is essentially unnatural. Mastering magic requires more than simple study or a natural knack. Those who seek to use magic must first find a suitable source of magic and harness it. Thule's scholars speak of five distinct origins or sources of magical power, and many wonder about several more that have not been confirmed to exist.

The first form of magic mastered by humans after they began to spread throughout the Earth and learn its secrets was animism—primal magic, or spirit magic. From the earliest days of humankind, wise men and women saw the world as a place alive with spirits and forces, and sought the favor of these natural spirits. Civilized Thuleans can barely perceive these spirits, and some openly scoff at “barbaric superstitions”—but shamans, druids, totem warriors, and others who draw magical power from the spirits of nature know better, my King.

As the wandering tribes of humankind began to slowly settle and become civilized, they forgot the ways of their savage forebears. Instead of spirits of beasts and seasons, they began to seek out powers that could teach crafts, knowledge, and secrets of lore. Where once humans raised stone circles, they began to build stone temples, and they named the beings that taught (and sometimes chastised) them. To their most faithful followers, the gods taught the secret art of invocation, or divine magic. Some believe that clerics beseech the gods for miracles that the gods in turn grant, but in truth the gods do not channel this power to their followers—the prayers and forms of cleric spells are designed to unlock the same supernal power the gods themselves employ, although clerics are initiated into only a small portion of this divine secret.

Humans may have discovered the power of animism and invocation on their own, but the secrets of arcane magic originated among older races. Arcana is the science of the occult, the logical study of supernatural principles and effects. It is the wizard's learning and study, an endlessly complex and abstruse science in which the most fundamental secrets of the universe are waiting to be discovered. Humans first studied arcana from stolen scrolls of serpentman mages or under the tutelage of the elves, who hoped to fill the ranks of their armies with servants powerful in magic. The wizards of Atlantis elevated the arcane arts to terrible and dangerous heights, and paid the price—but the Atlantean lore and its elven origins are still studied today.

Sorcery represents a different approach to power, O King; instead of changing the world with arcane knowledge, the sorcerer uses arcane knowledge to change himself or herself into a being whose nature is now in part magical. Sorcerers begin their careers by finding some rite or ritual and making a sacrifice, giving up some part of their humanity to gain power. In a world where magic use of any kind is seen as dangerous, sorcery is especially feared. In Thule it is said that the art of sorcery was the secret of innately magical races such as rakshasas or genies, who bartered their secrets to human seekers, usually at terrible cost.

There is one last route to power, a road that is dark and dangerous indeed—one can always bargain for the gift from an entity with the powers one seeks. Theurgy is the path of the warlock or the witch. By making a pact with some supernatural patron, the warlock gains the ability to use magic for his or her own purposes. The best of these patrons are fickle and inhuman powers from different realities—sly, mocking devils or bewitching fey. The worst are Great Old Ones, blind and hungry, responding to rituals far older than mankind. Theurgy descended to humankind from beings far more alien than elves or serpentmen, and warlocks are objects of suspicion and terror in all but the most callous of cities. Shun this dark knowledge, my King!

Other forms of magic almost certainly exist, of course. The Earth is ancient, and not even the wisest sage could begin to enumerate all the occult traditions and supernatural laws of its prehuman civilizations. But there are many dead cities and cursed ruins in Thule's jungles, and some of these are the result of dabbling in secrets man was not meant to know.

## OTHER WORLDS

If it pleases my lord and sovereign, the Earth is but one world among countless worlds in existence. The infinite depths of space are home to alien planets beyond number, but there are also infinite parallel realities in which different versions of the Earth exist. The most powerful magicians and the most advanced scientists possess techniques to travel to distant stars or into these parallel dimensions. For some reason or another, Thule has had more contact than most lands with these distant spheres.

Some of Thule's sages have attempted to describe these alternate worlds as a "Great Wheel" of metaphysical realms, as elemental planes, or as realms revolving around a universal axis. Most of these philosophical concepts aren't terribly accurate. In Thule's cosmology there are no heavens or hells where souls are given their eternal reward—other worlds can certainly be idyllic or hellish places, but they are every bit as physical as the Earth itself, and subject to physical laws and realities, even if strange and unfamiliar.

## DISTANT SPHERES

The Earth is only one planet among many in the universe. Astrologers have studied the movements of nearby planets such as Venus, Mars, and Jupiter, and know them well. What might lie in the sands of Mars or beneath the clouds of Venus no one knows, but one thing is certainly true: Alien races have come to the Earth from distant spheres on many occasions in the past, and some still visit the world from time to time to this day.

Since the denizens of other worlds have left little record of their travels on Earth, and few (if any) humans have traveled to these spheres, very little is known about them. The Moon is said to be home to a vile race of anthropophagic slavers known as the "moon-beasts," although it is possible that these creatures hail from the moon of an alternate Earth, not Thule's own moon. Saturn (or one of its moons, more likely) is supposedly the home of Tsathoggua, a Great Old One whose crude stone altars can still be found in remote caverns. The black world of Yuggoth lies at the outer edge of our sun's domain, and is home to the fungal creatures known as the mi-go.

Other planets are even more distant. The cursed city of Carcosa, dwelling place of Hastur, stands on a world that orbits the star Aldebaran. Nyarlathotep is said to dwell in the World of Seven Suns near the star Fomalhaut; the dhole-gnawed shell of the planet Yaddith is thought to lie near the star Deneb. Nheb, home of the star-things that lurk on Thule's highest peaks, is a vapor-shrouded moon orbiting a vast world near the star Schedar. No doubt there are dozens of other alien races that have taken an interest in the Earth at one time or another, and left their own dimensional gates or transportation mechanisms hidden in Thule's jungles—but it should be noted that very few humans ever leave the Earth, my King, and none of those individuals have ever been known to return.

## PARALLEL DIMENSIONS

Learned sages and scientists know that some things exist in a different way than the ordinary matter that makes up the world. Creatures such as ghosts or wraiths are not made of the same stuff that earthly creatures are, Mighty King. A student of science might say that such beings simply vibrate or resonate on a different frequency, and thus interact with the world in strange and unexpected ways.

Ethereal beings and objects are still in the world, but they are somehow out of phase. Unseen and intangible, they pass through the world unnoticed. They can dimly perceive the ordinary world around them, but humans that have attained an ethereal state report that they seem to be moving through dense gray mist. A few (thankfully rare) monsters such as the star-things of Nheb seem to be able to shift to and from an ethereal state of existence at will.

Like ethereal beings, astral or dream beings exist

in a different mode than physical beings. To be in astral form is to be pure thought. Astral beings can roam the world as disembodied intelligences, seeing distant places and interacting with others through dreams or visions. Astral beings can also enter dream-worlds, building for themselves astral bodies that mimic their own physical forms even though their own physical bodies lie sleeping or in deep trance somewhere in the real world.

Finally, some sages suggest there may be a supernal dimension or plane, a level of existence on which the gods and their servants dwell. Whether or not this is simply another form of astral existence, only the gods could say, but celestial palaces and heavenly domains do not seem to exist in the physical world.

## ALTERNATE EARTHS

In addition to the numberless worlds scattered throughout the infinity of the starry night, Thule's sages have confirmed the existence of many different Earths.

It seems there are many realities in the cosmos, O King, and Earth—or a different version of it—exists in many of these alternate realities. Beings that are apparently terrestrial in nature but clearly came into existence in different worlds may be natives of an alternate Earth, not an alien planet. Devices of powerful magic or advanced science can serve as doors between these different realities, allowing creatures to move from one to another at specific crossing-points.

Of these alternate earths, the most well known is the world of Faerie. It is much like Thule's earth, but innately magical, and peopled by strange creatures and powers that occasionally take an interest in the human world. Crossing points to this alternate world seem positively commonplace, at least in legend—every dark hill or lonely glen might harbor a secret door to the faerie world. Many educated Thuleans laugh at such stories, but there is no doubt that this otherworld exists, since the elves came to Thule from this realm many centuries ago.

The world of Shadow is likewise closely bound to Thule, and is innately magical in a dark and deadly way. By all reports, the shadow-Earth is a cold and gloomy realm, sparsely peopled; life itself is slowly leeched away from those who linger too long. Necromantic energy infuses this reality—things do not stay dead for long in this otherworld, and Thulean mages who wish to meddle with the nature of life and death sometimes draw upon this dark power.

Dozens of additional alternate worlds or realities are known to exist or are hinted at in the oldest and most terrible grimoires. These seem to be more distant from or out of alignment with Thule's Earth, and thus less accessible. Some of these include:

Tanar is a hellish world (or group of worlds) that is home to the swarming hordes of demonkind.

Lanka is the original home of the rakshasas, a place of steaming jungles and titanic fortresses.

## THULE'S COSMOLOGY: SOURCE, NOT DESTINATION

Thule exists in a universe that is more scientific and less magical than most fantasy settings. The stars are really stars, and they're sometimes thousands of light-years distant. Metaphysical or elemental planes of existence aren't really a part of the setting. On the rare occasions that Thulean PCs leave the Earth, they're usually physically traveling or teleporting to another planet, or moving to an Earth of an alternate reality. Cosmology is therefore more important as a way of describing where things come from, not where PCs can go.

In general, most extraplanar monsters or races you wish to use in your game just come from alternate Earths. Fire elementals or salamanders come from a version of Earth where volcanism runs amok and fire magic prevails. You can assume that there are Gehenna-like or Tarterus-like versions of the Earth where creatures such as night hags or demodands rule, or "fiendish" versions of beasts and monsters dwell. But in a setting where barbed devils might meet mi-go, it's useful to have a unified explanation of how these things fit in the same multiverse.

Nifhel is a dark and frozen orb ruled by giants or titans with powers of darkness and cold.

Kaf is home to the hidden race of genies. It is said to be a world of deserts, mountains, and ruins.

Your humble scribe wishes that he could relate more than this meager handful of hints and whispers about other worlds, but these things are only recorded in the rarest and most perilous of tomes, my King. There are many more worlds hinted at, but it is hard to say whether two books refer to the same place by different names or use the same name for many different places.

One thing is known: Powerful magic (or advanced science) can sometimes pull natives of these alternate worlds into Thule and bind them to service. Wizards do so at their own peril—the farther into the cosmos one reaches, the less likely it is that what one calls up can actually be controlled. Again, my King, I must urge you not to pry too deeply into these matters.

## IN CLOSING

Your humble servant thanks you a thousand times for your kind attention, Mighty King. If some unimportant detail or rumor escapes your keen perception, the fault lies entirely with this unworthy scribe. As you have commanded, all the notes and sources from which this discussion was drawn have been faithfully copied and bound with this tale; you will find them in the following chapters.

In the following pages many of your questions will doubtless find their answers. But as one who has had the privilege to visit the primeval continent in your Supreme Majesty's service, allow me to add this final remark: My words do not do justice to Thule.

Should you choose to voyage to its shores, you shall see wonders—and, possibly, terrors—unimagined in the tamer lands of the Earth. Read on, my King, and learn more of what awaits you in Thule!



## 2: HEROES OF THULE

*Many are the dangers of the primeval continent—terrible beasts, savage tribes, cities riddled with thievery and murder, and elder horrors lurking in the desolate places of the Earth. The people of Thule, whether they are barbaric nomads or civilized city-dwellers, live in a world where deadly threats may strike at any moment. In this savage land every man and woman, from the humblest laborer to the richest noble, goes armed and stands ready to fight for his or her life.*

It has always been true that the most difficult challenges provide the best opportunity for people to show their worth. The average Thulean tribesman is inured to physical hardships and routinely deals with lethal predators that few other people could possibly survive. The typical city-dweller might spend her days working as an artisan or shopkeeper, but she has had to defend herself with cudgel or blade many times, fighting off robbers or rivals. Compared to the common people of most settings, the common folk of Thule are fearless, tough, and exceedingly warlike. Survival in the primeval continent demands no less.

In a world so accustomed to brutality and danger, heroes are extraordinary specimens indeed. Just about every member of a barbarian tribe may be a dangerous warrior, but the one who decides to wander off and seek her fortune in the lands of civilization? She must be something special indeed—a lithe saber-tooth cat in human form, with the reactions of a cobra, the speed of a gazelle, and the keen senses of a timber wolf. There are a thousand tough and fearless barbarians in Thule, after all, but she's the one who is worth telling stories about.

Not all heroes act heroically, of course. The world of Thule is a crueler and more primitive place than most other settings. In Thule, one should think of a "hero" as a character that is worth telling stories about, not someone who acts altruistically or battles evil for the sake of the common good. This is a world of mercenaries and freebooters, not champions of good . . . although more than a few Thulean heroes do indeed find themselves forced to confront the worst evils imaginable.

## RACES OF THULE

Many different peoples live in Thule. Humans of various tribes or ethnic groups are scattered across the continent, and vastly outnumber the people of other races—this is an age of humans, after all. But humankind is a young and barbaric race, and they still share Thule with peoples such as dwarves, elves, or halflings.

This section provides an introduction to the character races found in the PRIMEVAL THULE setting. Atlanteans are a new character race native to Thule; they are human, but they possess a unique cultural heritage and new racial traits and powers. A discussion of Thule's other human tribes follows, along with a description of Thule's elves, dwarves, and halflings.

## ATLANTEAN

A dying race, Atlanteans were once the most advanced and powerful people to be found anywhere on the Earth. The great empire of Atlantis was fabulously rich, and Atlantean magic and technology made the island empire a realm of marvels in an otherwise

brutal and primitive age. But a little more than three hundred years ago, Atlantis was destroyed in a terrible cataclysm. Nine out of ten Atlanteans were erased from existence in a single day, breaking the worldwide dominance of the Atlantean race.

While the vast majority of Atlanteans died with their empire, some survived the destruction. The Atlanteans were a race of far-traveling mariners, and thousands of sailors and merchants were far from Atlantis on the day of doom. They were also conquerors and colonizers who controlled vast domains on the continents surrounding the Atlantean Ocean, and thousands more Atlanteans lived in these overseas possessions. The Atlanteans of the current day are descended from these travelers and colonists.

Atlanteans have lost much of their vast lore and advanced technology, but they are still a powerful force for good or evil in the world. Proud, audacious, self-reliant, and industrious, they work to preserve the fading glory of Atlantis and recover what they can of its lost sciences and arts. Some Atlanteans use this lore to guide (or dominate) the less-advanced peoples around them, hoping to rebuild Atlantis in a new home. Others recognize that the time of Atlantis has passed, and work to pass its knowledge to younger civilizations where it may do great good.

## PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Atlanteans are fully human, and possess a human range of builds, body types, and features. They form a distinct ethnicity, and can be identified as Atlantean at a glance. They are a tall and handsome people in general, and many Atlanteans are natural athletes. Their skin color ranges from a light copper hue to a deep bronze, their hair is usually dark brown or raven-black, and their features tend to be fine. Their most notable features are light-colored eyes in hues that are rare among other humans: gray, green, an icy pale blue, or even a bright gold. The contrast between the light-colored eyes and the copper or bronze complexion is often quite striking.

Because Atlanteans are declining in numbers, more and more have married into the general population of Thule. Classic Atlantean features are becoming hard to find, although the wealthiest and most powerful families are more likely to preserve the old bloodlines.

## ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

Atlanteans value knowledge and learning above all things. Even the most martially inclined Atlantean is not just a muscle-bound soldier—he or she is a student of combat and strategy, drawing upon centuries of martial philosophy. Atlanteans believe that every human endeavor can be studied, critiqued, and advanced through the application of logic and scholarship. The history of Atlantis was a triumph of progress in science, magic, war, and the arts, and now



that Atlantis is no more, the surviving Atlanteans strive to preserve and spread this philosophy to the other peoples of the world.

Because Atlanteans ruled over much of the Earth for so long, they see themselves as more intelligent and capable than other people. They are the “kings of men” in the parlance of the old empire, and they naturally see themselves as leaders. Atlanteans are proud, confident, and strong-willed, and often expect some amount of deference from people who do not share their education or incisiveness. At best, this attitude comes across as haughty or patronizing. At its worst, it is a belief system of racial superiority that empowers Atlanteans to dominate weaker peoples. However, many Atlanteans believe that the advantages they enjoy also carry an obligation to work to make the world a better place; more Atlanteans are compassionate teachers than arrogant conquerors.

Atlanteans are not especially pious. Their cultural heritage of scientific learning and technological advancement makes it easier for them to have faith in their own abilities instead of seeking divine patrons to protect them. Many people believe that the tragic fate of Atlantis was the gods’ punishment for this hubris, although few Atlanteans would agree. Those Atlanteans who are religious usually regard Asura, Mithra, Nergal, and Tiamat as the most important deities, and venerate them above all others. Asura in particular was viewed as the patroness and protector of Atlantis, and even though Atlantis is gone, her people still look to the dawn for inspiration.

## ATLANTEAN COMMUNITIES

The nation of Atlantis is now gone, and there are very few places in the world where Atlanteans live in their own isolated communities. In this new age, Atlanteans are most often found as minority populations within the cities or lands of other human peoples. Over the long centuries of Atlantis’s preeminence, Atlanteans living overseas naturally enjoyed significant advantages of wealth and political power in the empire’s various colonies. These advantages are not what they once were, but they still exist—Atlantean families are often titled nobles, successful merchants, or powerful politicians or military leaders.

Atlanteans are especially common in the city-states of Katagia, Marg, Orech, and Quodeth.

## ROLEPLAYING AN ATLANTEAN

When you play an Atlantean character, you are playing someone who is richer, more influential, and better-educated than most of the people he or she meets. Whether you regard these advantages as your birthright or as privileges you must earn through your own deeds is up to you.

**Seek knowledge for its own sake.** Your people are the living examples of the maxim that knowledge is power. Most Atlanteans cultivate a keen interest in many different things—ancient history, the natural sciences, war and strategy, commerce, philosophy, the arts, almost any field of study imaginable. Be intensely curious about the world around you, and seek out opportunities to explore ancient mysteries or discover new things.

**Lead by example.** Atlanteans are supremely self-confident. While you are certainly capable of reasoning with people to get them to see why your ideas are best, it has long been a cornerstone of the Atlantean makeup to demonstrate the merit of an argument by living it. When you know you're right, it's time to act, and trust that the success of your actions will argue your point for you. Others will follow when they see you succeed.

**There is always a better way.** Your people's dedication to study and progress has demonstrated time and time again that there is always room for improvement. When faced with an unappetizing choice, you are convinced that a better choice can be found if only you are perceptive enough to find it (or decisive enough to seize it). Question why something is done the way it is done, and look for a better way to do it.

## ATLANTEAN RACIAL TRAITS

While Atlanteans are fully human, they possess a distinct cultural heritage that offers them unique opportunities compared to most other humans in the world. This means that Atlanteans have different ability score adjustments and racial traits than other human characters do.

**Ability Scores:** +1 Strength, +2 Intelligence.

Atlanteans are naturally inclined toward an unusual combination of athleticism and scholarship.

**Age:** Atlanteans are somewhat long-lived compared to most other humans. They reach adulthood by 20, and often live to an age of 120 or so.

**Alignment:** Atlanteans tend to be lawful, believing that societies can be engineered with strong laws and good planning. Whether those laws bring good to all or help the evil to oppress the weak depends on the individual; Atlanteans have been both protectors and conquerors in the past.

**Size:** Atlanteans are Medium creatures.

**Speed:** Atlanteans have a base speed of 30 feet.

**Broad Education:** Atlantean characters begin play with training in any two Intelligence-based skills. Atlanteans are raised with a love of learning and are encouraged to study any subject that catches their interest.

**Headstrong:** Atlanteans gain tactical advantage on saving throws against *command*, *dominate*, *geas*, and *hold* spells. Atlanteans are willful and are used to having their way; when confronted with spells or effects that threaten to master the will with a direct attack, they are difficult to break.

**Wealthy:** Atlantean characters begin play with five times the normal starting wealth for their class, and can purchase common magic items with their starting wealth for 100 gp each. Atlanteans come from wealthy families with a number of heirlooms.

**Languages:** Atlantean characters speak Low Atlantean (the common tongue), High Atlantean, and one bonus language. Atlanteans can choose any common or uncommon language they want, but not rare or secret languages (see Languages in Chapter 1). They can read and write in any language they know.

## HUMAN

A young and vital race, humans are not far removed from the primordial savagery of their beginning times. In fact, many humans still live as savages, with no tools or technology other than wood, stone, or fire. There are many different races or ethnicities of humans scattered throughout the unexplored wilderness of Thule and its neighboring lands, but five are particularly important: the Atlantean, Dhari, Kalay, Lomari, and Nimothan peoples. The Atlanteans are distinct enough to form their own unique subrace, and have already been discussed. The other branches of humanity in Thule are described below.

## HUMAN, DHARI

The Dhari are the prevalent race of central and western Thule. They inhabit the jungles, forests, and hills of the continent's interior basin, especially the regions of Dhar Mesh (from which they take their name) and the dry uplands of Nar. Most Dhari are barbarians or savages, at home deep in their native jungles, but civilized Dhari make up most of the population of cities such as Katagia, Orech, and Thran.

Dhari tend toward medium height, with brown or black hair and eyes of brown or blue; men often grow beards and wear their hair shoulder-length. Dhari are naturally light in skin tone, but most are deeply tanned by lives spent outdoors. They often dress in well-cured buckskin, leather, or hides, and think nothing of stripping down to a loincloth and simple harness for carrying weapons or tools in the steaming humidity of their jungle home.

The Dhari people revere the spirits of nature and see the world as a living thing. Those who live in cities regard the gods simply as particularly important spirits, and honor them the same way they honor the spirits of the forest, the animals, and the elements. Dhari men and women are expected to be strongly self-reliant and independent; they prize freedom and the right to speak their minds or refuse leaders they disagree with. They tend to be direct, honest, and industrious, and compared to other peoples of Thule, they are very modest in their personal conduct—part of self-reliance is self-control, after all.

## HUMAN, KALAY

Most numerous of Thule's peoples, the Kalays were the last of the major tribal groups to migrate to Thule in the time of the continent's population by humans. They are the dominant race of the Kalayan Sea region as well as the Lands of the Long Shadow. Most Kalays are civilized, but some are barbarians, especially those who live in the shadow of the northern glaciers. They form the majority of the population of cities such as Quodeth, Droum, Ikath, and (thanks to one far-wandering tribe of long ago) Akal-Amo on the island of Hellumar. No Kalay tribes can be truly said to be savages—virtually all Kalay settlements have at least some metalworking and simple writing.

Kalays are of short to medium height, and are often lightly built. They have dark hair, dark eyes with a distinct epicanthic fold, and a bronze or golden skin color. Men sometimes grow small beards, but a good number of Kalay men have little facial hair at all. Barbaric Kalays usually dress in furs and leathers, but civilized Kalays favor short, colorful tunics, belted at the waist, with bare arms and legs and a cloak or cape for warmth.

As one of the more civilized races, Kalays are greatly concerned with manners and appearances. They are the most religious (or at least the most observant) of Thule's peoples, and show their reverence for the gods by building grand temples and holding many festivals throughout the year. In conversation they tend to be circuitous and polite, avoiding offensive topics or confrontation. To more plain-spoken peoples such as Dhari or Nimothans, Kalays talk a lot and don't say much.

## HUMAN, LOMARI

The most recently arrived of Thule's human peoples, the Lomari came to the primeval continent only a few short generations ago, migrating from lands over the ocean. They are comparatively few in number and are dominant in only one city, Lomar. There are no savage or barbaric Lomari tribes, but Lomari freeholds and homesteads are scattered throughout the hills south of the Kalayan Sea. Already these outposts are adopting more of the ways of their barbaric neighbors, although it is too soon to say that they have forgotten civilized ways.

Lomari are generally tall and long-legged, although not quite so tall or heavily built as Atlanteans or Nimothans. They have dark complexions ranging from a warm brown to a jet black, with African features, dark eyes, and black hair. Men generally dress in cotton kilts, often dyed in bright colors, while women favor long, sleeveless dresses. Both typically add long, loose robes when faring into cooler regions. Most Lomari men consider themselves warriors and wear arms and armor everywhere outside their homes.

The Lomari are a martial race; war and conquest are the pillars of their society, and civic life revolves

around the honors (and plunder) each warrior wins in the city's endless campaigns. In personal dealings, the Lomari tend to be courteous, honorable, and generous. They are nearly as pious as the Kalays, and as moderate in behavior as the Dhari. However, Lomari are very proud and can be quick to take offense; a Lomari is likely to respond to an insult by challenging the offender to a deadly duel.

## HUMAN, NIMOTHAN

Fierce warriors of the northern lands, Nimothans are a people without a homeland. The island of Nimoth now lies under the encroaching glaciers, and for decades the old kingdom of the Nimothan people has been abandoned to the ice. Migrating southward, the Nimothan tribes have carved out new lands for themselves along Thule's northern coasts in places such as Nim, Rime, and the chiefdoms of the Thousand Teeth with bloody axes and burning brands. A southerly branch of the tribe conquered old Atlantean holdings in southern Thule long ago, and now makes up most of the population of the predatory city of Marg. However, even city-dwelling Nimothans are barbarians at heart, scorning civilization and its decadent ways.

Nimothans are tall and strongly built; the average man is more than 6 feet in height, and it's not unusual for Nimothan women to reach 6 feet as well. They are very fair-skinned, although those who travel extensively in southerly lands can eventually acquire a light tan. Their hair is light brown, blond, or red, and their eyes are usually blue or gray. Nimothan men take pride in growing the largest beard or mustache they can, and both men and women usually braid their hair.

Bold, boastful, and given to extravagant gestures, Nimothans laugh loudly, fly into sudden rages, fall into crushing melancholy, or hurl themselves into mad ventures at the blink of an eye. Most other people in Thule are convinced that the Nimothan race is touched by madness. Nimothans are quick to settle differences with contests of strength, fisticuffs, or edged weapons, but they rarely hold grudges for long.

## OTHER HUMAN TRIBES

The ports of Thule attract merchants and mercenaries from many far lands. They are strangers in Thule—their homelands lie in the mysterious islands beyond Hellumar or on the vast, unexplored continents of the Atlantean Ocean.

The **Bytha** come from small, barbaric kingdoms along the eastern shores of the sea. They are slight of build, with fair skin and brown or black hair. Small numbers of Bythan sailors and fishermen inhabit the Isle of Bones.

To the southwest, the forests of Umn Tsav are home to countless nomadic **Umni** tribes. These simple hunters and gatherers have no metalworking. Most Umni tribes are peaceful, but some are territorial or even warlike. Umni tend to be short and strongly built, with deep bronze skin, dark eyes, and black hair.

North of Hellumar lies the great Borean Archipelago, largely unexplored by Thuleans. A strange people known as the **Hyperboreans** lived there once, but ice covered those lands long ago. A few surviving Hyperborean clans linger in Hellumar, and sometimes individuals visit the temple city of Akal-Amo. They are exceedingly tall—often 7 feet or more—and fair-skinned, lean and lanky, with yellow or white hair and pale eyes.

## DWARF, THULEAN

Secretive masters of stone and iron, dwarves are a race of arms-merchants and mercenaries. They dwell in Thule's mountains, carving hidden holds from the living rock. Outsiders are strongly discouraged from seeking out their homes—sometimes with deadly force. Only the fortress-city of Kal-Zinan, the City of the Iron Gate, welcomes visitors of other races, and even so these guests are watched constantly. But many human traders and warriors gladly endure dwarven suspicions to seek their help, because Thulean dwarves are the only smiths in the world who know the secret of working steel.

Dwarven weaponsmiths and armorers do not simply sell their prized work. They make each piece as a specific commission, and it's not unusual for the weaponsmith to stipulate that on the wielder's death, the arms or armor are to be recovered and returned. Some dwarf weaponsmiths go so far as to require the recipient to accept a brand or tattoo matching a smith's mark on the blade, to indicate that he or she has been specifically granted the right to carry and wield the smith's work. Convincing a dwarven smith to make arms or armor for another's use might involve presenting the smith with a rich gift, performing a great service for the smith, or earning a reputation of skill or heroism such that the smith would be proud to arm a hero of that caliber. Dwarves have been known to hire thieves to steal back blades that fall into the wrong hands, or assassins to kill those who misuse them.

Dwarves excel in all other forms of metalwork, of course, and dwarven merchants frequently travel to the larger and wealthier cities or barbarian tribes to trade tools, utensils, and fabrications of high-quality iron and bronze. Other dwarves form mercenary companies and fight for pay; unlike most other sellswords, dwarves are rigorously strict in honoring their contracts and requiring their employers to do the same. As a people, dwarves are careful to stay neutral in the affairs of other races, and take sides only when they are well paid to do so.

Dwarven culture places great importance on mastering trades. Dwarves have almost no hereditary titles; instead, most dwarven communities are led by a council of the oldest and most experienced masters of important trades. They are a pious and respectful people, and regard Tarhun, Nergal, and Kishar as the special patrons of their race.

Taciturn and hardworking to a fault, dwarves are difficult to befriend—but if one is fortunate enough to win a dwarf's friendship, he will find that a dwarf is a friend of exceptional loyalty and generosity.

## THULEAN DWARF SUBRACE

The dwarves of Thule are a subrace not found in other worlds. In addition to the racial characteristics common to all dwarves, Thulean dwarves have the following traits.

**Ability Scores:** +1 Strength or +1 Wisdom.

**Alignment:** Thulean dwarves are calculating and mercenary; they rarely act outside of their own self-interest. However, they understand that dealing unfairly with others is likely to be bad for business in the long run. As a result, they tend toward neutral alignments.

**Secret of Steel:** After purchasing starting equipment, choose one of the character's items (armor, shield, or weapon). That item is made of superior dwarven steel, and is treated as a magic item with a +1 bonus. If the item is lost or destroyed, it can be replaced the next time the Thulean dwarf character returns to his or her homeland, or gains a level. If the character is 10th level or higher, the item has a +2 bonus.

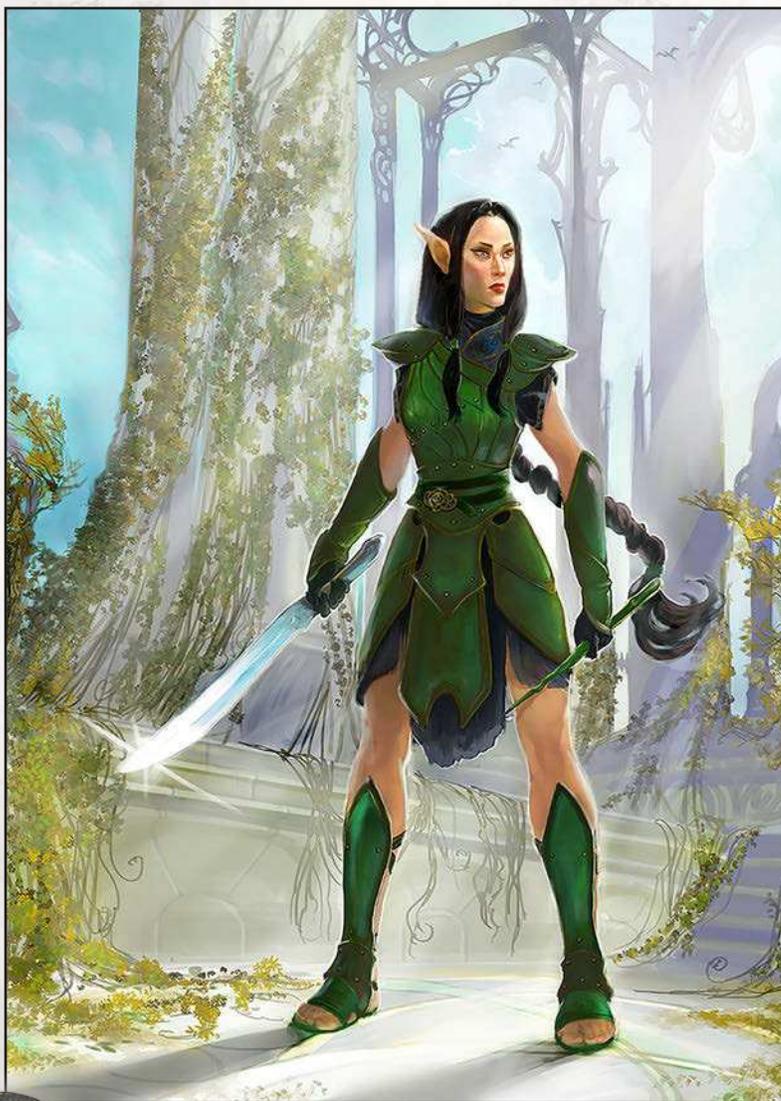
**Languages:** Thulean dwarves speak Dwarven and Low Atlantean (the common tongue). They may or may not be literate (see Character Class and Literacy, later in this chapter).



## ELF, THULEAN

The elves of Thule are a fading people, sinking deeper and deeper into dreaming lassitude with each passing year. Before the rise of Atlantis they were one of the dominant cultures of the continent, but as human civilization arose and grew strong, elven civilization grew old and decadent. The mighty elven kingdoms are long gone, leaving only a handful of crumbling city-states and lonely strongholds where the last vestiges of this once-great race pass their days in reverie and ennui.

Elves are few in number and have generally moved past a life of doing to a life of being. They love learning, study, reflection, and things of beauty. The great works of the elven race in the current day are now songs, studies of nature, and philosophical constructs that reveal the meaning and purpose of existence. They have little use for gods, and generally ignore human deities. The one practical talent in which elves still excel is magic; long ago, elves discovered and explored arcane lore, and much of Thule's arcane tradition is based on this ancient elven knowledge.



Some elves find themselves cast in the role of tutors and mentors to the younger peoples of Thule, and in that role they can excel—but many other elves are so enmeshed in their own dreamlike concerns that they see little reason to engage in the mortal world at all. Others, such as the decadent nobles of Imystrahl, have embraced the worst excesses of hedonism or cruelty in order to impart some meaning, no matter how dark, to their empty existences.

Elven heroes, of course, are made of different stuff. They are exceptional members of their race, throwbacks to the days when elves battled terrible monsters for mastery of Thule. Some fight to protect the weakening enclaves of elven culture that remain in the world, some adventure to experience something new in their own long centuries of life, and still others seek to find the vitality and ambition in other races that their own people have lost.

## THULEAN ELF SUBRACE

The elves of Thule belong to the high elf subrace. They possess the abilities and traits of high elves found in other worlds, except as noted here.

**Alignment:** Like the elves of many other worlds, Thulean elves value freedom and individuality. However, most are self-centered and disinterested in the troubles of others, and many regard other peoples with open contempt. Thulean elves are usually chaotic in alignment, and most are neutral or evil.

**Languages:** Thulean elves speak Elven and Low Atlantean (the common tongue). They can read and write in any language they know.

## HALFLING, THULEAN

Natives of the forests and jungles of Thule's steaming interior, halflings are a barbarian people who build no cities and regard the ways of civilization with suspicion. They are the undisputed masters of stealth and woodcraft, using the terrain of their chosen homeland to easily avoid larger enemies. In fact, halflings are so good at avoiding people they do not want to meet that many civilized Thuleans consider stories of tribes of child-sized people living in Dhar Mesh or Phoor to be mere fables.

Halflings have a reputation for being shy and suspicious of strangers, but this is not entirely deserved. They are often quite friendly and hospitable to strangers, once they have determined that the strangers are not enemies. They are happy to trade with people they trust, and more than a few jungle traders have become rich by bringing good metal tools and weapons to halflings with gemstones and ivory to trade. However, halflings are deadly foes to enemies foolish enough to venture into their territory. They are masters of ambush and poison, pelting invaders with a rain of envenomed arrows from the jungle shadows.

Like other savage peoples, halflings know little of gods or arcane matters. Instead, they learn the secrets of nature spirits, calling upon them to help protect and nourish the tribe. They are deeply religious in their own way, and are often shocked to learn that civilized people are ignorant of the nature spirits. Curiosity about other people and no small amount of wanderlust encourage halfling adventurers to overlook the ignorance and bad manners of most humans.

## THULEAN HALFLING SUBRACE

The halflings of Thule belong to a subrace not found in other worlds. In addition to the racial characteristics common to all halflings, Thulean halflings have the following traits.

**Ability Scores:** +1 Wisdom. Halflings are perceptive and deeply reverent of their forest spirits.

**Alignment:** The halflings of Thule are a barbarian people who place freedom and individual honor above obedience to authority. They are also some of the kinder and more generous people to be found in the savage continent, although simple survival dictates a certain amount of reclusiveness in dealing with Thule's more aggressive races. Most Thulean halflings are chaotic neutral or chaotic good.

**Masters of Woodcraft:** Thulean halflings can attempt to hide in any forest, jungle, marsh, or swamp setting, as long as they have partial cover or are lightly obscured by their surroundings.

**Languages:** Thulean halflings speak Dhari and Low Atlantean (the common tongue). Most are not literate (see Character Class and Literacy, later in this chapter). Halflings do not have a language of their own, and instead speak a dialect of Dhari, the language of their human neighbors in Dhar Mesh.

## OTHER CHARACTER RACES

No one is certain what—or who—might be hidden in the vast wilderness of Thule. If you want to allow a player to create a character of a less common race, feel free to do so. Perhaps there is an enclave of tieflings or gnomes or what-have-you somewhere in the depths of Thule's unexplored wilderness or on one of the other continents. It's even possible that a character might blunder into Thule through a magical gateway or sinister curse, and might be the only example of his or her race in the world. Characters of unusual races are left to the GM's discretion.

## CHARACTER CLASSES

Thule is a barbaric and superstitious place. Human civilization is young, and the great body of art, literature, philosophy, and technology that underlies classic medieval fantasy worlds is incomplete at best. Libraries full of books, chivalric ideals, organized religions, codes of law and traditions of scholarship—all of these things are absent from Thule, or exist only in the most primitive forms.

Naturally, some character types are more or less common in such a setting than they would be in a more civilized land. Arcane magic is rare in Thule, so there are relatively few arcane spellcasters. If you choose to play a sorcerer or wizard, your character is not one of hundreds of spellcasters thronging a major city; she's one of a handful in the city who have dared to study secrets beyond mortal lore. A party containing more than one arcane spellcaster would be unusual indeed.

**Character Class and Literacy:** The ability to read and write is far less common in Thule than in more advanced settings. Most people raised in civilized lands can at least puzzle out writings they encounter, and a good number of people born to savage or barbarian tribes eventually learn how to read and write if they spend a lot of time in and around civilization. However, you shouldn't assume your character is literate.

To determine whether your character is literate, consult the table below and roll an Intelligence check after you select your character class. If you fail, you can check again each time you gain a level to see if your character picked it up from his or her more civilized companions. If you multiclass, you may use the most advantageous category for your check. In addition, you automatically become literate if you select a feat, skill, narrative, or background that suggests literacy (for example, learning how to scribe scrolls or forge documents, or the Bearer of the Black Book narrative).

**Table 2-1: Character Class and Literacy**

Class	Intelligence check DC
Barbarian	DC 20
Bard	DC 5
Cleric	DC 5
Druid	DC 15
Fighter	DC 15
Monk	DC 10
Paladin	DC 10
Ranger	DC 15
Rogue	DC 15
Sorcerer	DC 5
Warlock	DC 10
Wizard	DC 0

Illiteracy is not necessarily the drawback it might be in more advanced settings. People in Thule expect to interact with a lot of other people who can't read or write, and take appropriate steps. For example, when sending a message, a merchant might actually dictate a message to the runner instead of handing him a written note; the runner simply recites the message when he finds the recipient. Even people who can't read can understand tally marks, or recognize very common symbols such as coin denominations.

## BARBARIAN

As you might expect in a setting of savage wilderness and ancient civilizations, barbarians can be found anywhere in Thule. Barbarians come in two basic varieties: savages and advanced tribes.

Barbarian characters from savage tribes begin their careers as hunters, scouts, or warriors who know little of the lands outside their tribe's hunting grounds. Savage tribes are small and insular (rarely more than a hundred people or so), so relatively few ever wander into civilized lands or become adventurers. Those individuals who do leave their homelands possess unmatched woodcraft and survival skills, and are prized as wilderness guides or trackers. These barbarians may be backwards, ignorant, and superstitious, but they aren't necessarily stupid—given a chance to arm themselves with better weapons and learn the ways of other lands, they are quick to do so.

Barbarians from more advanced tribes tend to know much more about the world outside their homeland. Stories of civilization's riches (and delights) draw many restless barbarian warriors to leave their homelands and seek their fortune as mercenaries—or raiders. Tribes of this sort tend to be strong in numbers, comfortable with practices such as agriculture, animal domestication, and metalworking, and more than a little warlike. Their reputation as fierce warriors ensures plenty of opportunities for employment in Thule's more civilized lands.

The most important part of a barbarian's identity (at least at the beginning of her career) is her tribe. Some of the more notable tribes include:

- **Ammur:** Fierce Dhari hill-clans from Ammurath, south of the Kalayan Sea.
- **Bearslayer:** A tribe of dwarf warriors from the Thousand Teeth.
- **Bolotanga:** A savage Dhari tribe from northern Dhar Mesh.
- **Drangir:** A bloodthirsty Nimothan tribe from Hellumar.
- **Hurgan:** Nomadic Kalay tribes from the eastern shores of the Kalayan Sea who domesticate and ride Thulean elk.
- **Jomurjan:** Kalay nomads who roam the southern portions of the Thousand Teeth and the western parts of the Lands of the Long Shadow.

- **Kyr:** A vicious tribe of Dhari savages from the swamplands of Phoor, notorious headhunters.
- **Narthan:** Nomadic Dhari mammoth-hunters who roam the plains of Nar.
- **Ullathi:** Nimothans who launch sea-raids against eastern Thule each spring.

## BARD

Minstrels and musicians are common enough in Thule's cities, but the heroic bard is not normally found in this setting because arcane magic is so rare. Very few Thuleans dabble in arcane studies—if a character makes any study of magic at all, she's much more likely to be a true arcane caster (for example, a sorcerer or wizard) instead of a dilettante. Elves and half-elves are the primary exceptions to this rule; arcane traditions are noticeably more prevalent in elven culture, so an elf bard would not necessarily be out of place in Thule. Some Atlantean nobles might also have a range of skills, talents, and magical ability best described by the bard class.

## CLERIC

The priesthoods of Thule's city-states are influential, wealthy, and above all mysterious. Each temple is a powerful institution that works to guide the city's rulers in the proper direction, guard against dangerous influences and knowledge, and defend its exalted position at the center of civic life. Most importantly, the temples of the city-states work hard to maintain a monopoly on magical power, safeguarding dangerous artifacts and suppressing unapproved studies of arcane lore. A major temple is a force to be reckoned with in the city's affairs and a law unto itself, with temple soldiers to arrest wrongdoers and temple inquisitors to pass judgment and carry out sentences.

While temples celebrate their deities' holy days and often dispense different forms of charity, they do not exist to proselytize for the gods or to look after the population's spiritual well-being. Thulean priesthoods are more like exclusive societies that are primarily interested in extending their influence, amassing wealth and power, and protecting the population from danger of any sort—including dangerous ideas or innovations. Few are truly altruistic or "good" institutions, although many individual priests aspire to a higher calling and seek to minister to people in need. In centuries past, the influence of the great temples did not extend far from the cities, but in the last few decades some of the larger barbarian tribes (such as the Ammur or the various Nimothan tribes) have also turned toward the worship of the Nine. Priests from these tribes naturally are much less interested in the intrigues and power plays of the city-state temples.

Most priests are administrators and scholars who work to advance their temple's interests, and do not

actually wield any form of divine magic. Clerics form a distinct “inner circle” within each temple priesthood, an elite order of leaders and special agents initiated into the deeper secrets of the temple and entrusted with the power of divine magic. Not all clerics eventually rise to the highest ranks of the priesthood, but any high priest is almost certainly initiated into this inner circle and is therefore a cleric.

Since clerics are so closely associated with the inner circles of the temples they serve, choosing a temple for a cleric character is an important part of building that character’s background. Some good choices include:

- The Winged Tower in Katagia (temple of Asura).
- The High Temple of Ishtar in Quodeth.
- The Golden Hall of Mithra in Quodeth.
- The Hall of a Thousand Victories in Lomar (temple of Nergal).
- The Jade Temple in Ikath (temple of Set).
- The Hall of Broken Shields in Nim (temple of Tarhun).

The various deities of Thule are described in detail in Chapter 1. In addition, two unique cleric domains are found in Thule: the Cosmic Domain and the Ophidian Domain.

## COSMIC DOMAIN

The Cosmic domain deals with the mortal struggle to understand the infinite reaches of space and time. Gods of the cosmos are often among the oldest and most cryptic of the beings belonging to a pantheon, and are frequently described as outsiders or predecessor figures with little interest in mortal affairs. In many cases, they are not even considered deities. They have few worshipers, and are most often sought out by mortals seeking guides or oracles who can lead them to the deep secrets of existence—an impious and reckless ambition at best. In Thule, gods of the Cosmic domain generally consist of Great Old Ones who offer terrible knowledge in exchange for the service of their mortal pawns.

### Cosmic Domain Spells

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	<i>color spray, feather fall</i>
3rd	<i>levitate, see invisibility</i>
5th	<i>blink, hypnotic pattern</i>
7th	<i>confusion, dimension door</i>
9th	<i>summon mi-go*, passwall</i>

\* New spell described in Chapter 7.

**Secret Knowledge (1st level):** When you choose this domain, you learn *dancing lights* and *ray of frost*. You also learn the Arcana skill.

**Uncontrolled Perception (1st level):** You can muddle the perceptions of attackers by giving them



disorienting visions of other realities. When a creature hits you with a melee attack, you can use your combat reaction to cause the creature to make an Intelligence save. On a failed save, the creature becomes disoriented until the end of its next turn. While disoriented, the creature has tactical disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks (but not saving throws). You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum one) per day.

**Turn Extraterrenes (2nd level):** You can use divine channeling to rebuke creatures with the extraterrene subtype. As an action, you brandish your holy symbol and invoke your cosmic patron. Each extraterrene creature within 30 feet of you must make a Wisdom save. If the creature fails the save, you turn it for 1 minute (or until it takes any damage).

**Sphere of Adaptation (6th level):** You can use divine channeling to survive alien or hostile environments. As an action, you cause the environment within 10 feet of you to become tolerable for as long as you concentrate, up to 1 hour. Creatures in the area ignore environmental conditions of extreme cold, extreme heat, high altitude, and poor air quality while they remain in the area. (They do not actually gain resistance to cold or fire, or the ability to survive vacuum.)

**Potent Ray (8th level):** Add your Wisdom modifier to the damage you deal with *ray of frost*.

**Starry Wisdom (17th level):** You gain resistance to psychic damage, and you cannot become charmed or confused (for example, by the *confusion* spell).

## OPHIDIAN DOMAIN

Serpents are powerful symbols for ancient secrets and hidden knowledge. Long ago, the Earth belonged to the reptiles, and the terrible race of serpentmen lingers in the jungles of Thule to this day. In Thule, ophidian gods are pre-human deities who embody many of the fears of primitive peoples: darkness, forbidden lore, black magic, and death. Set is the only such god that survives in the Age of Man.

## DOMAINS AND DEITIES

The deities of Thule have different interests and diverse portfolios. Gods and Great Old Ones appropriate for each cleric domain are listed below.

*Cosmic:* Hastur, Nyarlathotep, Yog-Sothoth  
*Death:* Cthulhu, Nergal, Tiamat, Tsathoggua  
*Knowledge:* Asura, Ishtar, Set, Tsathoggua, Yog-Sothoth  
*Life:* Kishar, Mithra  
*Light:* Asura, Mithra  
*Nature:* Dhuoth, Herum, Kishar  
*Ophidian:* Set  
*Tempest:* Cthulhu, Ithaqua, Tarhun, Tiamat  
*Trickery:* Ishtar, Nyarlathotep, Set, Yga-Ygo  
*War:* Herum, Lorthnu'un, Nergal, Tarhun

## Ophidian Domain Spells

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	<i>serpent fingers</i> *, <i>speak with animals</i> (reptiles only)
3rd	<i>backbiter curse</i> *, <i>ray of enfeeblement</i>
5th	<i>enthrall</i> , <i>feign death</i>
7th	<i>hold monster</i> , <i>polymorph</i> (reptiles only)
9th	<i>cloudkill</i> , <i>snake swarm</i> *

\* New spell described in Chapter 7.

**Bonus Proficiency (1st level):** You are proficient with heavy armor.

**Master of Venom (1st level):** You have resistance to poison damage. In addition, you can create poison from materials at hand. You can create one dose of poison per day, and each dose you create must be used within three days or else it loses its potency (so, you normally have three doses of poison on hand). It takes an action to apply a dose of poison to a weapon (or three pieces of ammunition), and an envenomed weapon remains poisoned for one minute. A creature hit by a weapon coated in your poison must make a Constitution save or take 2d4 poison damage (4d4 poison damage if you are 10th level or higher).

**Charm Reptiles (2nd level):** You can use divine channeling to charm reptilian animals and monsters. As an action, you display your holy symbol and invoke your deity. Each reptilian creature within 30 feet of you must make a Wisdom save. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is charmed for 1 minute or until it takes damage. While it is charmed, it is friendly to you and your allies. A creature with an Intelligence of 2 or less remains friendly to you after the charm wears off, although if you injure it the effect ends.

Reptilian creatures include animals that are reptiles, dragons, reptilian humanoids such as troglodytes and serpentmen, and monsters that are reptilian or part reptile (for example, basilisks, chimeras, medusas, and salamanders).

**Serpent's Eyes (6th level):** You gain darkvision to a range of 60 feet. If you already have darkvision, the range of your darkvision increases to 120 feet.

**Poison Strike (8th level):** You can infuse your weapon strikes with poison. Once per turn when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can deal an extra 1d8 poison damage to the target with that attack. At 14th level, the poison damage increases to 2d8.

**Serpent Shape (17th level):** You can use your action to magically assume the form of a snake. This functions like the druid's wild shape ability, except that you are limited to the following forms: constrictor snake, giant constrictor snake, poisonous snake, giant poisonous snake, and snake swarm. You can use this ability twice, then you must rest to regain two more uses of Serpent Shape.

## DRUID

Most barbarians do not worship the gods of the civilized peoples, but instead venerate the Forest Gods—a vast pantheon of nature spirits and natural forces that they experience every day of their lives. Druids (or shamans) are the chief priests and spirit-talkers of the barbarian peoples, and the tribes' guardians of magic. In many ways, they are the clerics of the barbarians, although no druid commands the wealth or authority of an important priest in one of the city-states; druids advise and guide, they do not command.

Many druids learn the Urgan language, which is dimly understood by some of the more intelligent beasts. Druids in Thule have no secret language or organization of their own—druids of different tribes have little interaction with each other.

## FIGHTER

The furious warriors of the barbarian tribes are perhaps more iconic as the fighting men and women of the primeval continent, but the warriors of Thule's city-states are every bit as fierce and hardy as their barbarian counterparts. This is a warlike land, and every city has its own martial traditions, from the deadly gladiators of Katagia to the disciplined phalanxes of Lomar. Noble charioteers, temple guards, implacable myrmidons, hardened mercenaries, street gang enforcers, adventurers and outlaws of a hundred different descriptions—these are the fighters of Thule.

More than most other characters, fighters are defined by the type of armor they wear and the type of weapons they prefer. Swords, axes, maces, and other instruments of mayhem are just as prevalent in Thule as they are in other settings, but some types of weapon and armor found in high medieval or Renaissance-era settings have yet to be invented in this savage age. For example, the full plate armor and heavy warhorse of the mounted knight, or the rapier and parrying dagger of a city bravo, are not normally found in Thule. Instead, a heavily armored fighter is much more likely to wear a bronze cuirass or a scale coat, and a noble duelist is more likely to fight with a pair of short swords. Refer to Equipment, later in this chapter, for guidance on Thulean arms and armor, and new types of armor and weapons found in the setting.

## MONK

Monks are not normally found in Thule. There is no true monastic tradition among the temples of the Nine Powers, and philosophies of asceticism and seclusion likewise have not yet developed in this ancient age. When Thuleans think of monks or monasteries, they think of strange cults and remote wilderness shrines dedicated to unnamed gods . . . many of which are probably not wholesome objects of worship. There are a few perfectly acceptable wilderness

temples—for example, the Three Pillars Monastery, near the town of Tiyerna—located in spots of special significance to one god or another, but even so the rugged terrain and hostile wilderness of Thule means that these structures are rare, indeed.

Just as monks and monasteries are uncommon in Thule, masters of unarmed combat are likewise few and far between. Some pit-fighters and gladiators specialize in unarmed bouts, and are lethal in unarmed combat. Many of Thule's warriors are exceptional brawlers or wrestlers, and achieve almost as much deadliness without formal training. But no one would mistake a two-fisted barbarian brawler for a disciplined student of the martial arts.

## PALADIN

The ideals of religious devotion, chivalry, self-denial, and self-sacrifice that lie at the heart of the paladin concept are conspicuously absent in most Thulean cultures. This is not a world where the gods inspire people to piety and moderation. Consequently, paladins are almost completely absent from the setting. The larger and richer temples of Thule's cities do recruit warriors to serve the priesthood and defend temple interests, but those individuals would be best described as fighters who simply owe allegiance to a temple (see the Sacred Slayer narrative).

## RANGER

Thule is known as “the primeval continent” for good reason—the vast majority of this land is covered in untamed wilderness. Warriors who master the arts of hunting, skirmishing, scouting, and wilderness lore are therefore some of the most useful heroes around. Many warriors from the tribal peoples of Thule (especially the savage tribes) pursue the abilities of the ranger class, not the barbarian class, proving that stealth and hit-and-run tactics can be even more deadly than the headlong fury of a barbarian charge.

While rangers are commonplace among the tribal peoples of Dhar Mesh or the Lands of Long Shadow, a small number of civilized heroes also study wilderness warfare. Cities such as Lomar or Quodeth are actively trying to tame their frontiers and expand the territory under their control; the settlers and homesteaders who live in these border regions may be civilized in name, but often adopt the ways of their barbarian neighbors. Rangers from these outlying settlements may not be born to their trade as tribal rangers are, but with time they master the same skills and learn to overcome the same enemies.

Both civilized and tribal rangers naturally become very familiar with the specific dangers and enemies native to their home territory, and are highly adept at dealing with these threats. If a ranger designates a favored enemy, the following selections are appropriate:

Home Region	Recommended Favored Enemies
Claws of Imystrahl	Aberrations, elves, monstrosities, minotaurs
Dhar Mesh	Beasts, beastmen, fiends, serpentmen
Hellumar and Nimoth	Fiends, giants, rakshasas, yetis
Highlands of Nar	Aberrations, beasts, gnolls
Kalayan the Golden	Beastmen, minotaurs, serpentmen, troglodytes, undead
Lands of the Long Shadow	Beasts, giants, monstrosities, yetis
Quodeth	Aberrations, undead
Thousand Teeth	Giants, gnolls, monstrosities

## ROGUE

Just ask anyone who spends an hour wandering the streets of Quodeth or Ikath—the cities of Thule are full of thieves. Beggars, pickpockets, cutpurses, muggers, burglars, and simple gangs of street robbers make it dangerous to set foot outside a well-guarded palace or city gate. Few of these vicious criminals could truly be described as heroes, but the boldest and most daring rogues become legendary for their exploits.

While individual rogues may win fame and renown, most Thulean city-dwellers see rogues as vicious gangsters. Large, ruthless, and well-organized thieves' guilds control whole districts in most of Thule's cities. Not all rogues belong to a thieves' guild, but many do, and there are significant advantages to being part of a big organization. A rogue who belongs to a guild always has a safe place to hide in her home city, a source of news and information when something interesting develops, and (in a pinch) allies or muscle who can back her up in case of trouble. Some of the more prominent thieves' guilds include:

- The city of Marg is home to the **Crimson Slavers**, a ruthless alliance of slavers, merchants, and marauders.
- The **Fangs of Set** are an elite brotherhood of holy assassins based in the city of Ikath.
- The **Golden Sea Brotherhood** is a league of corsairs operating from the hidden city of Rime.
- The **Red Furies** are a guild of female thieves who control part of Quodeth's old town.
- The most powerful guild in Quodeth is the **Seven Knives**, a small army of thieves and assassins who control much of the city.

## SORCERER

The average Thulean makes little distinction between the various forms of arcane study. No one knows much about such matters, and the differences between a sorcerer, warlock, and wizard appear academic at best. All three dabble in dangerous lore to do unnatural things; what more does a barbarian freebooter or sharp-eyed

Quodethi rogue need to know about the occult? Thuleans are well acquainted with the old aphorism warning one not to meddle in the affairs of wizards, and they naturally include sorcerers and warlocks with their more scholarly colleagues.

While one arcane spellcaster looks much like another to the typical barbarian or thief, the differences can be important. The arcane tradition of sorcery arises from prehuman races for whom magic was as natural as breathing or eating. In Thule, these prehuman races included genies, rakshasas, and serpentmen, or even extra-dimensional creatures. Humans (and other mortals) seeking to master this dangerous art either have a touch of inhuman blood in their veins, or make use of inhuman artifacts or rites to first transform themselves into something that is not quite human. Any character who becomes a sorcerer is assumed to have already taken this first step, and is now ready to begin testing the limits of his or her ability.

Sorcerers often command special abilities or powers based on their bloodline, although no particular bloodline can be said to be truly common in Thule. Sorcerers with draconic powers generally derive their magic from the forbidden rites of the serpentmen. Sorcerers who wield wild magic gain their ability through the use of genie or rakshasa artifacts.

## WARLOCK

As described under Sorcerer (above), most people in Thule assume that warlocks, wizards, and sorcerers are just different flavors of the same thing. Warlocks, like sorcerers, derive their magic from supernatural beings—but instead of calling upon ancient bloodlines or seeking new transformations, warlocks seek the direct patronage of a powerful supernatural ally, forging a pact or bargain that will forever define the warlock's abilities. Warlocks have become the most numerous of Thule's arcane spellcasters over the last century or two, since the destruction of Atlantis and the increasing senescence of elven civilization have brought about a sharp decline in other forms of arcane scholarship.

The first question for a warlock character is simply: With whom or what did he strike his pact? Most warlocks begin their careers with perilous rituals that establish contact with a powerful patron. Researching or discovering a suitable ritual is a daunting task, and may involve searching through forgotten libraries, visiting sites of arcane power, or stumbling across a forbidden tome. Most would-be warlocks never find what they are looking for, but any character who becomes a warlock has already overcome this first challenge and forged a pact with a supernatural patron.

Pacts for Thulean warlocks include:

- Fey patrons are quite rare in Thule. The powers that rule in Faerie are unconcerned with events in Thule, but sometimes favor warlocks with some amount of elf blood.



- Fiendish patrons are native to alternate worlds, such as demon-haunted Tanar.
- The Great Old Ones are the most common patrons of Thulean warlocks. Nyarlathotep, Tsathoggua, and Yga-Ygo are interested in mortals dabbling with forbidden knowledge and sometimes bargain with them.

## WIZARD

Arcane scholarship is rare in the current age of Thule, but this was not always the case. The high civilizations of Atlantis and the realms of elvenkind considered arcane magic one of the noblest of the sciences, and made extensive study of occult lore. Much of what they once knew is lost forever, but enough remains to make talented students of arcana some of the most powerful and dangerous individuals in the world.

Because arcane lore has faded into the realm of myth and superstition for most Thuleans, it is poorly understood by the masses—and therefore feared. Because all magic is feared, no particular schools of magic or spells are regarded as particularly sinister. Wizards who animate the bones of the dead, conjure demons, or enslave their enemies with insidious enchantments are just doing what wizards do; necromancers aren't considered to be any less acceptable than diviners or invokers. Reckless or destructive

wizards are generally avoided by any who are aware of their reputation, but the value of intimidation only goes so far; if a wizard becomes a major threat to a city, she is likely to attract the attention of assassins or inquisitorially minded priests from the major temples and be put down.

## CHARACTER NARRATIVES

Every hero has a story. Character race describes a hero's natural gifts and talents from early childhood, while character class describes a hero's skills, talents, and pure fighting ability—but neither of these truly describe what the character *does* with his talents and gifts. That's where character narrative comes into play.

A narrative is a description of a character's career, position, or calling in life, a third pillar of character identity that helps you to tell the character's story. Your choice of narrative makes your character different from other heroes who share the same race and class. If your character is a human barbarian, is he a beastmaster with a loyal animal friend? A hunter of the Dhari tribes, skilled in slaying fierce beasts? Or an ice reaver, greedy for blood and plunder? If your character is an elf wizard, is he a far-seeing

soothsayer, a Guardian of the Nine, or a mysterious bearer of the Black Book?

Narrative is also one of the important determinants of your character's place in the world and how NPCs react to him. A NPC can't tell if an expert swordsman is a barbarian, fighter, ranger, or rogue just by watching him fight. In fact, those terms have little meaning to people in the world. But that same NPC can tell at a glance that a swordsman looks and acts like a nobleman, a pit fighter, a raider from the icy wastes, or a vicious street thug. Like character race, narrative is an excellent measure of what is observable about your character, and the kind of first impression he makes.

A narrative provides your character with a modest set of skill or background bonuses that reflect his unique experience and training. As your character grows in experience and the tales of his deeds begin to spread throughout Thule, he may gain other benefits: the high regard and friendship of NPCs who respect individuals of his station, or perquisites such as the power to pass judgment against lawbreakers in his home city or a pirate galley and willing crew ready to join him at his beck and call. But, more importantly, your character's narrative provides you with built-in adventure hooks and tools for developing the story of your character across his or her career. Narrative provides you with friends, family, rivals, enemies, ambitions, questions, and fears—and you can count on your GM using those tools to tailor the PRIMEVAL THULE campaign to your character's story.

## CHOOSING A NARRATIVE

You can choose a narrative for your character at 1st level. This serves as your character background—it's your character's origin story, and describes how other people in the setting see your character. You can only have one character narrative, and usually your choice lasts for the duration of your adventuring career (but see Changing Narratives, below).

Each narrative is available to characters of any race or class, unless it has specific requirements. For example, the Dhari hunter narrative may make the most sense for a barbarian or ranger, but there's no reason you couldn't build a hunter concept around a rogue who relies on stealth and sneak attack to make quick kills, or even a druid who worships spirits of the hunt. On the other hand, the whole point of the Black Book is that its owner possesses arcane power, so a character must be an arcane spellcaster to choose the Bearer of the Black Book narrative.

**Narratives and Backgrounds:** Narrative overlaps the same conceptual space as character background, so don't choose both a narrative and a background. Ask your Gamemaster which system he or she prefers to use in the campaign.

## FOLLOWERS

Many narratives provide a group of followers. Followers come in three basic varieties: elite companies, raiders, or armies. You don't have to pay them or arm

**Table 2-2: Narratives at a Glance**

Narrative	Best for . . .	Description
Atlantean Noble	Fighter, wizard	Hero from an aristocratic family
Bearer of the Black Book	Sorcerer, warlock, wizard	Master of a legendary artifact
Beastfriend	Barbarian, druid, ranger	Hero with an animal companion
Dhari Hunter	Barbarian, ranger, rogue	Savage-born hunter, tracker, guide
Free Blade	Fighter, rogue	Freebooter or mercenary
Golden Sea Corsair	Barbarian, rogue	Bold pirate
Guardian of the Nine	Cleric, druid	Enemy of the Great Old Ones
Ice Reaver	Barbarian, fighter	Berserk warrior from the icy north
Initiate of Mysteries	Cleric	Member of priestly order
Jungle Trader	Bard, rogue	Resourceful explorer and caravan leader
Katagian Pit Fighter	Fighter	Arena fighter or gladiator
Myrmidon	Fighter, ranger	Elite soldier
Occult Scientist	Wizard	Scholar combining studies of magic and weird science
Panjandrum	Cleric, rogue	Judge, agent, or official
Quodethi Thief	Ranger, rogue	Member of a powerful thieves' guild
Sacred Slayer	Cleric, rogue	Holy assassin
Soothsayer	Cleric, wizard	Seer and adviser
Star-Lore Adept	Warlock, wizard	Dabbler in forbidden lore
Tribal Outcast	Barbarian, druid, ranger	Wanderer who can't go home

them—you can assume that the benefit of gaining these followers includes the ability to manage whatever wages are appropriate, provide them with equipment, and see to their room and board. The majority of your followers are members of your own character race, although in certain circumstances (for example, if you are a dwarf panjandrum serving in a human city) you may summon followers of a different race.

Your followers are very loyal and are willing to fight and die for you, but they aren't suicidal. You can order them to take a ship and sail off to cross an ocean that has never been crossed, but they won't obey if you order them to sail with no provisions, or if you simply order them to march into the sea. If you abuse your followers badly (GM's discretion), they may desert; regaining their loyalty may require a special quest.

**Elite Company:** A company is an elite band of warriors who guard you and protect your property and interests when you are not around. You gain a number of followers equal to 6 + your character level + your Charisma modifier. The exact type of followers you gain depend on your narrative.

Usually, one-quarter of your elite company is available to accompany you on adventures, if you ask. Your warriors serve to guard campsites or mounts, but can be pressed into combat if needed. They are difficult to replace if killed (see Replacing Followers, page 159).

An elite company is best used to provide you with a handful of reasonably tough bodyguards for a difficult journey or adventure. However, the GM may modify your XP award for adventures in which you rely heavily on your followers.

**Raid:** Raiders are allies numbering in the scores to the low hundreds of individuals, who join you for a specific task lasting not more than a few days or weeks. You can summon a number of warriors equal to (5 + your Cha modifier) per character level; for example, if you are a 12th-level character with a Charisma of 14, you can summon a raid of 84 warriors. The exact type of follower you summon depends on your narrative.

It usually takes 3 days to gather a raid, and the raiders must be in the general area. If you are in the same city or village as the raiders you wish to call, you can organize a half-strength raid in an hour. You can summon a raid three times per year, although the GM may permit additional uses of the ability in appropriate circumstances.

Raids are best used to meet an unusual challenge in the course of an adventure—for example, countering a large number of low-level enemy NPCs. Raiders normally act at GM discretion and have whatever effect your GM deems appropriate.

**Army or Horde:** When you raise a mighty army, you can summon a number of warriors equal to (your character level + your Cha modifier) × 400; the exact type of follower is determined by your narrative. The army includes sub-leaders, mounts, warbeasts, or special units as appropriate.

It requires at least 1 month to gather your army or horde, and you must be in the homeland of the warriors you are assembling. The army remains together through a full military campaign or effort—for example, a march against an enemy city and the ensuing assault or siege—and may remain in the field for months or longer if the war continues. You can summon an army or horde no more than once per three years, unless the GM decides otherwise.

Summoning an army or horde is usually a world-building event, not a specific adventure (although an army or horde may cause adventures to happen). The GM decides how your army or horde affects the world.

## INCOME

Income derive from a direct stipend, the sale of valuable produce from an estate, rents or royalties for businesses you are entitled to oversee, or your cut of criminal activity in areas you control. You usually can't turn income into powerful magic items or buy mercenary champions to guard you, but it does allow you to sponsor activities or individuals you want to help out.

If your narrative provides a source of income, the amount your character receives is based on his or her character level.

Character Level	High Income
1-10	(level + Int modifier) × 50 gp/month
11-16	(level + Int modifier) × 200 gp/month
17-20	(level + Int modifier) × 1,000 gp/month

Moderate income is one-half high income.

For example, if you are a 10th-level character with an Intelligence score of 16, high income is 650 gp per month, and moderate income is 325 gp per month.

Bank accounts are not exactly common in Thule, but the larger cities are home to counting-houses and moneylenders who can hold sums for you. You might also receive some of your income in the form of property, investments, or ownership shares in different enterprises. A fat purse may not help you much during the typical adventure, but it may make it easier for you to hire specialists such as sages or assassins, live an opulent lifestyle, or sponsor individuals who attract your interest.

## TITLES

Titles are more nebulous than followers or income. After all, the value of the title depends greatly on who you're trying to impress. In general, a high title is a lot like diplomatic immunity; most city guards won't dare to detain or impede your character unless he poses an immediate and obvious threat to someone else of high rank. A title also grants your character access to the

inner circles of power, the ability to gain audiences with rulers or high priests, and a voice in important affairs or decisions—for example, whether the ruler accepts an offer of alliance from another city, or which laws should be passed. Much like an army in your service, a high title is generally not useful for resolving an adventure, but it may make new adventures possible.

## CHANGING NARRATIVES

You can select a new narrative with your GM's permission. Usually this is an important and long-lasting change in your character's fortunes or station. An ice reaver who spends a single adventure as a pirate probably shouldn't change her narrative, but an ice reaver who never intends to go back to the icy wastes in which she was born and sets her sights on becoming a great pirate captain might be ready to change her narrative from ice reaver to Golden Sea corsair. As a rule of thumb, your character must practice the new career or path he or she is following for at least one full character level before actually changing her character narrative.

When your character changes narratives, you lose the benefits of the old narrative and gain the benefits of the new as a character of equal level. For example, if you were a 5th level ice reaver and you change narrative to Golden Sea corsair, you gain the benefits appropriate for a 5th level Golden Sea corsair. (This is why you must spend a level transitioning between narratives.)

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTIONS

The narrative descriptions presented here are organized as follows.

**Key Identity:** This is a quick summary of character races or classes that are especially appropriate for the narrative. For example, a Dhari hunter ought to be a human of the Dhari ethnicity or a halfling (since many halfling tribes also inhabit Dhar Mesh and produce hunters of similar skill). This is not a requirement to select the narrative, only a guideline.

**(Narrative) Benefits:** This paragraph describes the sort of skills, talents, combat edges, or social advantages conferred by the narrative.

**(Narrative) in the World:** This entry explains how NPCs are likely to react to your character, and what sort of status or influence your character is likely to wield because of who he is. It also notes any special enemies or rivals of people like your character.

**Personalizing the (Narrative):** The narrative description concludes with suggestions about specific tribes, organizations, or cities your character may belong to. For example, ice reavers might be Bearslayer dwarves, Khatranir warriors, Hurgan

riders, or Ullathi sea-raiders. These are not intended to be exhaustive lists—there are dozens of barbarian tribes that might produce ice reaver characters. Feel free to invent your own.

## ATLANTEAN NOBLE

The lost realm of Atlantis was an imperial power that ruled over half of Thule for many hundreds of years. Katagia, Orech, Quodeth—all were jewels of greater or lesser value in the royal crown of Atlantis. To this day, a majority of nobles in the cities that were formerly part of the Atlantean Empire still claim descent from highborn Atlantean families. In fact, so much prestige is attached to these old family lines that quite a few noble clans falsely claim Atlantean descent. Your family is above any such base suspicions, of course.

Many Thuleans are born to lives of struggle and want, but not you. You were brought up in a life of luxury and ease that most common-born citizens (let alone jungle savages) could hardly even imagine. You had access to the finest tutors and all the privileges and perquisites of high station. No simple title intimidates you; you have spent your whole life rubbing elbows with lords, princes, and panjandrums. Where you walk, common folk step aside; when you speak, people listen. You wear an invisible mantle of authority and command, and you are used to getting your way.

All nobles of Atlantean descent are human, or at least partly so. Naturally, most are full-blooded Atlanteans and belong to the Atlantean character race. However, in some places the old Atlantean families have intermarried so often with the local populations that the traditional Atlantean features and traits are virtually lost, leaving only a noble name and a family history that stretches back through the centuries. Humans of Dhari or Kalayan descent can therefore be "Atlantean" nobles, too, as can a few rare half-elves. The people of Lomar arrived in Thule after the fall of Atlantis, and never developed any tradition of rule by Atlantean masters. Likewise, no dwarf, elf, or halfling would ever be mistaken for an Atlantean of high birth.

**Key Identity:** Atlantean, bard, fighter, wizard.

## ATLANTEAN NOBLE BENEFITS

The life of a noble is more than outrageous decadence. Most young nobles enjoy the best martial training available, since assassinations, duels, and feuds with rival families are commonplace occurrences in noble life. As your fame grows, you find that mere mention of your name is enough to open almost any door in your homeland, or to set the city's bureaucrats and panjandrums working against anyone who displeases you (other than another high noble, of course). Eventually, you may stand beside the throne as a member of the royal council—or, if necessary, you may take the throne for yourself.

**Skill Training (1st level):** You are trained in History and Persuasion. As a noble, you were instructed in the events that shaped your family's legacy, and learned the arts of diplomacy.

**Urgent Command (1st level):** On your turn, you can use a bonus action to allow one ally within 30 feet of you to make a single melee or ranged attack as a combat reaction. You can use this ability once, and then you must rest to regain it.

**Noble's Grace (6th level):** Your air of nobility and confidence gives you greater influence over other people in positions of power. You have tactical advantage on ability checks or skill checks to interact with nobles and leaders.

**Noble Patriarch (10th level):** You become the official patriarch of your noble house. You are nominated to a seat of power in your home city, appointed to a ruling body, or awarded some similar great honor. You gain access to the wealth of your house and the authority to command its soldiers; you have a high income, and a company of followers equivalent to legionaries (see the sidebar on page 79). At 15th level, your followers improve to veterans.

## ATLANTEAN NOBLES IN THE WORLD

As you might expect, you are a person of great importance in your home city. Since people know you are rich and powerful, they are careful to defer to you in public—most nobles have small private armies that can do what they want to any non-noble who causes trouble. The city's monarch or officials might eventually do something about nobles who are extremely abusive toward their social inferiors, but they might not, so commoners think twice about crossing you.

Noble families in any city constantly maneuver for influence and power, and these rivalries often become quite heated. The worst enemy you possess is probably another noble jealous of your fame or threatened by your success.

## PERSONALIZING THE ATLANTEAN NOBLE

Each of Thule's cities has its own traditions of nobility and trappings of power. Some cities such as Lomar or Rime have no regard for Atlantean descent at all, for example. Consequently, your home city is one of the most important determinants of the sort of noble you are.

**Merchant Prince of Quodeth:** Quodeth is the greatest mercantile power in Thule, and most of its nobles control rich stakes in a variety of industries and trades. Your blood may be blue, but at heart you are a man or woman of business. You own interests in merchant galleys, spice caravans, vineyards, and silk orchards—and you're not afraid to

get your hands dirty if something or someone poses a threat to your little empire.

**Patrician of Katagia:** The city of Katagia is the purest example of Atlantean culture remaining in Thule, and you were raised with the finest education in the arts and sciences of Atlantis . . . especially the arcane arts. Your family is wealthy and powerful, of course, but you understand that the true power of Atlantis was not measured in gold coins and loyal troops, but in *knowledge*. The libraries of Katagia are extensive, but many secrets of Atlantean magic and technology lie hidden beyond the city's walls, and you mean to seek them out.

**Rebel Lord:** Your family represented a threat to the ruler of your home city, so they were driven into exile. Fortunately, your family was able to carry off sufficient treasure to become established in a new home, but someday you mean to return to your native city and see justice done. Which city is your true home? Where did your family find shelter? And why were they exiled to begin with?

## BEARER OF THE BLACK BOOK

The Black Book holds dark wisdom within its pages, for any who dare open it and read the ever-changing ink scrawl within. The Black Book is an artifact, and it's your duty—or curse—to carry it with you and add to its eldritch lore.

You were chosen at an early age by a mentor to bear the Black Book with you throughout your life and add your experience to its pages. The last owner of the Black Book was maddeningly vague about what to write in the book—"when the time comes, you'll know what the book expects you to write down."

Previous bearers of the Black Book have led lives as monster hunters, court alchemists, learned sages, and royal wizards, just to name a few. From time to time, you page through the Black Book and read some of the hundreds of pages already filled. Bookmarks seem to fall out of the Black Book, however, and you swear the pages may be magically rearranging themselves.

Technically, the Black Book is an artifact. It can't be destroyed through ordinary means, and a simple *detect magic* spell will reveal its overwhelming power. But the book doesn't directly make the bearer a more powerful spellcaster, or aid the bearer in combat . . . at least so far as you know. Wizards can use the Black Book as a spellbook if they like (those pages don't rearrange themselves and can easily be found), and any bearer can use the Black Book as an alchemical workbook, a reference for ritual magic, or a notebook for the strange and wondrous things they encounter as they travel across Thule. Beyond its indestructibility, the book's only obvious magical feature is how the pages rearrange themselves from time to time.



With their predilection for spellbooks, wizards are natural bearers of the Black Book, but they aren't the only ones. Any character interested in ancient lore or powerful magic could be interested in the Black Book. More to the point, adventurers are interested to the Black Book itself, assuming that there's some sort of sentience that controls or influences it. Each bearer is supposed to carry the Black Book with them at all times and record key events—some of which may aid subsequent bearers of the Black Book centuries in the future.

**Key Identity:** Wizard, bard, cleric, other spellcasting classes. Among races, humans and Atlanteans are most likely.

## BEARER BENEFITS

The biggest benefit of the Black Book is the lore contained within, every page painstakingly curated by previous bearers. It's not reliable, however; you never know when paging through the Black Book will reveal a new spell, a ritual to close a portal, the recipe for a rare poison, or some other information. You swear sometimes the Black Book knows what you want to know, and consulting its pages can give you the insight you need.

Another "benefit" of bearing the Black Book is the attention it attracts from arcanists and power-brokers

across Thule. Many sages and wizards have heard of the Black Book, mostly because previous bearers were powerful and/or notorious. Bearing the Black Book will grant you entrance to many a cabal of wizards or college of sages.

Not all attention is welcome, however . . .

**Skill Training (1st level):** You are trained in Arcana and History, topics discussed at length within the book.

**Eldritch Power (1st level):** You gain a bonus sorcerer, warlock, or wizard spell slot of the highest level you can normally cast. If you cannot cast spells as a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard, you instead learn *chill touch* and *true strike*; you can use these spells at will. The Black Book holds many arcane secrets.

**Hidden Insight (6th level):** The Black Book can act as a focus and material component for any divination spell. The book is not consumed when used as a material component in this way.

**Secret Lore (10th level):** Once per day, you can cast *legend lore* by simply consulting the book. You need not know the spell or otherwise be able to cast it.

## BEARERS IN THE WORLD

At any given time, there are dozens of cults, conspiracies, and power-mad tyrants who would love to get their hands on the Black Book. From time to time you'll have to fend off unwanted attention—sometimes violently—or go incognito to avoid shadowy figures lurking in the dark.

You have a key ally in your efforts to thwart would-be book thieves, though: the Black Book itself. You were chosen to be the bearer of the Black Book for a reason. In the future, you're going to witness or learn something important to future bearers, and the Black Book wants to help you survive long enough to write in its pages. From time to time, you may open the book to find a warning scrawled in its pages.

As written, it's a lonely task being the bearer of the Black Book, but it's possible to envision an organization devoted to keeping the Black Book safe and learning all they can from its contents. If that organization doesn't exist when you become the bearer of the Black Book, perhaps you're destined to build that organization to aid future bearers. And Thule is a big place . . . who's to say that there isn't more than one Black Book out there?

## PERSONALIZING THE BEARER

Bearer of the Black Book is a more individual, unique narrative than most; you may never meet or hear of another bearer during your time with the book. You were chosen as the bearer of the Black Book for a reason, however. Perhaps you're a bearer because of your connection (through ancestry, mentorship, or admiration) with one or more of the following previous bearers of the Black Book.

**Rubiak the Hunchback:** Royal Wizard to Katagia's Solon III "The Mad," Rubiak was obsessed with countering the Atlantean bastion's territorial losses on Thule by reaching and eventually conquering other worlds and dimensions. It didn't matter how close to Katagia's walls the barbarians got, he reasoned, if his monarch could rule lands beyond the portals he constructed. His writings in the Black Book often concern portal magic . . . and what awaits adventurers in the dimensions beyond those portals.

**Lord Venath:** An advisor to notorious king Zafid Onther of Quodeth, much of Venath's writings in the Black Book involve the secrets of the city-state's noble families. Most of those families would pay dearly (or alternatively, kill without remorse) for those 80-year-old secrets to remain buried. A bearer of the Black Book is thus poised to sow chaos—or a new order—in present-day Quodeth.

**Zar Kuhnel:** Moreso than most bearers of the Black Book, the great sage Zar Kuhnel tried to learn the ultimate purpose of the Black Book and wrote his hypotheses within the book itself. Kuhnel found multiple connections, individually tenuous but collectively convincing, between the Black Book and the Old One Hastur. Whether the Black Book was a tool or an obstacle to Hastur was a question that vexed Kuhnel until his death. You can continue Kuhnel's research, if you dare . . .

## BEASTFRIEND

The tribal peoples of Thule live in a world ruled by beasts both small and great. The predator and prey relationships of Thule's primeval fauna aren't matters of mere academic interest—they are the rulers for survival in this primeval landscape, harsh truths that are written out anew every day in red ink. Most tribal hunters naturally concern themselves with becoming as skillful and efficient as possible in hunting their primary food sources, and avoiding the most dangerous predators that share their environment. For some peoples, this means taming wild beasts that can find, pursue, or flush out prey that otherwise would be impossible for human hunters to manage alone.

You are a loner, more comfortable in the silent company of a loyal animal friend than among people, who are complicated and unpredictable. You see things in the world around you that most others miss, and possess a seemingly supernatural ability to train animals of all kinds.

Beastfriends are almost always people who come from the barbaric or savage cultures of Thule. Learning how to tame (or at least befriend) wild animals takes many years of observation and a keen understanding of the world they live in, and those born in civilization simply don't have the opportunity. Most human beastfriends come from the Dhari or Kalay

tribes—the Lomari are too civilized, and the Nimothans view the natural world as a foe to be conquered. Halflings are especially likely to become beastfriends, since many halfling tribes rely heavily on well-trained animals for both hunting and war.

**Key Identity:** Barbarian, druid, ranger, rogue, halfling.

## BEASTFRIEND BENEFITS

You don't tame beasts so much as empathize with them so they gladly do your bidding. Animals provide you more comfort and companionship than people in most circumstances. You find the simple perspective of beasts preferable to the impulsive or distrustful actions of most so-called civilized people.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You gain training in Animal Handling and Survival, and you learn the Urgan language (see Languages, page 24). You possess an unusual empathy for animals, and you understand how and where they live.



**Animal Rapport (1st level):** You can use the Animal Handling skill to influence both domesticated and wild animals. In general, you can only guide wild animals toward behavior they might normally exhibit anyway. For example, a successful check might convince a predator to head off in search of easier prey, convince a territorial beast such as a muskox to ignore an intrusion instead of charging, or drive herd animals away from danger. If the wild animal is undecided, the DC of the check is 10. If the animal is committed to the behavior you are trying to change, the DC is 20. If you are dealing with a number of creatures at once (for example, a herd or pack), the DC increases by 5.

**Deep Rapport (6th level):** When you use the Animal Handling skill, you charm the animal if you succeed. It remains charmed for 24 hours, until you dismiss it or charm a different animal, or until you or one of your companions harms it.

**Animal Companion (10th level):** You gain a loyal servant in the form of a wolf, panther, raptor, or similar animal. This functions like the ranger's beast companion feature except that you can also choose a Large animal suitable for use as a mount (for example, a riding horse, warhorse, dire wolf, Thulean elk, or giant lizard). Your effective ranger level is equal to your character level -4.

If you are a ranger with a beast companion, you keep your existing companion, but add 2 to your effective level for determining your companion's stats.

## BEASTFRIENDS IN THE WORLD

Even among your tribe, you are poorly understood. Some superstitious tribes mistake the talents of beastfriends for black magic and drive them out, while others assume that beastfriends are spirits in human shape or simply affected by a peculiar form of madness. Beastfriends often find more respect and friendship outside their home tribes, and are highly prized as trackers and scouts by those who aren't worried about superstition.

You have few true enemies—beastfriends are relatively rare individuals, and are often inclined to stay out of other people's business anyway. Your foes are determined by your native tribe, and may include slavers, beastmen, or savage raiding tribes such as the Kyran headhunters.

## PERSONALIZING THE BEASTFRIEND

Beastfriends are most common among peoples that live close to nature—usually, tundra nomads or primitive jungle tribes. The animal you befriend and the tribe you hail from are important parts of your story.

**Ammur Eagle-Caller:** The barbarians of Ammurath sometimes train crested eagles for hunting and war. You were chosen to study this sacred art when you were young, forsaking your clan to join the brotherhood of the eagle-callers. It's unusual for an eagle-caller to leave Ammurath; why do you seek adventure in other lands?

**Daraynian Scout:** You are a halfling of one of the tribes inhabiting the Darayn Peninsula, on the southern shore of the Inner Sea. Beastfriends may be unusual in other lands, but many Daraynian warriors learn the ways of training battle-companions and hunting-beasts; you aren't all that special in your homeland. In a world filled with dangerous predators and hostile enemy tribes, the animal companions of you and your fellow Daraynian warriors help to even the odds in battle.

**Phoorean Packmaster:** Not all beastfriends win the loyalty of their animal companions through kindness and patience. The lash works too, and in Phoor beastfriends use pain and intimidation to break wild animals to their will. Phoorean packmasters drive bands of vicious hyenas or hungry wolves into battle ahead of their fellow tribesmen, spreading confusion and panic among the tribe's enemies. Some packmasters choose to sell their services to the sort of employers who aren't picky about who they hire, as long as they get results.

## DHARI HUNTER

The jungles and plains of Thule are home to plentiful game animals, but few of these creatures are easy kills. Creatures such as the giant elk, the Thulean sloth, or the woolly mammoth sell their lives dearly. Worse yet, hunters who venture into the wilds risk becoming the prey of the even more dangerous predators that hunt the same game the hunters seek. Only the bravest men and women dare to hunt in the wilderness of Thule—and you are one of them.

Leading a life close to nature, you are quick, keen-eyed, inured to hardship, and intimately familiar with the plants and animals of your favored hunting grounds. Your spear or bow is your companion; you are fearless in the face of any wilderness hazard or natural danger. Few indeed can match your woodcraft or your endurance.

Most of the Dhari tribes are humans of Dhari descent. However, there are a few halfling tribes who roam the deep forests of Dhar Mesh, and share a similar lifestyle, so you could easily be either human or halfling. Humans of other nationalities are generally too civilized to master the hunter's skills to the same extent as a native of the forests, but some do. Kalay or Lomari hunters are likely to be individuals who pursue dangerous game to harvest valuable pelts or ivory, as opposed to hunting for basic subsistence. It

is a dangerous way to earn a living, and by necessity they must learn the same skills that savage hunters do. Dwarves and elves rarely become hunters, since they aren't tribal societies and don't often practice the trades of trapping or ivory-hunting.

**Key Identity:** Human (Dhari or Kalay), halfling, barbarian, ranger, rogue, druid.

## DHARI HUNTER BENEFITS

Hunters of the Dhari tribes are expert trackers, patient stalkers, and skilled at setting ambushes. As you might expect, hunters rely on a deadly first strike to swiftly kill or incapacitate dangerous game—you don't get many second chances when you attack a Thulean sloth or a cave bear. As you gain in experience and begin to build a record of notable deeds, you find that the tribes of the jungle, both friend and foe, have heard of your skill and respect you for your bravery. In time, you may become a great chief of your people, a champion in war and a wise leader in peace.

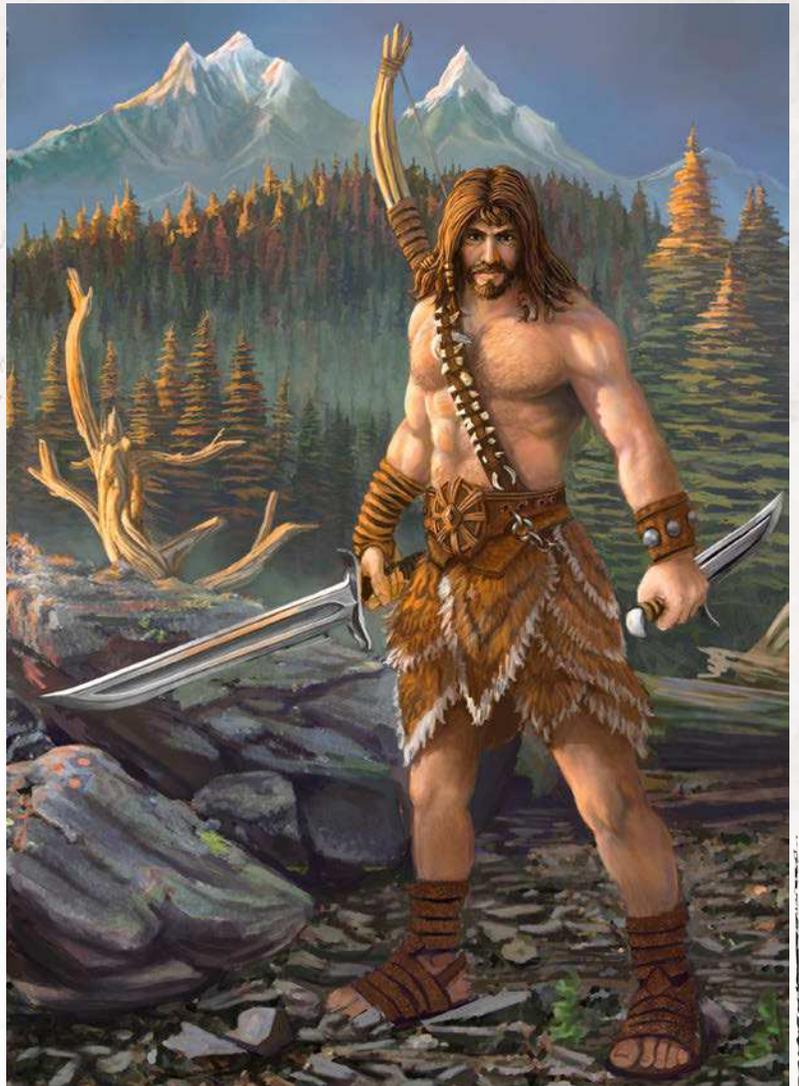
**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Stealth and Survival. To be a successful hunter, one must understand every aspect of game behavior—including what else might be hunting the game you seek—but the first rule of the hunt is to not let yourself be seen, heard, or smelled by the beast you are stalking.

**Hunter's Strike (1st level):** When you attack a target that is not aware of you or has not acted yet in the encounter, you can choose to perform a hunter's strike. You gain tactical advantage with the strike, and if you hit, you deal maximum damage with your weapon.

You can use Hunter's Strike once, and then you must rest to regain it.

**Hunter's Instinct (6th level):** You possess an uncanny ability to notice animals and anticipate their behavior. You gain tactical advantage on all skill checks made against animals, including Perception checks to spot hidden animals, Survival checks to follow animal tracks, or Nature checks to identify rare animals and their abilities.

**Dhari Chieftain (10th level):** You become the chief of your tribe or establish a new tribe of your own. You gain sufficient followers to call for raids (see Followers, under narrative benefits); your followers are equivalent to tribal warriors. Your tribe numbers a couple of hundred warriors, spouses, and children, and your tribal lands cover about 1,000 square miles. In its own lands, your tribe is almost impossible to locate or attack, and it is quite capable of getting along without you for long periods of time if you continue to adventure.



## DHARI HUNTERS IN THE WORLD

Naturally, you are held in high honor by your own tribe, and by all who are friendly to your tribe. In addition, you may enjoy a reputation as a guide or tracker of great skill. Anyone contemplating an expedition into the jungles of Dhar Mesh or the plains of Nar would be wise to retain the services of a Dhari hunter.

Thule's savage beastmen are mortal enemies of the Dhari peoples, and they especially hate you. Most beastmen attack you on sight, and everyone with you. It is a rare day when you meet a beastman and no blood is spilled.

## PERSONALIZING THE DHARI HUNTER

The Dhari people are made up of scores of different tribes, most of which rely heavily on the talents of their hunters and trackers.

**Bolotanga Windrunner:** You are a member of the Bolotanga tribe of northern Dhar Mesh. Your people are skilled hunters and warriors like all Dhari, but they also possess a deep and abiding reverence for the primal spirits. You strive to live in harmony with nature, to understand the place of your people in the life of the forest and to defend the forest with your own life if need be.

**Kyran Headhunter:** Most Dhari tribes are fierce warriors, but they rarely attack people who haven't given them offense. Not so the headhunters of Kyr; this vicious tribe aggressively raids and plunders every land within their reach. Bands of Kyran headhunters have waylaid travelers on the road to Thran, burned villages as far east as Ry Mar, and even slipped over the walls of Ikath to murder people in the streets. You are a member of this tribe, savage even by Thule's brutal standards.

As the name suggests, your tribe often takes the heads of especially noteworthy enemies (or victims) and brings them back to Kyr as grisly trophies. The skills you learned to stalk and bring down big game are just as useful in stalking and ambushing enemies. Are you proud of belonging to one of the toughest and most fearsome tribes of Thule's jungles? Or were you sickened by the bloodlust and savagery of your people, choosing self-exile?

**Narthan Mammoth Hunter:** You belong to one of the Dhari tribes native to the plains of Nar, not the jungles of the Inner Sea. You have little experience with the jungle, but you are familiar with the beasts and the terrain of the wide savanna. Mammoths are the most dangerous of all beasts regularly hunted by humans, so you are naturally the bravest and most daring of all the Dhari tribes. Mammoth hunters have a reputation for recklessness and risk-taking that even the steadiest jungle tribesman would never consider; you literally laugh in the face of danger.

## FREE BLADE

Mercenary, wanderer, outlaw, fortune-hunter, free-booter—the cities of Thule are full of hard-nosed adventurers ready to earn a living with a strong sword-hand. Monarchs and nobles are always looking for skilled soldiers, merchants need bodyguards, and forgotten treasures lie waiting for the audacious explorer bold enough to dare deadly jungles and cursed ruins and claim them. The free blade is a true soldier of fortune, a sell-sword who may try out a dozen different careers as he or she searches for that one bold stroke that might make a mercenary into a lord . . . or even a king.

Whether you're a professional mercenary with a careful eye for the odds or a bored barbarian looking for adventure, you keep your sword loose in the scabbard and your coinpurse where you can see it. You're ambitious, resourceful, and pragmatic—all

the gold in the world is worthless to a dead man. Above all, you are a great believer in the power of opportunity. No matter where you are or what you're doing, you never stop looking for your next big chance. If it involves making enemies or breaking laws, so be it.

Fighting skill is the stock in trade of the free blade—anyone following this path must be handy with weapons and willing to fight for pay. Free blades come from almost any culture or background. Some are wandering barbarians, some are desperate street thugs trying to get ahead, and a few are highborn swordsmen or swordswomen forced by family circumstances to carve out their own place in the world. Even nonhumans such as dwarven mercenaries or elven duelists are found in this opportunistic trade.

**Key Identity:** Barbarian, fighter, ranger, rogue.

## FREE BLADE BENEFITS

Even if you're just beginning your career, you've already been to more places and seen more things than most people. Free blades are defined by their wanderlust; you're familiar with a lot of different places, you have a knack for languages, and you have an uncanny ability to fit in wherever you find yourself. As a veteran of many skirmishes, riots, and tavern brawls, you have learned how to finish fights fast when you get an opponent at a disadvantage. It might not be particularly honorable, but honor isn't something you worry about too much. As word of your prowess spreads, you'll find that you are never really without a job—there's always someone hiring mercenaries, or a band of outlaws in need of a leader.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** Your travels and business associations have provided you with a certain breadth of knowledge. You gain a bonus language selected from the following: High Atlantean, Dhari, Kalayan, Lomari, Nimothan, Urgan. You are also trained in Intimidation.

**Opportunist (1st level):** When you make an opportunity attack, you gain tactical advantage. Instead of making an opportunity attack, you can use a combat reaction to move up to your speed.

**Sellsword (6th level):** Whenever you are paid gold for your services, you get 50% more gold. In addition, you gain tactical advantage on skill checks made to interact with mercenaries or other soldiers for hire.

**Company of Blades (10th level):** You have worked for, with, and against many other sellswords and earned their respect. You now have a company of elite warriors at your call (see Followers, under narrative benefits). The warriors of your company are equivalent to berserkers or legionaries (see page 79); you can choose which you prefer. When you reach 15th level, they improve to veterans..

You decide whether your company is a band of outlaws, soldiers, mercenaries or something in between. You also may choose a base of operations, such as a hall in a city-state, a watchtower on a road, or a hidden cave near a trade route.

## FREE BLADES IN THE WORLD

Rootless adventurers are common in Thule. Some are city-born men and women of the lower classes who set out to win wealth any way they can. Others are barbarians curious about civilized ways (or, perhaps, unwelcome in their own homelands) who have nothing to sell but their blades. Low-born Thuleans often romanticize the free blades' way of life, so you have many friends among the common people.

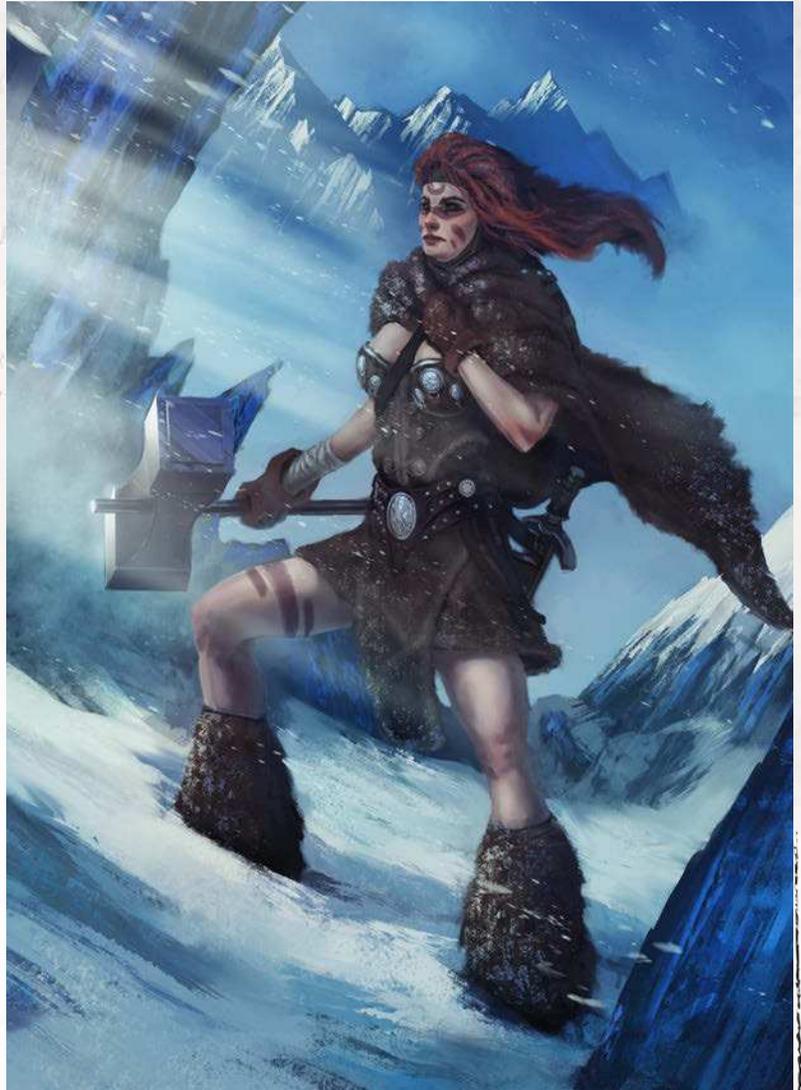
Over time, you will naturally cross paths with other free blades who have their own ideas about the opportunities you come across. Competition, rivalry, or outright treachery are the usual results—your worst enemies are all too often free blades just like you.

## PERSONALIZING THE FREE BLADE

The hallmarks of a free blade are adaptability and wanderlust. They'll do anything to get by, taking on boring or dangerous work until something better turns up, and they think nothing of setting out to see if the next city offers better opportunities.

**Ammur Wanderer:** The barbarian clans of the Ammur Hills are a strong, settled Dhari tribe that has at various times fought off incursions from Lomar, Quodeth, and Marg. Many young Ammur warriors leave their homeland to sell their swords in the rich city-states. Unlike most barbarians, who know little of civilization before they arrive at a city gate, you are acquainted with civilized ways—you just don't think much of them.

**Dishonored Lomari:** The people of Lomar are known for their martial spirit and prickly sense of honor. More than a few of Lomar's warriors find that better prospects await them in the wide world beyond Lomar's mighty walls. Some of these exiles leave voluntarily, unable to find a place that suits them in Lomar's rigid society. Others fail to live up to the unforgiving standards of Lomari society and leave in disgrace. Whatever your reason for leaving Lomar, you now earn the best living you can by selling a lifetime of martial training to the highest bidder. What drove you to leave? If you could go back, would you?



**Margish Wolf:** The city of Marg has a deservedly evil reputation as the center of Thule's slave trade, but not every Marg is a slaver. Most are ruthless merchants and traders—commonly called “wolves” in Marg and nearby lands—who deal in any commodity that comes their way, or turn to robbery and plunder if legitimate trade is hard to come by. Part mercenary, part trader, part outlaw, a Margish wolf has an evil reputation, but everyone knows that you will do whatever you must to get ahead.

**Zinandar Mercenary:** You are a dwarf of Kal-Zinan, the City of the Iron Gate. Kal-Zinan is renowned for two principal exports: Iron arms and armor, and the toughest mercenaries in Thule. You're one of the latter. Free blades in general have a reputation for being opportunistic and unreliable, but you consider yourself a professional and prefer to honor your contracts as long as your employer holds up his end of the bargain.



## GOLDEN SEA CORSAIR

The seas of Thule are plagued by fleets of pirate galleys. Preying on merchant shipping, coastal settlements, and sometimes even large cities or barbarian tribes whose lands are exposed to raids from the sea, these corsairs pose a major threat to any unfortunate enough to cross their paths. Of all the pirates to plague the waterways of the primeval continent, none are so widespread—or so bold—as the corsairs of the Golden Sea Brotherhood.

As a corsair, you live outside the law. You are recognized by all civilized lands (and more than a few of the tribal peoples) as an enemy of all mankind, deserving of nothing less than a swift execution should you ever fall into the hands of the authorities or tribal elders. Even if you are not personally a vicious brute, you understand that the day you show weakness is the day you die, whether at the hands of your would-be victims or under the knives of your own comrades. Yet, despite the enmity of all good people and the fellowship of brutes and murderers, you have something beyond price: absolute freedom. You kneel to no one.

Corsair fleets are made up of the dregs of humanity—thieves and murderers who fled their homelands to escape justice, mercenaries too lazy or cowardly to find paying work, and brutal savages greedy to plunder the riches of more developed peoples. Any character who joins a corsair crew needs to be handy with a blade, not only to make herself a useful member of the crew, but also to have a chance of defending herself against the scum and villains who surround her. Few spellcasters are desperate enough to consider becoming corsairs.

**Key Identity:** Barbarian, fighter, rogue.

## GOLDEN SEA CORSAIR BENEFITS

Corsairs are exceptional seamen, skilled at navigation, rope handling, sailing, and naval tactics—after all, pirates who can't handle their ships effectively can't catch prey or get away from the warships sent to hunt them down. Terror and intimidation are your weapons in combat; your headlong assaults strike fear into the bravest foes. Individual corsairs often crossdeck to other ships, turn smuggler, take up slaving, or even become honest traders, so over time your network of former shipmates comes to include hundreds of pirates and sailors throughout the harbor districts of Thule—you have contacts in every port. Sooner or later, the day comes when you command a corsair galley of your own, and you will find a rough and ready crew eager to sail at your side.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** Thanks to your experience as a pirate on the high seas, you are trained in Acrobatics and Athletics. In addition, you are proficient in the use of boats, ships, and navigator's instruments.

**Cutthroat Strike (1st level):** When you attack a creature that is threatened by at least one of your allies (in other words, it's within your ally's reach), you can choose to perform a cutthroat strike. You gain tactical advantage on the attack, and if you hit, the target becomes frightened of you until the end of your next turn.

You can use Cutthroat Strike once. You must take a rest to regain the ability.

**Infamy (6th level):** As word of your exploits gets around, you gain the respect of other pirates, merchants, and outlaws of the coastal regions around the Kalayan Sea and along the Atlantean Ocean. You gain tactical advantage on all skill checks made to interact with people familiar with your reputation.

**Pirate Terror (10th level):** Your former shipmates make you captain of your own ship. You can sail with them whenever you need sea transportation, since your crew keeps your ship in a nearby port or will readily steal one if you need something sooner. Your crew provides you with raiders any time you are aboard your ship, and the spoils your crew obtains provides you with a moderate income (see Followers and Income, under narrative benefits). Your raiders are equivalent to bandits. Once per three years, you can summon an army in the form of a corsair fleet.

## GOLDEN SEA CORSAIRS IN THE WORLD

The corsairs of Thule are universally reviled by all other people. The city-states hate them for the destruction they wreak on merchant shipping, while all but the strongest and most fierce tribal peoples suffer from corsair raiding and slaving. Despite this universal hostility, corsairs are sometimes hired as seagoing mercenaries—many merchants find it easier to buy protection from corsair fleets than to risk the loss of an entire cargo, and city rulers who lack strong navies sometimes bribe corsair lords to join them in war. Unfortunately, corsairs have a habit of not staying bought for long.

You can pass yourself off as a seaman or mercenary when you are not surrounded by other pirates, so it's not overly dangerous to visit civilized ports when traveling alone or with a small group of companions who don't look like a gang of pirates. However, there is a price on your head in most cities—if the authorities find out who you really are and what you've done, you'll likely face the executioner within the day.

## PERSONALIZING THE GOLDEN SEA CORSAIR

The iconic pirate of Thule is, of course, a corsair belonging to the Golden Sea Brotherhood. This seagoing horde plagues the Kalayan Sea from one end to the other, fearing nothing except the war-navy of Quodeth. However, characters who sail with different pirate groups have similar benefits and drawbacks.

**Golden Sea Brother:** You belong to the corsair fleet known as the Golden Sea Brotherhood, a bloody-handed sea-horde that plagues the Kalayan Sea. The corsair brotherhood is based in the hidden city of Rime, and often hires out its services to nobles and monarchs in need of fleets. Golden Sea corsairs have more loyalty to the Brotherhood as a whole than any particular ship or captain, and have a habit of abandoning unsuccessful commanders to sign on with the captains who lead them to the richest prizes.

**Thousand Teeth Raider:** The northern coast of Thule is home to countless islets and headlands known as the Thousand Teeth. Here scores of Nimothan chieftains and jarls measure their strength by the number of longships they command. To become a chief that other warriors will follow, you must first captain a longship, and to captain a longship, you must prove that you are a fierce and cunning warrior. What will you do to win fame and respect?

**Umni Sea-Wolf:** You are a stranger to Thule. Your home is the wide land of Umn Tsav to the west, and your people are simple by the standards of Thule's great cities. Instead of galleys or longships, you sail in boats of skin and hide, and you fight with weapons made from bone and wood. Each year the bravest Umni warriors launch raids against the western coasts of Thule, landing savage war-parties to seek captives, plunder, and trophies from the civilized peoples. Were you left behind by such a raid, or did you come alone to see for yourself the wonders you have heard about from other sea-wolves?

## GUARDIAN OF THE NINE

Priests of Mithra hate those of Tiamat. Followers of Asura will put those of Set to the torch if they can. And yet there's one exception within each of Thule's organized religions: the Guardians of the Nine. Though no less devoted to their patron gods, guardians cross religious lines to thwart the Thule pantheon's common threat: the Great Old Ones.

Some of Thule's faiths call it scripture and to others it's heresy, but there's a belief among the Guardians of the Nine that millennia ago, the Great Ones rose and walked the earth, and only by combining forces did the gods defeat them. This diminished the gods as well, which is why deities do not (or cannot) manifest in the world anymore either. The Guardians of the Nine will do anything to ensure that the Great Old Ones, individually or collectively, never threaten the world again.

In practical terms, this makes you a cult-hunter. You're part of a sect within your religion that the broader priesthood doesn't necessarily understand. But when Great Cthulhu stirs, they'll be glad you have a plan to make sure he remains asleep.

Clerics are obvious choices for the Guardians of the Nine, but it's a pragmatic organization that'll take any capable cult-hunter into its ranks. Many druids also belong to this secret society—down through the centuries the Guardians have worked hard to forge alliances with followers of the Forest Gods, especially among the friendlier barbarian tribes. Almost all Guardians are spellcasters because they know they'll be expected to close gates and banish horrors from another world.

**Key Identity:** Human, cleric, druid.

## GUARDIAN BENEFITS

As you rise through the ranks of the Guardians of the Nine, you'll pick up some of the investigative skills useful in uncovering cult activity—after all, few cultists self-identify as cultists (until they've gone completely mad, anyway). You'll also learn magic techniques useful for thwarting Great Old One efforts to intrude on the world.

The organization itself is another benefit of sorts. You have common cause with a subset of priests in every major faith and shamans in the most important barbarian tribes, even rival faiths or tribes who would ordinarily shun you (or worse). Walk into a major temple, make the right secret signs, and you can connect with a guardian who'll help with your current investigation.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Arcana and Investigation. Unraveling the true purpose of a mad cult requires a combination of occult lore and attention to detail.

**Mind Clearing (1st level):** When you fail a Wisdom or Charisma saving throw, you can use a combat reaction to reroll your saving throw. You must abide by the results of the second save. You can use Mind Clearing once, and then you must rest before you can use it again.

**Banisher of Horrors (6th level):** You gain a +1 bonus to attacks, defenses, and saving throws when you're battling creatures with the extraterrene trait.

**Elder Scribe (10th level):** You gain the ability to inscribe an *elder sign*. Creating an *elder sign* requires an 8-hour ritual that must be performed under the correct astrological alignment, and a suitable piece of a rare type of soapstone. You can assume that the proper conditions occur about once per year, although if an *elder sign* you create is lost or destroyed, you may be able to replace it sooner (GM's discretion).

## GUARDIANS IN THE WORLD

The Guardians of the Nine have many friends of convenience; the tyrant of many a city-state has showered the organization with riches after they thwarted a cultist uprising that threatened the city. But such appreciation is fleeting as the threat fades into history. The only lasting allies of the Guardians are the organized major faiths and a few of the wiser shaman brotherhoods . . . if they can be convinced

that a Great Old One threat is truly imminent.

Most of the priesthoods, though, are ambivalent about the Guardians of the Nine. They have more immediate, pressing concerns like "suppressing rival faiths" and "squeezing more offerings out of the merchant class" and "maintaining religious purity within their order." Because the Guardians consort with those outside of the faith, they're sometimes ostracized within their own priesthoods.

The biggest enemies of the Guardians of the Nine are the cults of the Great Old Ones of course, but those cultists aren't all in remote temples, underground lairs, or hidden forest clearings. It's a certainty that cultists have infiltrated the hierarchies of all the major religions, and those agents of the Great Old Ones will stop at nothing to hinder the Guardians of the Nine any way they can.

## PERSONALIZING THE GUARDIAN

The key question for a Guardian of the Nine is which patron deity represents your "home" faith. It's rare but not unheard of for a guardian to change faiths but remain a guardian in good standing. Here are how three religions each deal with the Guardians of the Nine in their midst.

**Mithra:** You are an investigator; Mithra's wide-ranging faith has many sages and researchers among its ranks, and when they uncover a strange phenomenon that might have a connection to the Great Old Ones, they call upon their sect of the Guardians to examine the matter further. The rest of the church generally sees you as eccentric but occasionally useful. They're apt to send you off on long journeys to explore a recently discovered monolith or strange ruins uncovered in the jungle.

**Asura:** You are the flame that purifies the corrupt evil of the cults, no matter where the corruption hides. More of an inquisitor than an investigator, you uncover Great Old One plots by uncovering cultists and tracking them to their source. The rest of Asura's priests usually do their best to ignore you, although they're very touchy about any collaboration with evil-aligned Guardians.

**Nergal:** An adherent of the war god, you are often the muscle when the Guardians must battle against the forces of the Great Old Ones directly. You often don't get much advance notice; it's more like, "Ride to Reglaren and put the village to the torch, or in three days Shub-Niggurath will rise there." You're usually outnumbered by the cultists and horrors you face, but that just means more targets for your wrath. Sometimes the other priests of Nergal make noise about whether you're really serving the forces of evil or just glorying in battle, but they give you a wide berth because they know it's not *your* blood on that armor.

## ICE REAVER

The windswept glaciers, the frozen mountains, the vast cold plains beneath the shadow of the encroaching ice—these hard lands are home to the fiercest peoples of Thule. The barbarians of the cold lands live off the great herds of caribou that roam the tundra or the teeming seals and fish of the frozen coasts, but when the herds or pods move on, these hardy warriors soon turn their attention to different prey: The civilized peoples of the warmer lands. Riding giant elk or rowing dragon-prowed galleys, the reavers of the north strike with terrible speed and savagery, pillaging and plundering their way across Thule's remote marches. From Nar to Quodeth, the reaver tribes are names of terror and dread.

As one of these northern raiders, you are at home in the frozen lands. Your world is simple: The strong survive, and the weak perish. You regard the city-folk of the south as soft and decadent, and despise their hedonistic ways even when you choose to sell your axe or spear as a mercenary. The gods gave you the power to strive and to slay when you were born, and you intend to carve your way to greatness with your bloody sword or axe.

Most ice reavers are humans of Nimothan descent, simply because Nimothans make up the great majority of the raiding peoples of Thule's northern wastes. They stubbornly cling to their homelands even as the snows grow deeper year by year. A few tribes in the eastern highlands of Thule are Kalays; centuries ago these were the hardy frontiersmen Inner Sea cities, but over the generations they became more and more isolated, adopting the barbaric ways of their neighbors. Finally, a small number of dwarf clans with no citadel of their own share these bitter lands with the human tribes, and follow a similar lifestyle.

**Key Identity:** Human (Nimothan or Kalay), dwarf, barbarian, fighter, ranger, bard.

### ICE REAVER BENEFITS

Your people don't fight all the time. You were raised to be a hardy hunter, and live off the great herds of the northern tundra or the seals and whales of the cold seas. The rugged mountains and broken glaciers of your homeland might be impassable to other travelers, but not to you. In battle, you rely on pure ferocity, charging into the thick of the fighting and hewing down your enemies with reckless abandon. Your many battles earn you a reputation among other raiding tribes and barbarian mercenaries employed in civilized lands, and they listen carefully when you speak. In time, your fame grows so great that hundreds of northern warriors answer your call when you decide to launch a raid of your own.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are proficient in Intimidation, and one other skill appropriate to your tribe: Athletics, Animal Handling, or boats and

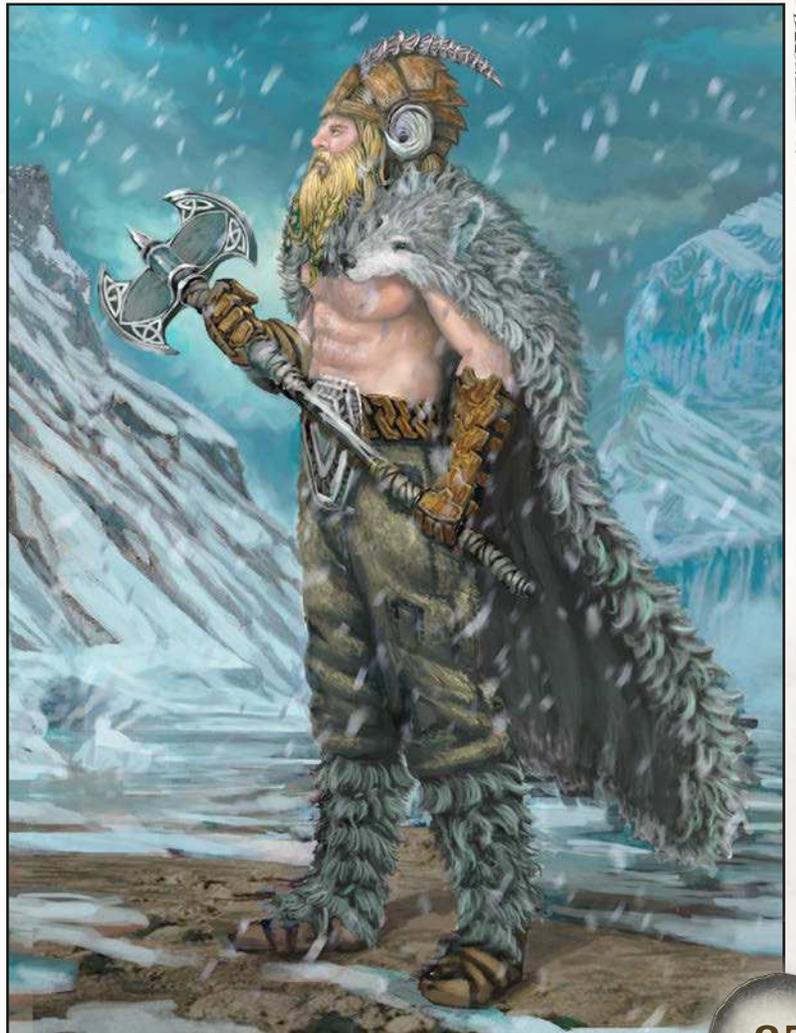
navigation tools. Ice reavers are renowned for their violent ways, and you are familiar with the hard terrain of your home.

**Reaver's Charge (1st level):** You can perform a Reaver's Charge before initiative is rolled in an encounter, as long as you are not surprised. You can also use a bonus action to perform a Reaver's Charge any time you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points (or less) with a melee attack. When you perform a Reaver's Charge, you move up to your speed and make a melee attack.

You can use Reaver's Charge once, and then you must take a rest before you can use it again.

**Renowned Raider (6th level):** Your name is known among the fighting peoples of Thule, and your reputation precedes you. When you make a skill or ability check to interact with barbarians, mercenaries, or outlaws, you gain tactical advantage.

**Reaver Chief (10th level):** You can call for raiders from your homeland to go marauding with you (including a ship if they are a seafaring people). Your raiders are equivalent to tribal warriors. Once per three years, you can raise a horde for a major attack. See Followers, under narrative benefits.



## ICE REAVERS IN THE WORLD

You come from a tribe that measures a person's worth by his or her fighting prowess. If you are a great warrior, you are held in high regard by your people; if not, you are expected to seek the opportunity to prove yourself in battle. Civilized Thuleans who are aware of your tribe's reputation (for example, the people of Akal-Amo, Orech, or Thran) are intimidated by you, and assume that you are irrationally brutal and violent. However, they hold a healthy respect for your fighting skill, and many southerners eagerly hire ice reavers as bodyguards, enforcers, or mercenary troops.

## PERSONALIZING THE ICE REAVER

There are many different reaver tribes, and each has its own unique story or quirk.

**Bearslayer:** You are a dwarf of a dispossessed clan.

Your people were driven out of their native citadel years ago. With the loss of their home, they abandoned their rightful clan name and took up a name of exile, calling themselves simply Bearslayers after the beasts whose home they now shared. Someday you intend to be strong enough and respected enough to lead your people back to their stolen citadel and reclaim it.

**Khatranir Warrior:** You are among the last of a vanished tribe. Once your people called the heights of Kha, the Ice Mountain, home. They raided far and wide, blunting their *r'uchuk* ice-axes in lands hundreds of miles distant. None were stronger, hardier, or more widely feared than the Khatranir. But while you were away on a long journey to the warm lands, something terrible happened. When you returned your people were dead, entombed in the snows of Kha by some dire frost curse. You do not know who cursed the Khatranir or why, but someday you will avenge your people.

**Rider of Hurgan:** You are a warrior of the Hurgan tribe, known throughout Thule as riders of the foul-tempered giant elk. Your people are close kin to the Quodethi, and of all the ice peoples, the most likely to engage in peaceful trade with the peoples of the south. For you, raiding is not a matter of survival or pure bloodthirst—it is a matter of pride, a way to avenge insults and defend your tribe's own hunting grounds. Change is coming to the Hurgan people: Your tribe must abandon their ancestral lands and carve out a new home from the lands of the south. Are you the great chief the wise men see rising in the smokes of the future?

**Ullathi Sea Reaver:** The sea is the mother to your people. The Ullathi live on the shores of the icy seas, sealing and fishing throughout the winter

months—but when the spring comes and the ice breaks up, they take to their longships and spend the warm months boldly harrying the coastlands of Thule. While raiding is a way of life for the Ullathi, your people are also explorers and sea-traders, and have a driving wanderlust to see new places and find new things. There are many ways to become a hero to be sung of down through the years, and you are determined to find your fame someday.

## INITIATE OF MYSTERIES

Some devoted worshipers of a god are content to join the rank-and-file priesthood, while others join obscure sects or orders (like the Guardians of the Nine, above). You feel the call of your patron deity deeply, though—so deeply that you want to bask in every glory and revelation your god has to offer. Over time, you'll learn secrets scarcely imaginable to more ordinary worshipers. You'll grow ever closer to understanding the very mind of the god you worship. And perhaps most importantly, you'll ascend through the religious hierarchy to a place where the rank-and-file worshipers may start venerating you.

There's a sect or order analogous to the initiate of mysteries within each of Thule's organized religions, though it goes by different names in different faiths (see below). There's a parallel structure for PCs who worship the Forest Gods (often druids) as well.

**Key Identity:** Human, cleric, druid.

## INITIATE BENEFITS

Though your divine power grows as an initiate, the biggest benefit of becoming an Initiate of Mysteries is the rise through the temple hierarchy. The major temples in a given city-state are among its most active power brokers, and you can put some of that power to work for you. Over time, you'll even gain followers—rather fanatic ones!—of your own.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Religion, as well as one additional skill related to your god's portfolio: Athletics (Tarhun), Deception (Ishtar), History (Nergal), Insight (Asura), Intimidation (Tiamat), Medicine (Kishar), Persuasion (Mithra), Stealth (Set), or Survival (Herum).

**Healing Blessing (1st level):** You can use an action to heal yourself or another with a touch. You can heal hit points equal to three times your character level per day, and need not use all of your blessing at once. (For example, at 5th level, you could heal three times, restoring 4, 8, and 3 hit points). If the recipient is someone other than you, the recipient also gains the benefit of a *resistance* spell.

**Inner Circle (6th level):** You are initiated into the senior priesthood of your temple. All subordinates in your temple hierarchy follow your orders. Priests and adherents from other temples that share your deity

regard you as an authority figure or honored guest and do their best to accommodate your requests. If an interaction skill check is necessary to influence your fellow priests or worshipers, you gain tactical advantage on the check.

**Keeper of the Shrine (10th level):** Worshipers of your god raise funds to build a shrine to your deity—and to you. They consult with you on its location and construction, though they possess only ordinary building techniques and craftsmanship. The shrine, once completed, can serve as a “home base” for you. While there, you have a reasonable expectation of safety, insofar as anyplace in Thule can be considered “safe.” You gain a company of bodyguards; half are priests, and half are legionaries (see page 79). At 15th level, your followers improve to knights.

## INITIATES IN THE WORLD

Other worshipers of your deity are generally impressed that you’re an Initiate of Mysteries—if they’re well-versed enough in the religious hierarchy to know that you’re among the chosen ones. The reflected glory of your patron deity can be a powerful inducement to good behavior. Eventually, they’ll treat you as a living saint.

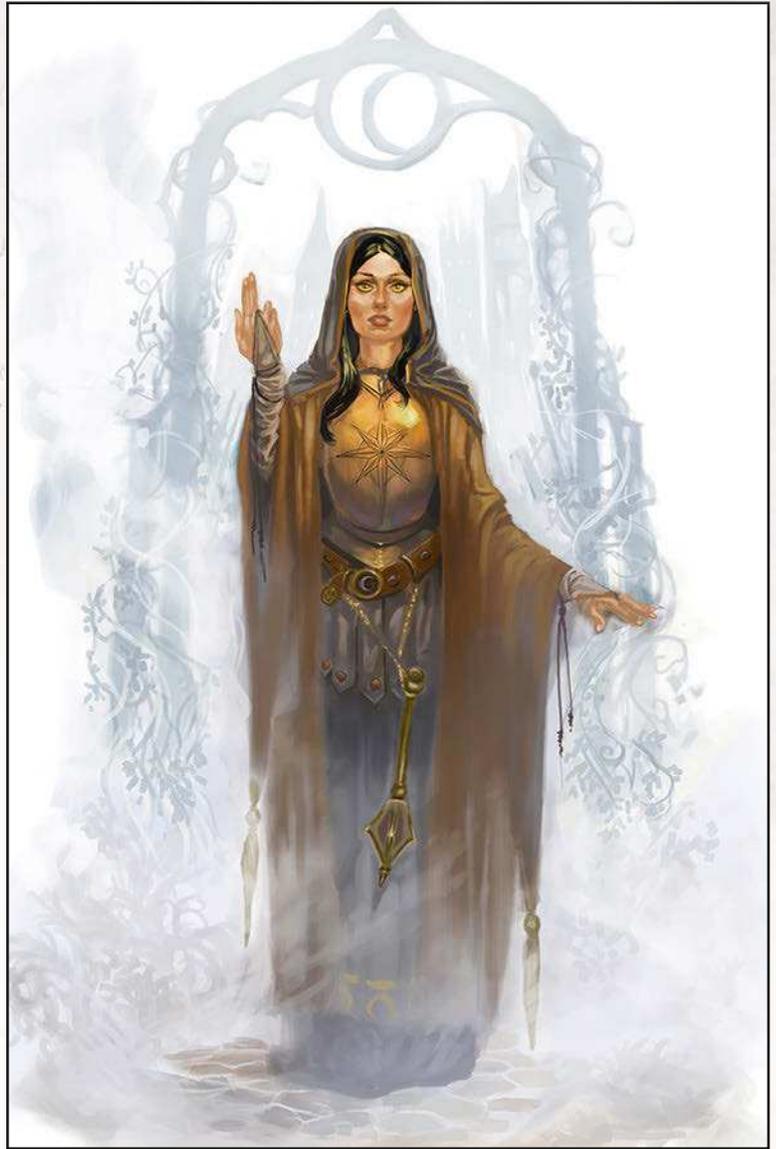
Anyone who wants to diminish your deity might decide to start with you, though. Nothing scandalizes the temple-goers like an Initiate of Mysteries who falls from grace. Rival faiths and hidden sects within your own religion will embarrass you or disrupt your efforts if they can. And in the more hierarchical religions, you might eventually develop rivalries with other initiates as you each seek to become the “most favored” of your god.

## PERSONALIZING THE INITIATE

Each of the organized religions associated with the Nine Powers has its own version of the Initiate of Mysteries; larger faiths have more initiates, of course. Here are three examples.

**Ishtar:** The priesthood of Ishtar has had “Initiates of Mysteries” for centuries, and this narrative takes its name from that sect. You are a charismatic beacon of love and luck, and what is “luck” but a low-level manifestation of fate itself? You seek rarefied pleasures to be sure, but you’re also keen for the chance to keep ugliness and cruelty out of the world.

**Tarhun:** You are one of Tarhun’s “Harbingers,” a group of warrior-priests that are destined to ride ahead of the Storm to End All Storms in a battle at the end of time. You’ll be asked to prove yourself as an initiate in battle time and time again. Remember, Tarhun adores valor over everything else—better to be bravely defeated than to be a cowardly victor.



**Set:** You’re climbing a hierarchy within Set’s temples known as the “Serpentis Ladder,” and you don’t even learn what the next stage of the hierarchy is like until you’ve attained the one before. Each of Set’s tests is a pop quiz, but you pride yourself on your adaptability. You can slither into whatever form your patron desires if it gains you one more rung on the Serpentis Ladder.

## JUNGLE TRADER

Someone’s got to get Imystrahli pearls to Katagia, or find a new source of rare iron alloys now that Kal-Zinan has closed its gates. That someone is you. You’re willing to crisscross the continent, brave savage monsters, and overcome countless obstacles, as long as the balance sheet is black at journey’s end.

Lots of people call themselves “traders” or “merchants” in Thule, but you don’t have much in common with the farmer bringing his vegetables downriver or the wagoneer selling ceramic pots from village to village. You favor high-margin cargoes and

dangerous routes. You're also comfortable with speculation—you'll observe a shortage and buy (or otherwise "acquire") the available supply. Everything from spices to silks to alchemical reagents to magic-imbued materials is in your hands just long enough for you to get it to the buyer and collect your profit.

The narrative is named Jungle Trader, but you'll go anywhere in search of a profitable gap between supply and demand. That means classes with a predilection for travel (such as rangers, rogues, and bards) are suited for the trader's life. Really, though, if you like money, life as a jungle trader should hold at least some appeal.

**Key Identity:** Human, ranger, rogue, bard.

## JUNGLE TRADER BENEFITS

Unlike other narratives that provide skill, spellcasting, or similar bonuses, the jungle trader's benefit is primarily economic. All other things being equal, you're going to have somewhat more money than characters in other narratives. You can, of course, convert that economic bonus into a combat or skill bonus (another sort of trading, really), but you'll always be tempted to keep your funds liquid so you can pounce on the next moneymaking opportunity.

You also gain bonuses related to travel and commerce. You know merchants and their dealings, and eventually you can take advantage of rivalries and inefficiencies among Thule's great merchant houses. You also gain a modicum of trail savvy, because the unwary, oblivious jungle trader winds up in a tribal stew-pot, not counting coins at the trade route's destination.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Persuasion, Sleight of Hand, and Survival.

**Estimate Value (1st level):** You can use an action to carefully study an item and determine its value. This functions as an *identify* spell, with no component cost. If the item studied is not magical, you instead determine its value in gold pieces (and where in Thule it will most likely command the highest price).

You can use Estimate Value once per day.

**Profit Margin (6th level):** Whenever you sell a gem, art object, or magic item for gold, you obtain 10% more than the standard price.

**Trade Empire (10th level):** Over the course of your career, you have created a network of local trade agents, factotums, and business partners—a continental trade empire with you at its head. The activities of your trade network provide you with a high income (see Narrative Benefits). In addition, your personal wealth is accessible in any city of Thule. Local counting-houses and moneychangers are aware of your resources and can serve as a route by which you can draw on your treasure, no matter where it is actually kept.

## JUNGLE TRADERS IN THE WORLD

Jungle traders are generally well-liked, because the vast majority of Thule's population lives in a state of fundamental isolation. Even residents of the city-states are keenly aware of wonderful things from far-off lands that they don't have access to (and that lack gnaws at many a potential customer). A jungle trader is the person that brings you news of far-off lands and provides you with necessities and luxuries you simply couldn't obtain any other way. Jungle traders who use underhanded means such as thievery to handle the "supply" part of the equation have more enemies than most, of course.

Only two groups hate jungle traders as a matter of course. The first group are those victimized by economics—the local trader that you undercut, or the noble who finds herself paying four times the price for high-end mead because you've cornered the market. The second group is other jungle traders. Among traders plying the same routes with the same goods, the phrase "cutthroat competition" often becomes a literal description.

## PERSONALIZING THE JUNGLE TRADER

Most of a jungle trader's affiliations are business arrangements; that's the nature of the profession. The key thing that defines a particular jungle trader is what she's selling. You'll deal with countless sorts of goods as you advance your narrative, of course, but if you're looking to make a profit, consider some of the following goods.

**Low Levels:** Leave the basic, staple commodities like grain and wood to mere teamsters; you want high-margin items like rare spices, gourmet food and drink, and fine textiles. Rare alchemical reagents and spell components can often be harvested in the jungle or purchased from friendly tribes, then brought to a city-state for a tidy profit.

**Middle Levels:** Now your resources have grown, and your eye for an opportunity has sharpened. You're interested in goods where the supply is inherently low and the demand is sky-high. The decadent elves of Imystrahl prize the black lotuses that grow in the southern jungles . . . but could perhaps be cultivated in hothouses elsewhere. Art objects and other treasures belonging to Atlantis before it sank under the waves will fetch a price—both to nostalgic Atlanteans and art collectors who realize that the supply can only dwindle.

**High Levels:** By this point, only the rich and powerful can afford you, so you're selling the most valuable commodities on the continent of Thule. Everyone wants iron and other metals that only the dwarves can smelt, for example. Magic items, substances from other worlds, and curiosities from exotic, ancient cultures are your stock in trade.

## KATAGIAN PIT FIGHTER

If the first fight at the dawn of time was to the death, it's probable that the second fight was a wagering proposition—with the survivor of the first fight as the favorite. As a Katagian pit fighter, you're part of that tradition: gladiators who risk life and limb for entertainment and wagering.

Some gladiator arenas are thinly disguised execution chambers, with criminals and the poor herded to their death for sport. But the "pits" of the city-state of Katagia are more sporting than most, with well trained combatants that often survive the match even if they lose. You are one of those gladiators, capable of fighting man or beast for the cheering masses and winning or losing in crowd-pleasing fashion.

Not every arena in Katagia is a pit, but many of the largest are, so the name sticks. Nor are all in Katagia; enterprising promoters have taken their gladiatorial shows on the road, and now most major cities have at least one Katagian-style pit, as do towns within a few weeks' travel of Katagia.

Spellcasting is against the rules for combatants in the Katagian pits, so this narrative is better for barbarians, fighters, rogues, and other classes with melee prowess. Archers tend to fare poorly because they can only loose a few arrows before the other gladiator is upon them.

**Key Identity:** Atlantean, human, halfling, barbarian, fighter, monk, rogue.

### PIT FIGHTER BENEFITS

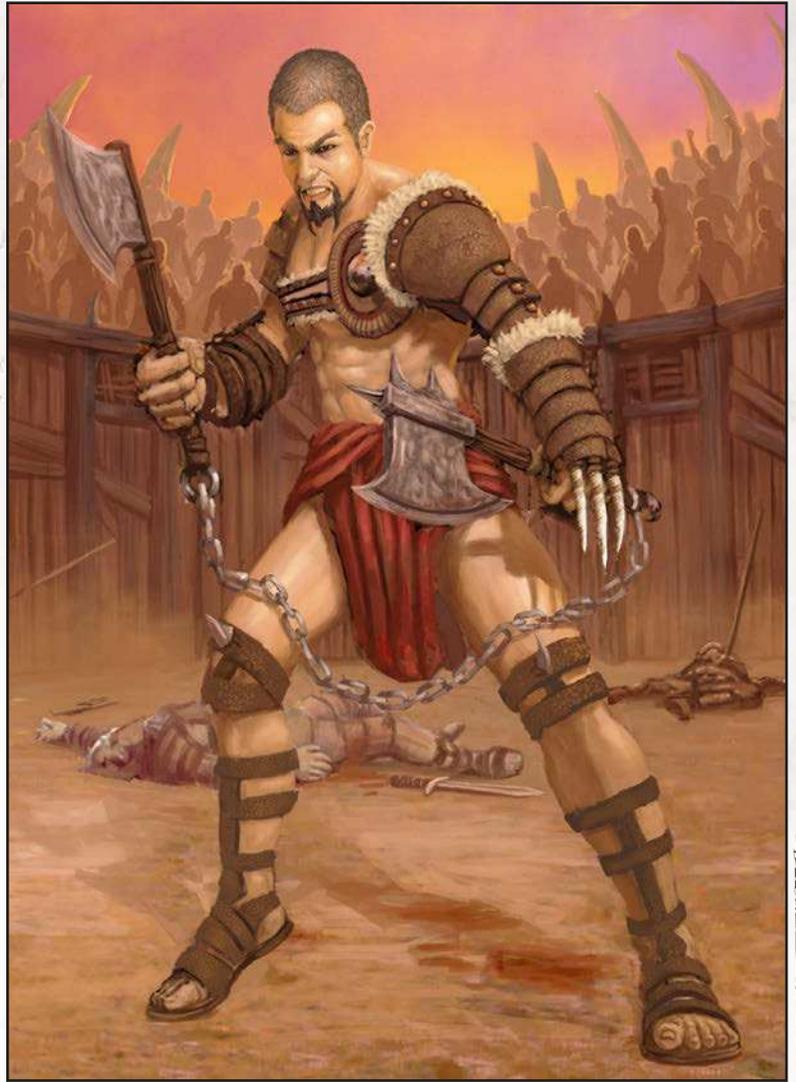
When you're a pit fighter, you get accustomed to dirty fighting quite early, and over time you gain an appreciation for the fighting styles prevalent across the continent of Thule. Unlike the grim warriors that blanket Thule from one end to the other, you can project a demeanor that gets the crowd on your side—or "turn heel" and cultivate an air of menace.

Your most important ability, however, is the ability to protect yourself so that you don't die when you get clobbered in the pit. The Katagian pits keep healing magic on hand, but it's not powerful enough to raise the dead. You can cover your vitals and cling to life better than most, even if they have to drag you out of the pit by your heels. When your manager orders you to take a dive for betting reasons, this ability comes in particularly handy.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Intimidation and Performance. You know how to stage a spectacle for the crowd, and how to get inside the heads of your adversaries when it's not just a show.

**Will to Live (1st level):** When you are required to make a death saving throw, you can instead heal hit points equal to your level plus your Constitution modifier.

You can use Will to Live once per day.



**Killer Instinct (6th level):** When an enemy within 5 feet of you falls prone, you can use a combat reaction to make a melee weapon attack against the prone enemy.

**Expert Trainer (10th level):** You've started to attract would-be gladiators who want to fight like you do. You gain a company of followers; you can choose berserkers or legionaries (see page 79). Choose a "home pit" where you can find these thugs whenever you need them. Your trainees handle their own upkeep, and they hang on your every word, doing whatever you say unless it's obviously suicidal. When you reach 15th level, your followers improve to veterans.

### PIT FIGHTERS IN THE WORLD

Everyone loves rooting for a pit fighter, but few want to share a meal with one. People who have heard of you—or seen you fight firsthand—tend to be a little scared of you, and they might underestimate your intelligence. For better and for worse, the world sees you as a trained killer.

Your biggest rivals are other pit fighters, especially ones in the employ of other managers. Sometimes the two sides will collude on a match for betting reasons, but in most cases, the two (or more) pit fighters are genuinely trying to win . . . and the other pit fighters take it personally when you're standing between them and a purse full of coin. Partnerships exist in the world of pit fighting but they're rare and transient things. Rivalries, though—those'll burn for decades.

## PERSONALIZING THE PIT FIGHTER

As a pit fighter, you probably have a manager (or owner) who arranges matches and makes sure you don't get fleeced by the many factions who want a cut of the prize money. Here are three examples of managers, but hundreds of other managers ply the trade across Thule at any given time.

**Ugrak of Katagia:** Specializing in “talent” from the hinterlands of Thule, Ugrak has a stable of gladiators heavy on barbarians and fighters with exotic weapon styles. He's harsh with all but his best fighters, but he tends to keep his gladiators safe throughout their career. Many of his gladiators retire, and that's relatively rare among Katagian pit fighters in general.

**Silivia:** A former beast-tamer with no small amount of magic skill, Silivia specializes in pit fighter vs. beast battles. She has a separate crew devoted to capturing dangerous monsters to set loose in the pits, and sometimes her gladiators help in those captures.

**Bronak the Bald:** One of Katagia's wealthiest fight promoters, Bronak has nearly a hundred Katagian pit fighters under contract at a given time. An entrepreneur first and a trainer second, Bronak lets his low-level gladiators fight against each other, figuring that the stronger will survive and the weaker was a bad investment anyway. Bronak has multiple gladiator troupes traveling circuits throughout southern Thule at any given time, and sometimes Bronak grows weary of life in Katagia and leads a troupe personally.

## MYRMIDON

Thule has fewer standing armies than most fantasy settings; the city-states can defend their walls and project force a few days away from their gates, but marching armies haven't been seen on Thule since the Lomar-Droum war sixty years ago, and there haven't been truly massive legions since the Atlanteans invaded the Inner Sea more than five hundred years ago.

Atlantis is no more, and the Atlantean holdings on Thule are dwindling, but you are part of one of Atlantis's great gifts to Thule: the Myrmidons, heavily armored elite troops. Each myrmidon “century” had its own fighting styles and legendary history, and the

Atlanteans' enemies on Thule were so impressed that they started training “myrmidon” units of their own and adopting at least some of the Atlantean trappings. Now the phrase “myrmidon” means “elite trooper” and doesn't necessarily indicate an Atlantean heritage. You are an elite trooper in one of Thule's organized militaries (even if you're on detached duty to enable independent adventuring). Those who see your raised weapon or heavy armor know they're facing the best of the best.

**Key Identity:** Atlantean, human (Dhari or Kalay), fighter.

## MYRMIDON BENEFITS

You're a warrior through and through, capable of striding purposefully straight into danger. Fearless and cunning, you're capable of great things on the battlefield, but teamwork and discipline are your biggest assets. Your mere presence as a myrmidon makes others fight better, because you inspire them to be as brave and disciplined as you are.

In time, the myrmidon “century” (80–100 troopers) you're affiliated with may grant you an honor guard of lower-level myrmidons to command as you see fit.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Animal Handling and Medicine. You know how to handle mounts in battle, and you've learned how to deal with typical battlefield injuries.

**Inspiring Example (1st level):** When you hit with a melee or ranged weapon attack, you can use a bonus action to inspire each ally within 30 feet of you. Until the beginning of your next turn, inspired creatures add 1d4 to attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

You can use Inspiring Example once, and then you must rest to regain the ability.

**Patrol Leader (6th level):** You gain the ability to summon a raid (see Followers), which takes the form of soldiers from your century temporarily placed under your command to garrison your home base or patrol in whatever area you are operating in. Your followers are equivalent to guards.

**Centurion (10th level):** You become commander of your myrmidon century. You gain a company of legionaries (see page 79). At 15th level, your followers improve to veterans. In addition, once per three years you can call an army to your banner. You are expected to keep your century employed, either as mercenaries or in the service of your home city; they can handle routine duties while you are away.

## MYRMIDONS IN THE WORLD

Within the larger military force you associate with, you're regarded as elite, so other soldiers treat you with respect bordering on awe, or with jealousy. The civilians of your city-state are impressed as well, even if they only know the myrmidons from military parades, not military action.

Conversely, you are hated and feared by the rank-and-file members of enemy armies, who would love to retreat and fight another day (if they're frightened of you) or take your head as a trophy (if they're feeling brave). That heavy armor and that purposeful march forward attracts attention on the battlefield, and attention from the enemy army is what you'll certainly get.

## PERSONALIZING THE MYRMIDON

Many myrmidon centuries no longer adhere to the Atlantean standard of 100 troopers per unit; some have more and others have less. The home base of your century and its typical duties determine what you're doing when you aren't adventuring. Three examples follow.

**Century XII of Katagia:** A group of myrmidons that can trace its organizational heritage back 600 years to when it first set foot on Thule, Century XII acts as an honor guard for high-ranking nobles in Katagia. They're also the organization responsible for carrying out executions ordered by the throne. This has earned them more enemies than the average myrmidons. Century XII is down to about 50 myrmidons, plus another 20 who are only marginally of useful fighting age. They're eager to recruit more members, but their initiation tests are fierce.

**Silver Gauntlets of Lomar:** This century is native to Thule, but its myrmidons are no less disciplined for it. The Silver Gauntlets were instrumental in Lomar's victory over Droum and continue to send out periodic patrols in that direction. In addition to patrolling the countryside, the Silver Gauntlets act as a training cadre for Lomar's more ordinary military units. Perhaps unusual among both myrmidons and the Lomar military in general, if you can shake hands with the Silver Gauntlet recruiter, all debts enforceable by Lomari law are forgiven and all arrest warrants suspended. Thus many try to join the Silver Gauntlets to turn around their lives, but the brutal tests that accompany membership have many scurrying back to the city to pay their bills or turn themselves in.

**Century III of Droum:** Thule's oldest century, this group can trace its history back 900 years. It has exactly 100 troopers under its banners . . . but about one in five is actually an intelligent undead. (Even death doesn't end their duty to serve their century faithfully and well.) Droum's top generals know this, but neither the rank-and-file army nor the civilian populace is aware. The people see the myrmidons only when they're parading through the city in full helmets and heavy gloves, so it's relatively straightforward for Century III to keep its secret. The century's leaders are torn over whether to replace fallen comrades with living recruits, or to raise the fallen myrmidons as wights or other undead.

## OCCULT SCIENTIST

The world of the Thule has so much unexplained phenomena—and if you have your way, it won't be unexplained for long. Your theories reached further than your mentors thought prudent, and they decried your conclusions. You'll show them.

They'll rue the day they mocked you, because you understand the esoteric underpinnings of reality better than even the wisest sages, and you see connections where others see only isolated details. Maybe you cut corners in your research, and maybe you don't have time to kowtow to the “noble patrons” and “eminent sages” in your field. There's no time! You have a lot to discover—and a lot to prove.

Wizards and warlocks are naturals for the occult scientist background, but any character with a modicum of intelligence and spellcasting can hear the call of occult science. Humans, Atlanteans, elves (especially urban ones), and dwarves all have their nonconformist scientists.

**Key Identity:** Wizard, warlock, bard, cleric (especially one who favors necromantic arts).

## OCCULT SCIENTIST BENEFITS

No two scientists are the same, and no two scientists gain power and knowledge in the same way. But right off the bat you'll be uncommonly well-informed. (You were never the sort to stick to the instructor's suggested reading list, and you think “syllabus” means “out-of-date and irrelevant topics to be avoided.”)

As your studies sharpen your mind and you probe the greater mysteries of the universe, you'll eventually need a specialized place to engage in research, study, and meditation. And what sort of occult scientist would you be if you were washing out your own flasks and re-shelving your own books? You can always find an eager young apprentice to assist you in your work.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Arcana and Investigation. You also learn one language of your choice from the following list: High Atlantean, Draconic, Elven, or Giant.

**Scientific Casting (1st level):** When you cast a spell (or use a spell-like power from a magic item or other source), you can apply your careful study of the laws of magic to double the spell's duration (to a maximum of 24 hours).

You can use Scientific Casting once. You must take a rest to regain the ability.

**Overcome the Parameters (6th level):** You require less materials to craft mundane or magic items. Reduce the creation cost of such items by 20%. In addition, you do not need to know prerequisite spells when crafting magic items, though if such spells require a rare or unusual material component, those components must still be acquired as part of item creation.

**Personal Laboratory (10th level):** You gain a moderate income (see Income, under Narrative Benefits), which represents retainers paid to you by powerful



nobles or panjandrums who wish to be able to consult with you when unnatural problems arise. In addition, you obtain a small domicile or run-down manor to use as your laboratory. Consult with your GM to determine its layout and location; it is sturdy, but made of ordinary materials, and contains appropriate equipment for alchemical, biological, or otherworldly investigation and experimentation. It comes with a laboratory assistant (hunchback optional) who will do your bidding but rarely leaves your laboratory. You can furnish or expand the laboratory as you wish, and under ordinary circumstances, it's a reasonably safe "home base" for you.

## OCCULT SCIENTISTS IN THE WORLD

Most of the world doesn't give a tinker's damn about you . . . the fools! That ignorance fuels your explorations into exotic and forbidden fields of study. Over time, though, you'll gain the grudging respect and eventually the admiration (or abject fear) of those who share your interest in a particular occult discipline.

There are few grounds more fertile for growing rivalries than academia, of course, and when you give

academics access to world-altering spellcasting, suffice it to say that occult scientists don't always limit their rivalries to stern rebukes during periodic face-to-face meetings. And some temples and civic officials might take a dim view of the experiments you're performing near (or on) the local populace. These are the occupational hazards that every misunderstood genius must suffer in the search of sublime truth.

## PERSONALIZING THE OCCULT SCIENTIST

No mortal mind can fathom every facet of the multiverse (although the word "mortal" does suggest a loophole for the assiduous scientist!). Here are three possible fields for you to focus your study, but don't let them limit you. Such limits are for lesser minds!

**Ethereal Energy:** You understand how others view the Ethereal Plane, but you think it could be so much more. The Ethereal Plane—and by extension the many worlds beyond Thule—can be an energy source, a medium of communication, and perhaps even a living entity. You want to understand everything otherworldly, building ether-powered vessels that sail between the worlds, obelisks that transmit eldritch energy from plane to plane, and other wonders undreamed of in this primitive age.

**The Animator:** You want to imbue everything around you with some semblance of life, or at least motility. A world where someone else has to open a door, swing a sword, or build a wall is a world you live in only reluctantly. You want swords that swing themselves, doors that open of their own volition, and an army of alloyed neo-golems to build the walls for you. There are many ways to build the machines that future Thule will need, of course—and you'll probably be scouring the continent for rare materials, esoteric components, and strange power sources.

**Unified Theory of Necromancy:** Necromancers in Thule are a copper a dozen, but you wonder whether they're just coasting on eons-old techniques. Many of the restrictions of necromancy seem arbitrary to you and ripe for challenge. Must one die to become undead? Can one become both living and dead simultaneously? What is the connection between necromancy and evil, and can that connection be severed? Moreso even than with most occult scientists, the villagers are going to hate and fear you. Make sure you keep an eye out for torches and pitchforks.

## PANJANDRUM

The power of the monarchy in each of Thule's cities rests on a powerful class of officials, magistrates, bureaucrats, and advisors armed with a bewildering array of titles and responsibilities. These are the panjandrums, the administrators of the realm and enforcers of its laws, and you are one of these influential officials.

Panjandrum are not selfless civil servants, and certainly don't live under any vow of poverty. Many postings or positions—for example, the collection of taxes, oversight of building or purchasing, or responsibility for customs and duties—offer vast potential for enriching yourself. Many of your fellow panjandrum maneuver constantly for these prized titles, or jockey for positions in which they can sell their influence or access to the highest levels of government. Whether you choose to live like a high prince or crusade against the excesses of your fellows is up to you.

The panjandrum class is an artifact of civilization, so panjandrum are found only among the more civilized peoples. Cities that were ruled by or tributary to Atlantis developed large and influential bureaucracies over the centuries, so most panjandrum are humans of Atlantean or Kalay descent. Atlantis had no particular influence over Lomar, but a powerful military bureaucracy with similar authority governs in that martial city. Finally, elven society gave rise to a different sort of panjandrum: Human or half-elf slaves or janissaries who took on more and more of the work of administering the realm as the elven nobility lost interest in overseeing their civic affairs.

**Key Identity:** Human (Atlantean, Kalay, Lomari), half-elf, cleric, bard, fighter, monk.

## PANJANDRUM BENEFITS

Panjandrum are well-educated and versed in the arts of administration, diplomacy, and lawmaking. You wield broad powers to command your city's soldiers, to prefer charges and order arrests, or to pass judgment on issues within your sphere of authority. These powers are diminished when you are away from your home, but even in foreign cities you are regarded as an important diplomat, and the local panjandrum try to accommodate any reasonable request you make of them. As your career progresses, you naturally rise in rank and gain even more influence and respect for your position. In time you become a royal advisor or governor charged with responsibility for a whole district, town, fleet, or army, answerable only to the monarch of your city.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Investigation and Persuasion. Panjandrum are highly educated and are frequently called upon to solve difficult problems, or negotiate with important people from many different stations.

**Panjandrum's Command (1st level):** On your turn, you can use a bonus action to allow one creature within 30 feet of you to move up to his or her speed as a combat reaction. The creature you command also gains temporary hit points equal to your level, which last for 1 hour.

You can use this ability once, and then you must rest before you can use it again.

**Magistrate (6th level):** You are empowered to arrest, charge, try, and sentence criminals. You can't use these powers against nobles, priests, or your fellow panjandrum without first obtaining a special writ from the

highest authorities. In other cities you can use these powers against criminals from your home city, but you need the approval of the local authorities to do so.

This ability allows you to command city guards to take people into custody. You command sufficient followers to summon a raid when needed in your home city (see Followers, under narrative benefits). Overzealous use of these powers can lead to a lot of trouble, and more senior panjandrum may release your prisoners or commute your sentences.

**High Minister (10th level):** You are appointed to your home city's ruling council or top-ranking circle of royal advisors. You are awarded a palace, a staff of loyal servants, and a moderate income in the form of a royal stipend, investments, or duties that you are entitled to collect. You also gain an elite company of legionaries (see page 79) to protect your palace and serve you. At 15th level, your followers improve to veterans.

## PANJANDRUMS IN THE WORLD

As an important official or authority in your home city, you naturally command the respect of your fellow citizens. People seeking to curry favor with the city's rulers are prepared to do favors for you, share information and resources, or even offer you hefty bribes to gain your assistance. People who regard your city as an ally are likewise well-disposed toward you, and assist you as they can. On the other hand, power breeds rivals and enemies. People who resent your influence and authority—for example, thieves' guilds, high nobles, or agents of enemy cities—frequently work against you.

## PERSONALIZING THE PANJANDRUM

The exact nature of the panjandrum class varies from city to city.

**Court Eunuch:** Quodeth, Ikath, and other Kalay cities are home to bureaucracies headed by eunuchs who are considered slaves to the throne. In theory the removal of the eunuch's ability to continue his line means that all of his loyalty is transferred to the monarch, breaking any preexisting ties of family and social class. However, many eunuchs remain partisans who work inside the bureaucracy to advance the interests of their old families. Court eunuchs can amass wealth and influence to rival the most powerful princes and high nobles, and sometimes rule their cities in all but name.

**Katagian Scribe:** The panjandrum of Katagia are dedicated to the study of many different sciences and the preservation of knowledge of all kinds. Each scribe specializes in a field such as arcana, diplomacy, engineering, law, mathematics, or natural science, and oversees civic projects related to his or her field

of study. To advance in the ranks, a Katagian scribe must pass rigorous examinations demonstrating his or her mastery of many different fields.

**Lomari Centurion:** In Lomar, all civic officials hold military rank and are expected to be able to lead warriors in the field as well as perform their administrative functions. Most centurions are assigned to strict duties and have little ability to adventure at their own discretion, but some are unattached, and trusted to act in the city's interests as they see fit.

## QUODETHI THIEF

Most cities in Thule are plagued by highly organized thieves' guilds, but nowhere are the thieves so bold or numerous as they are in the rich city of Quodeth. You belong to one of the Quodethi guilds, whether it's a powerful guild of hundreds controlling entire quarters of the city or an upstart gang fighting for a single street to call its own. You grew up poor and desperate, but your guild gives you the things you could never have achieved on your own: money, power, and prestige. You're expected to answer

the call when your guild needs a job done or foot soldiers for a street war, but the rest of the time you're free to do as you please.

Many thieves are content to serve as loyal rank-and-file guild soldiers, taking their orders from more senior thieves and rising or falling with the guild's fortunes. You are more ambitious than that; you're willing to take orders for now, but some day you intend to be the one giving the orders. If that means climbing the guild ladder with hard work, sharp wits, and a keen eye for opportunity, well and good. If it turns out that your advancement is blocked, then maybe you'll just have to strike out on your own and establish your own guild somewhere.

The people of Quodeth are humans of Kalay descent, although there are sizable communities of Atlanteans, Dhari, Nimothans, and a small number of nonhumans present in the city. Consequently, the majority of Quodethi thieves are Kalays born in Quodeth, but a Quodethi thief might come from any race or nationality. The vast majority of guild thieves are men and women of the lower classes—nobles and high-ranking priests or panjandrums have all the power and wealth they need, and don't have to turn to street crime to improve their lots in life.

**Key Identity:** Human (any), rogue, fighter, bard.

## QUODETHI THIEF BENEFITS

The streets are your home. You can disappear in a crowd or around a corner in the blink of an eye, blending perfectly into the teeming masses of humanity that throng the city streets. News and rumors come your way like water flowing downhill—if it's worth knowing, you know it. While the authorities are not your friends, the common people of Quodeth know who you are and what you are a part of, so they are careful to treat you with respect.

You have dozens (sometimes hundreds) of allies in the form of your guildbrothers and guildsisters, plus a city full of safehouses and boltholes where you can lie low whenever you want to drop out of sight.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You gain training in Acrobatics and Deception. No one can lie like a thief born and raised in the streets, and at an early age you learned the value of sure feet and a good sense of balance.

**Thief's Feint (1st level):** When you make a melee or ranged attack on your turn, you can perform a thief's feint. You gain tactical advantage on the attack roll, and after the attack, you can use a bonus action to disengage.

You can use Thief's Feint once, and then you must rest before you can use it again.

**Reputation (6th level):** When you make an interaction skill check with criminal elements in your home city (or other areas where you spend a lot of time), you gain tactical advantage—you've earned a reputation that other thieves and outlaws respect. Your bonus also



applies to checks made to intimidate or bluff common citizens, who are likewise aware of the fact that you mean business. On the down side, the authorities know your name and are generally hostile toward you.

**Guildmaster (10th level):** You become the leader of your thieves' guild or establish a new guild of your own. You gain a hidden guild stronghold protected by secret entrances, deadly traps, and trained guard-beasts. You gain enough followers to provide you with a company of enforcers who are equivalent to bandit captains, plus a high income from your cut of the guild's activities (see Followers and Income under narrative benefits). Your thieves are initially very loyal, but if you fail to provide strong leadership, you may face challenges from the lower ranks.

## QUODETHI THIEVES IN THE WORLD

Thieves have few friends and many enemies—the forces of law and order, rival guilds, even members of your own guild who are jealous of your success or who, like you, intend to be the man or woman in charge someday. In territory controlled by your guild, you command the respect (and the fear) of the common people. Outside your territory, you are regarded as a thug and a villain. Your only allies are the other members of your own guild. Individually you are weak, but together you are an army, a force that can overwhelm all but the most determined foes.

## PERSONALIZING THE QUODETHI THIEF

Major guilds in Quodeth include the Seven Knives, Red Furies, Muggers, Beggars, and Bargemasters, but there is no reason you couldn't belong to a small upstart guild—or even a guild with similar power in another city of Thule.

**Red Fury Acrobat:** The Red Furies are a bold sisterhood of burglars, pickpockets, and robbers who rule the Temple Quarter of Quodeth. They are not above blackmail or assassination when the stakes justify these tactics, but they are renowned as cat burglars. Many Red Furies are climbers and acrobatics of amazing skill, and they roam the rooftops and spires of Quodeth like other thieves roam the streets and alleyways. As you might guess, all Red Furies are female—men are not welcome in this guild.

**Seven Knives Assassin:** You are a member in good standing of the Seven Knives, the strongest thieves' guild in Quodeth. You have hundreds of brothers and sisters ready to fight by your side, secret strongholds and safehouses where you can lie hidden as long as you need to, and a vast network of informants, fences, and specialists who can equip you for almost any escapade imaginable. The

only drawback is that the Seven Knives demand your obedience. Will you seek greater autonomy, or will you fight your way up the ranks and take your place as one of the Seven who lead the guild?

**Thranish Juggler:** In a city ruled by black sorcery, thieves must take steps to disguise their true activities. You pose as a juggler or a fool, always ready with a jest or a pratfall to entertain the masses, but behind your painted smile, you are a spy and burglar of peerless skill.

## SACRED SLAYER

The temples of Thule are not places where faithful priests minister to the poor and needy. Behind the public traditions of religious festivals and public alms, they are secretive cabals that jealously protect their power and privileges. Some of this protection is obvious: Fortress-like temple compounds, influential friends at court, and armies of temple soldiers. But most temples also employ agents who are less obvious, and you are one of these. Dedicated to the service of your god, you are a bodyguard, inquisitor, spy, and—when the situation requires it—assassin who kills the enemies of your temple.

The tradition of the sacred slayer only exists in devout societies, such as the cities of Akal-Amo, Ikath, Lomar, or Kal-Zinan. Most barbarian tribes do not possess the sheer religious fanaticism to develop any sort of similar institution, but there are exceptions. For example, some tribes especially devoted to the spirits initiate their warriors into a sacred brotherhood dedicated to protecting the holy places and relics of the tribe.

**Key Identity:** Human (Dhari, Kalay, Lomari), dwarf, cleric, rogue, ranger.

## SACRED SLAYER BENEFITS

Your training begins with a thorough indoctrination in the dogma and precepts of your faith, followed by years of study in the arts of stealth and observation. You are deadly when you have the opportunity to strike with surprise—your god demands you strike true when you face an enemy of the faith. Because you seek to do your work in secrecy, you do not gain any widespread reputation as you advance, but your standing and authority in your temple increase throughout your career.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Religion and Stealth. The tenets of your faith guide your actions, and you find that staying out of sight makes your work easier.

**Slayer's Strike (1st level):** When you attack a target you have tactical advantage against, you can choose to perform a slayer's strike. If you hit, you deal maximum damage with your weapon. In addition, if the target is a special enemy of your god (see the sidebar), it must attempt a Constitution save (DC 8 + your

## SPECIAL ENEMIES OF THE DEITIES

Sacred slayers are charged with destroying the enemies of the faith, and their deadly strike is keyed to whether the target they attack is a special enemy of their faith. Special enemies for each of the Nine are:

- Asura:** Cold creatures, fiends, servants of Tiamat
- Herum:** Arcane spellcasters, Atlanteans, servants of Asura
- Ishtar:** Beastmen, lawful celestials and fiends, servants of Nergal
- Kishar:** Beastmen, monstrosities, servants of Tiamat
- Mithra:** Aberrations, undead, servants of Set
- Nergal:** Elves, chaotic celestials and fiends, servants of Ishtar
- Set:** Good creatures, servants of Mithra and Tarhun
- Tarhun:** Giants, reptiles, serpentmen, servants of Set
- Tiamat:** Aberrations, celestials, servants of all other gods

Wisdom modifier + your level bonus). On a failed save, you double the damage of your attack against the target.

You can use Slayer's Strike once, and then you must rest to regain it.

**Sacred Relic (6th level):** In recognition for your service to the temple, you are granted custody of a holy relic that can aid you in your duties. Choose one of the following: *+1 weapon*, *+1 armor*, *bracers of defense*, *cloak of protection*, *ring of mind shielding*, *ring of protection*, or an item of the GM's discretion of similar power.

While magic items are rare in Thule, temples often hoard mysterious treasures acquired down through the centuries. The sacred relic is not yours to dispose of, and if you no longer need it, you are expected to return it to your temple.

**Planar Ally (10th level):** Once during each character level at 10th level and above, you can conjure a celestial being, elemental, or fiend even if you are not normally able to cast a conjuring spell. This is equivalent to *planar ally*, but the maximum CR of the creature you conjure is equal to one-half your character level. (The GM may allow higher-level monsters or longer duration if the scenario warrants the special attention of your deity.) In general, your deity only provides allies that are close to his or her alignment.

## SACRED SLAYERS IN THE WORLD

To most outsiders, you appear to be one more priest or temple guard. How people react to you is based primarily on how they would react to any mid-ranking priest or templar in the temple you serve. If someone regards the priests of Set with suspicion, he or she usually sees the sacred slayers in Set's service in the same light. As long as you remain in the favor of your temple masters, you can call upon the resources of the temple for shelter, assistance, and the resources necessary for your work.

## PERSONALIZING THE SACRED SLAYER

The most important step in creating your sacred slayer character is simple: Which god do you serve?

**Bolotanga Ghost Warrior:** The Bolotanga tribe of Dhar Mesh is deeply religious. You are one of the tribe's "ghost warriors," sworn to serve the tribe's shamans and protect the things and places sacred to the spirits of nature. If someone defiles one of these places or murders a shaman, it falls to you and your brothers to pursue the defiler to the ends of the Earth if necessary to see justice done. Who is it that you pursue, and what crime did they commit?

**Fang of Set:** You were raised to be a holy assassin of Set. From your childhood you studied the arts of stealth, combat, and poisoning. You were trained to follow the orders of the priests of Set without hesitation, slaying whomever they told you to slay, and standing ready to surrender your life if it should prove necessary to strike down Set's foes. While the Fangs of Set are intended to be used against those who have offended the faith, you have learned that the priests you obey often employ the Fangs as common mercenary killers, hiring you out to anyone in need of an assassin and pocketing the rich fees they can charge for your services. Perhaps you are still a faithful servant of the Father of Night . . . or perhaps you have turned apostate, and use the skills the priests taught you to enrich yourself.

**Mithran Inquisitor:** Mithra's temples are among the richest and most powerful in most of Thule's cities, but with wealth and power, corruption is sure to follow. Your sacred task is to protect Mithra's priesthood from the insidious dangers that threaten the faith, both from within and without. You keep a vigilant watch for any signs of cult activity and move to stamp it out whenever it appears; you search out the agents of enemy faiths and stop their plots against Mithra's temple; and you observe your fellow priests for signs of venality or corrupt influences. It is a thankless task, but it must be done.

## SOOTHSAYER

Both civilized and savage Thuleans are highly superstitious people. They place great importance on omens, dreams, astrology, and other hints of what the future may hold. These signs and portents can be cryptic or frightening, but those who are trained to understand their meanings can often transform a puzzling dream or the seemingly unpredictable movements of the stars into clear, actionable advice. You are a soothsayer, a speaker of truth, and it is your gift that helps both the highborn and the low to understand what the future holds.

Many people claim to have the gift of foresight, but only a few have any real talent. Soothsayers who truly possess the gift are highly sought-after. Kings, great chieftains, and high nobles keep talented soothsayers as valued advisors, and frequently consult with them on all sorts of decisions. You enjoy the trust and confidence of a high-ranking patron, and need not concern yourself with finding a place to live or selling your talents by reading palms in the bazaar.

Soothsayers are found among many races, although their techniques vary from culture to culture. Some are simply born with the gift, and see truths that no one else perceives from an early age. Others begin with a long apprenticeship or education, studying religious texts and occult lore. Most soothsayers possess at least a small amount of magical ability. Soothsayers are rarely great warriors or brawny heroes, but many such individuals are guided and advised by a soothsayer's counsel.

**Key Identity:** Human, dwarf, elf, cleric (not of Ishtar), wizard, sorcerer, druid.

## SOOTHSAYER BENEFITS

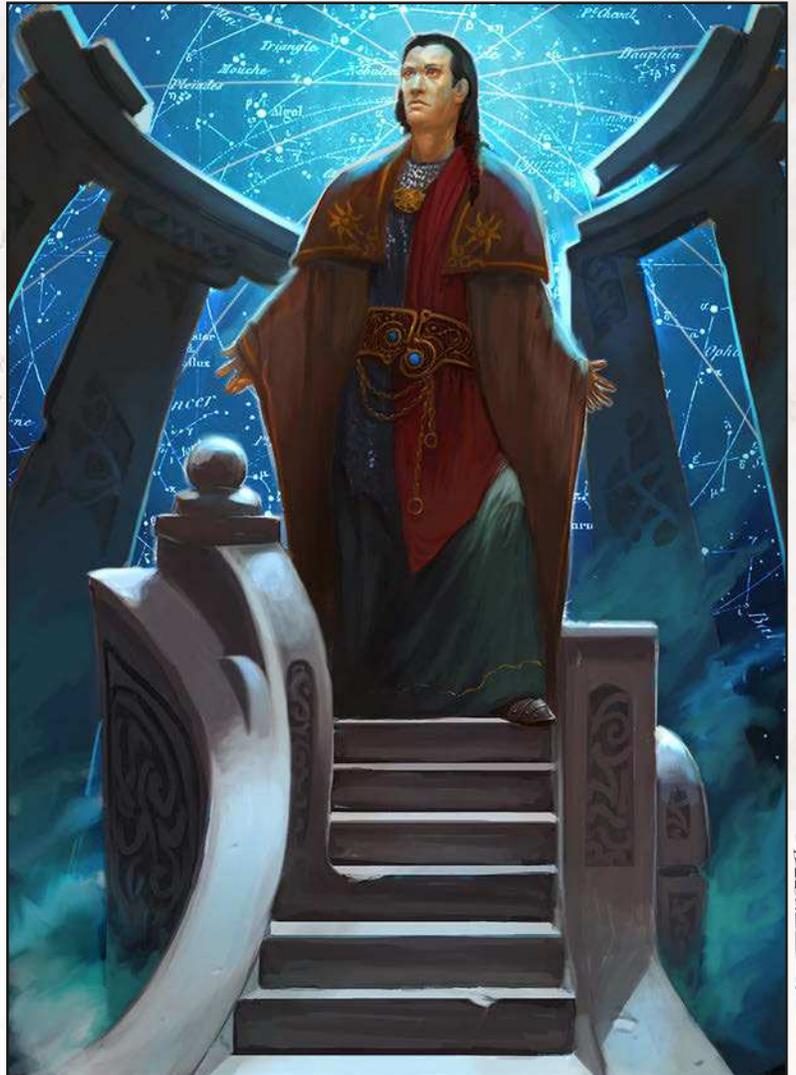
There are many seers who have no special gift of foresight, but your gift is real—you can find meaning in dreams and signs, or foretell the fortunes of others by casting horoscopes or reading runes. You must first master an arcane and complicated subject with a long apprenticeship, learning the meaning of different stars or signs; even if you had no gift at all, your advice would still be valuable due to the depth of your learning. The stories of your wise pronouncements soon spread and bring many people in search of counsel to your door. At the zenith of your career, your predictions take on the weight of true prophecy, and Fate itself seems to conspire to make your utterances come true.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You gain training in Insight and Religion. The best soothsayers understand that many who seek out their services already know the answers to the questions they ask, and need only a little encouragement to see the truth for themselves.

**Foretelling (1st level):** You can perform a foretelling for one ally within 30 feet. This requires one minute, and you cannot foretell for yourself. Roll d20 twice and record the results. You can substitute one of these d20 rolls for a d20 roll made by the target ally or made by an enemy attacking the target ally. The target ally need not be in sight, and you do not need to be able to take an action or even be aware of the ally's situation—you performed your foretelling earlier, and now it is unfolding.

You can create a foretelling once per day, and substitute up to two d20 rolls with each foretelling.

**Hear Sooth (6th level):** Your reputation as a soothsayer leads powerful individuals to seek out your assistance. When you interact with merchants, nobles, and other potential patrons, you gain tactical advantage.



In addition, you gain a moderate income from wealthy patrons who request your counsel (see Income, under narrative benefits).

**Prophecy Revealed (10th level):** Once during each character level at 10th level and above, you gain a special insight into an important situation or challenge you face by recognizing the signs of old prophecies coming true or discerning the meaning of a powerful omen. If the GM determines that there is no additional information or special insight available, you do not expend this use of the ability.

## SOOTHSAYERS IN THE WORLD

Most Thuleans hold a deep respect for soothsayers and listen carefully to anything you say. Unfortunately, there are enough frauds and charlatans posing as soothsayers that you cannot expect to be heeded at all times, especially if you appear to be giving counsel in your own self-interest. Many so-called soothsayers make a good living by telling important people what they want to hear—and more than a few honest soothsayers have had their livings

curtailed quite suddenly by telling a powerful client something unpleasant. In addition, you should be wary of the priests and priestesses of Ishtar. They believe that the working of Fate is in their goddess's hands, and that attempts to see what the future holds are misguided at best.

## PERSONALIZING THE SOOTHSAYER

Soothsayers are principally distinguished by their preferred method of foretelling.

**Atlantean Astrologer:** The study of astrology was raised to a high science by the sages of Atlantis. You are trained in both the meticulous observations and calculations needed to work out personal horoscopes, as well as the mystic meanings of hundreds of combinations of planet conjunctions with major and minor constellations. There are always skeptics, but most civilized Thuleans pay great attention to the movements of stars and planets that they believe are linked to their personal destinies.

**Sersid Dreamwalker:** The great seers of the ancient elven realm of Sersidyen mastered the art of dreamwalking—sharing the dreams of others. You know how to brew a soporific dream-potion that allows you to dimly sense the dreams of anyone who sleeps in your presence, and you are trained in the meaning of dream images and events. When the mighty are troubled by recurring dark dreams, they call for a dreamwalker to help them understand what they are being told.

**Nimothan Runecaster:** Most people believe Nimothans to be unconcerned with anything they cannot physically touch or feel, but these northern warriors possess their own traditions of foretelling. Runecasters use bones or stones carved with mystic runes, dropping them at random and searching for meaning in the way they fall. You possess the gift of runecasting, and use your talent to help guide your people when they encounter the supernatural.

## STAR-LORE ADEPT

Arcane magic is rare and perilous in Thule. Sorcery, theurgy, and wizardry are not things that should be studied by humans. They belong to earlier ages, when prehuman races such as serpentmen, rakshasas, genies, and other evil creatures dabbled in arcane power. But these grim and frightening arts pale in comparison to the sort of magic that you dare to study. You have discarded the earthly black arts in favor of alien teachings millions of years older, the dark wisdom of terrible races from beyond the stars. Perhaps you seek the power to protect the world from such unearthly threats—or perhaps you seek to harness their power for your own selfish purposes.

No mortal mind, no matter how strong or well-defended, can withstand contact with such lore and remain completely undamaged. Your sanity hangs by a thread, and in fact you may have snapped already. But your familiarity with Things That Should Not Be means that when you do encounter unearthly horror, you are already inured to it. Nightgaunts, mi-go, elder things—these present no great shock to you. Armed with the magic and knowledge of alien races, you seek to turn their own powers against them.

Most Thuleans fear and dread any hint of contact with the powers beyond the Earth. There are very few mages who have ever dared to explore the mystic traditions of distant stars, and most of those individuals came to bad ends. You most likely began to study this lore by discovering the notes or writings of one of these individuals, which means you are a scholar from one of the civilized realms with access to occult libraries or hidden texts. Naturally, you must have some foundation in the mystic arts to even begin to decipher any such materials that come into your possession.

**Key Identity:** Human (Atlantean, Kalay), elf, sorcerer, wizard.

## STAR-LORE ADEPT BENEFITS

As might be expected, you are a master of the strangest and most esoteric lore imaginable. You are familiar with languages no human should know, and know monstrous truths that would send lesser minds reeling in fear and terror. Magic derived from the lore of star-beings can be exceptionally hard for earthly creatures to resist, giving you a powerful advantage over most other spellcasters. While you never develop any wide reputation in the human world, you acquire knowledge of potent names and signs as your studies advance. By speaking or drawing these powerful names, you can sometimes command the aid of beings that would otherwise destroy you.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** You are trained in Arcana and Religion. In addition, you gain a bonus language chosen from the following list: Benthic, Draconic, or Mi-Go. Adepts who study the lore of alien races often need to learn how to use items or interpret lore not meant for humans.

**Potent Lore (1st level):** You can spend a bonus action on your turn to increase the level of the next arcane spell you cast this turn by 2. This affects all level-based variables of the spell you are casting, including resisting counterspell attempts or casting at a higher level of effect. By calling upon the arcane secrets of alien races, star-lore adepts can create unexpectedly powerful magical effects.

You can use Potent Lore once, and then you must rest before you can use it again.

**Mystic Signs (6th level):** Through mystic gestures and motions, you can identify yourself as an initiate in unearthly lore to creatures that are otherwise hostile to humans and their ilk. You begin any interaction with intelligent extraterrene or extraplanar creatures with an attitude one step better than would otherwise be the case (Hostile becomes Indifferent, Indifferent becomes Friendly, and so on).

**The Stars Are Right (10th level):** Once during each character level at 10th level and above, you can call upon powerful alien entities to perform services for you. This functions as *planar ally*, except that you can use the spell even if you are not normally able to cast it, and you call an extraterrene creature instead of a planar creature. You can conjure an extraterrene creature whose CR is no higher than one-half your character level.

## STAR-LORE ADEPTS IN THE WORLD

Fortunately, almost no one realizes what you are really up to. People view you as simply one more eccentric mage, and treat you as they would treat any sorcerer or wizard who appears to be powerful and perhaps a little unstable. If the true nature of your power were to become widely known, the priests of the Nine and the Guardians of the Sign would certainly seek to destroy you.

## PERSONALIZING THE STAR-LORE ADEPT

Each star-lore adept is unique. There is no school or tradition of elder race magic widely practiced in Thule, so each student of star-lore follows his or her own path to power.

**Cultist of the Crawling Chaos:** Cults dedicated to the worship of the Great Old Ones are scattered throughout Thule. You belong to one of these hidden cabals that worship Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos. In exchange for your adoration, Nyarlathotep provides mystic revelations and secrets of advanced science. What led you to join the cult in the first place? Do you still seek enlightenment and power, or have you turned away from the Black Pharaoh?

**The Most Ancient:** You seek to win the patronage of the mysterious being known as Tawil at'Umr, the Most Ancient, the Prolonged of Life. Over the centuries the boldest and most skillful masters of the arcane arts have sworn allegiance to this being, which is an avatar or servant of Yog-Sothoth and a mighty sorcerer. The Most Ancient grants great power and a vastly extended lifespan to those it favors, but few indeed have found their way to its silver halls and fewer still survive the experience.



**Pnakotic Scholar:** You possess a metallic scroll or tablet marked with the alien hieroglyphs of the Pnakotic Manuscripts. Terrible secrets of power are locked in its weird symbology, and you are slowly but surely deciphering them. It is dangerous to possess an artifact of this nature, since priests and panjandrums ban the study of this alien lore. Worse yet, there are creatures that can sense your fragment and take it from you if you do not guard your secret carefully.

**Transposed Mind:** You put on a clumsy act, but you are not remotely human. Your body is that of some unfortunate human scribe or conjuror who dabbled in dangerous lore, but your mind is that of an alien entity from the far reaches of the universe. Through some terrible experiment or unfortunate accident, your consciousness was transposed with the mind of your host body. You may view this as a temporary inconvenience, an opportunity to study a primitive race by living among them, or as a bitter and unwelcome period of exile in which everything you see disgusts and repels you. The only way to remedy this mistake is to train your frail human brain to cast the mighty spell needed to return your consciousness to its rightful place.



## TRIBAL OUTCAST

Life in the Thulean wilderness is hard. A savage or barbarian faces dangerous beasts, harsh weather, and vicious enemies in the form of rival tribes. In this deadly world, the only allies a tribal hero has are his people, the warriors and kin with whom he has grown up . . . but some tribal heroes don't even have that. Tribal justice can be harsh, and the penalties for breaking taboos, disobedience, failure, or turning against your tribe are stark: Death or exile. You are no longer welcome among your people, and you must now find your own way in the world.

As an outcast, you are alone and friendless. Behind you lies some dark tragedy or mortal enemy; ahead, an uncertain future. You have learned that the only person you can rely on is yourself. You may turn your back completely on your people and plunge into experiencing civilization in every way you can, or you might choose to honor your people's ways even though you are no longer one of them. Either way, you can't go home again.

Almost any character could begin an adventuring career as a tribal outcast. Many tribal heroes are barbarians or rangers, of course, but a character exiled for practicing magic or stealing might instead be a druid, sorcerer, or a rogue. Every outcast's situation is unique.

**Key Identity:** Human (Dhari, Kalay, Nimothan).

## TRIBAL OUTCAST BENEFITS

You possess the superb woodcraft and finely honed instincts that anyone who grew up among your tribe must cultivate in order to survive in Thule's deadly wilderness. In battle, you expect to fight alone—you excel at dueling enemies one on one, and leaving any other foes to whatever companions you happen to have at the moment. Over time, you establish a name for yourself, much like any other free blade or mercenary. In time the day will come when you do go home again, and set right the mistake or crime that led to your exile in the first place.

**Skill Bonuses (1st level):** Wandering the wilderness has honed your outdoor skills. You are trained in Nature and Survival.

**Lone Wolf's Strike (1st level):** If no creatures other than you are adjacent to a creature, you can use your action to perform a Lonely Strike. You gain tactical advantage on the attack, and if you hit, the target falls prone if it is Large or smaller.

You can use Lone Wolf's Strike once, and then you must rest to regain it.

**A New Identity (6th level):** You pick up the practices of a new life, and while you'll always have your heritage, you have new experiences that mold you. You gain the 1st-level Skill Bonuses from a second narrative.

**Triumphant Return (10th level):** Your former tribe is ready for reconciliation. Whether you accept the offer is up to you, but as a token of sincerity, you have been given a tribal heirloom. Work with your GM to choose an appropriate magic item, which is yours until you return it to your tribe. Tribal heirlooms usually are uncommon or rare magic items.

## TRIBAL OUTCASTS IN THE WORLD

To civilized folk, one barbarian is much like another. They don't care if a warrior is wandering to seek his fortune, or wandering because he was driven out of his homeland. As a result, a tribal outcast has ample opportunity to carve out a place for himself in Thule's city-states and borderlands. Nobles and merchants always need skilled warriors, so it isn't hard to find someone willing to pay an outcast to fight for them. Other outcasts who happen to fall in with unsavory types do well as thieves or bandits, since their wilderness-honed instincts prove valuable in all sorts of criminal enterprises.

Anyone who regards your tribe as their enemy likely regards you as an enemy, too. If you're a Dhari warrior, any beastman you meet could care less about troubles you've had at home—he assumes that you are his ancestral foe and tries to kill you. Depending on the nature of your crime, your own tribe might be out to kill you, too.

## PERSONALIZING THE TRIBAL OUTCAST

No two tribal outcasts are alike, since each individual forced to leave his or her people represents a unique combination of native tribe, family disapproval, or broken taboos.

**Drangir Slave:** When you were only a child, your village was attacked by slavers. Your family was killed, and you were carried off into captivity. For years you endured brutality and toil, until one day you managed to escape and make your way back to your homeland. There, you discovered that you were dead to your people: A Drangir is supposed to choose death rather than the humiliation of thralldom. The Drangir in you is ashamed that you lived . . . but a dead man cannot avenge his murdered kin.

**Jomurjan Warlock:** The Kalay barbarians of Jomur fear and loathe wizardry in any form. To your people, arcane magic is unclean, an abomination in the eyes of the Forest Gods. Yet you chose to defy this taboo and bargain with evil powers for the use of their magic. Was your hunger for power so great that you chose to ignore the primitive superstitions of your people? Or did some terrible need drive you to seek out forbidden lore, understanding that it would cost you everything?

**Narthan Murderer:** You grew up among the Dhari tribes of the Nar Highlands. As a young warrior, you fell in love with the daughter of the chief—but you had a rival. When the chief's daughter made her choice, you and your rival quarreled. Tragically, she threw herself between you and your foe at the wrong moment. You lived, but your love and your enemy died, and your tribe blamed you.

## LEGIONARIES

Legionaries are loyal, well-trained soldiers who often serve as palace guards or elite mercenary bands. They are a cut above typical guards.

<b>LEGIONARY</b>	<b>CR 2</b>
Medium humanoid (human)	XP 450

**Senses** average Perception 12

**Languages** Low Atlantean, one other

### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (scale coat, shield)

**hp** 52 (8d8+16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 10 (+0), **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 11 (+0), **Cha** 11 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Intimidation +2, Perception +2

**Equipment** scale coat, shield, warspear, shortsword

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The legionary attacks twice with spear or shortsword.

**Warspear** (melee or ranged weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+3 piercing damage.

**Shortsword** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+3 slashing damage.

## PATRONS AND ENEMIES

Many different forces are at work across Thule: Secret cults or organizations with plans to dominate the continent, barbarian tribes that chafe at the corrupt influences seeping out of civilization, mighty kings with dreams of conquest, baleful supernatural entities that threaten to bring about the end of the human age, and more. During the course of your character's adventures in Thule, he or she may find both allies and enemies among these greater forces. Choosing which causes to fight for and which to fight against is perhaps the single most important decision your character makes in the course of his or her career.

Thirteen pervasive organizations, supernatural forces, or influential individuals are presented here to serve as your character's allies, contacts, patrons, or enemies. This is not intended to be an exhaustive

list; there are many warlike tribes, dangerous villains, and ancient evils that might rise to prominence and become especially important to the story of your character. Some of these forces are barely even sentient and might not even be aware of your character's existence—but nevertheless they become fulcrums that change the course of a hero's career, and forever influence events across a continent.

**Choosing Patrons and Enemies:** Choose one entity to be a patron, and one to be an enemy. Your GM will provide opportunities for your character's relationships with the great powers of Thule to come up in play.

## THE BEAST CHIEFTAIN

The history of Thule has been the story of barbarian tribes struggling to master the wilderness, and slowly clawing their way toward civilization. Once humans were little more than beasts themselves, but as people learned to master nature, they rose above the level of beasts and became the lords of the Earth. The beastmen—a cruder and more savage breed of humankind—are being left behind, and they hate what more advanced humans represent. The beastman Ghom, *khur-za-khur* of Ur-Ghom, dreams of unleashing an orgy of violence and unthinking rage on all of humankind. Yet Ghom is only the personification of a savage, sullen spirit that lurks in the shadows of Thule's jungles, hating humans and all their works. Few humans willingly serve this fierce spirit, but a few—particularly those warriors who give themselves over completely to animal rage brutality—become its unwitting agents.

## THE BLACK CIRCLE

The demon-haunted city of Thran is home to the most powerful group of mages in Thule: The society known as the Black Circle. These proud, cruel wizards are bent on nothing less than world domination, and constantly seek ancient artifacts, forgotten spells, and unwholesome allies to bring their dark dreams to fruition. Until they find the tome or ritual that will give them what they seek, they carefully husband their power, staying in the shadows and working through intrigue and manipulation. Spies of the Black Circle operate in most of Thule's major cities, and the wizards are not above conjuring demons and other monsters to destroy those who get in their way.

## THE EMPEROR OF KATAGIA

The rulers of Katagia, the Last Bastion of Atlantis, have long tried to re-create the lost empire by gathering Atlantean knowledge, magic, and technology within their city. The Emperor of Katagia sees Thule as a land in danger of being lost to darkness,

barbarism, and superstition. To save it, he will impose civilization in the high tradition of Atlantis, even if he must do so at the point of a sword. The Emperor can easily finance expeditions, make Katagia's store of magic and technology available to heroes engaged in his work, or assign soldiers or agents to promote causes he supports—or attack those working against his purposes.

## THE GREAT SERPENT

The cult of Set is older than humankind. Long before the first human nomads found their way to Thule's shores, the serpentmen of Neskk honored the Great Serpent with horrible rites and obscene sacrifices on steaming jungle altars. Even though the empires of the serpentmen are gone, this vile cult persists. Every city is home to worshipers of Set; some practice their dark faith openly in grand temples, while others carry out their rituals in secret. These worshipers form a vast network of spies, assassins, and zealots who obey any order the cult's high priests give in the name of the Lord of Night.

## KANG, THE WHITE DEATH

A malicious spirit of hate and destruction lurks in the great glaciers of Thule. Kang, the White Death, is the mightiest of them all, and it is a vast and implacable menace to all civilization. As one might expect, the ice-spirit wants to bring endless winter and death to all within its reach, crushing all the Earth in its gelid grasp. But Kang also stands for doom—the ending of the age—and the necessary destruction that must come before this chapter of history closes and a new one begins. Its weapons are ill fortune and ironic doom, and its agents are (sometimes unwitting) nemeses of the proud and mighty.

## LAST HERO OF THE ELVES

Long ago, the elven empires defeated the prehuman monstrosities that dominated the primeval continent and helped to civilize the barbaric human tribes that shared Thule with them. Now the great elven cities are in ruins, and the great warrior-heroes of elvenkind are no more . . . except, perhaps, Orethya, the Silver Sword of Imystrahl, sometimes known as the Last Hero of the Elves. Orethya has led a dozen desperate quests across the centuries, challenging the ancient enemies of elvenkind or safeguarding dangerous legacies left behind by her people. Some believe that she is deliberately erasing the history of her people, ensuring that future civilizations will not be influenced by the arcane lore and haughty pride of their predecessors.

## LIGHT OF MITHRA

Mithra's temples are among the most influential in Thule. Mithran priests stand at the side of many monarchs, staunch defenders of royal power and privilege. Many are corrupt and venal, but behind the vast wealth and venal interests of Mithra's temples lies an ancient power of truth and good. Mithra checks the ambitions of evil gods who would drag Thule's civilizations into an age of darkness and despair, and he stands as an important protector of the human world against the Great Old Ones and their terrible servants. Mithra does not always work through his priests, but every now and then a brave barbarian or plucky rogue confronting elder evils has found the Light to be on his side without ever knowing that he was serving as Mithra's champion.

## NYARLATHOTEP

For the most part, the Great Old Ones take little interest in the affairs of mere humans. Some sages believe they aren't even aware of their own cults, and are utterly indifferent to the fates of their most ardent supporters. Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos, is the exception. This fearsome being is sometimes referred to as the soul or the voice of the Great Old Ones, the only one of their number that seems interested in humans—for good or for ill. In his guise as the "Dark Pharaoh," Nyarlathotep spreads chaos, madness, and despair, bringing moral decay and destruction to human realms. But to those who serve him, the Dark Pharaoh bestows gifts of unholy power and knowledge.

## QUEEN OF THE PEACOCK THRONE

The great city of Quodeth is home to greedy merchant lords, corrupt panjandrums, and swaggering thieves, but it is also the seat of Deyane Verix Hazeda, the Queen of the Peacock Throne. She wields little power in her own city, and is little more than a figurehead. However, she stands for something much bigger: The beauty and splendor of Thulean civilization. No other city captures this moment in history or is so inextricably interwoven with the story of Thule as Quodeth, and the Queen of the Peacock Throne is the symbol of the city. The Queen has little strength to arm legions of champions and few agents to help those who fight in her cause—her aid (or opposition) comes in the form of influence and suggestion.

## THE REAVER KING

The barbarian tribes of Thule regard civilization as weak, decadent, and corrupt. Many barbarians eschew civilization's vices, but others see the need to sweep it away altogether and make a clean start of things. The Reaver King of Nim is one such chieftain. The city of Nim is heir to the strength and

fury of the Nimothan people, and whoever holds the throne of Nim is effectively the king of Thule's barbarians. The Reaver King gives aid and support to those who aspire to plunder city-states, battles civilizing influences wherever he finds them, and inspires lesser chieftains to launch their own wars against civilization's wickedness and dissolute ways.

## THE SAGE OF ATLANTIS

On the outskirts of Katagia stands a lonely tower, overlooking the sea. This is the home of Hyar Thomel, the legendary Sage of Atlantis. A white-bearded old man now bent with age, Hyar Thomel is the last living person who was born on the island of Atlantis. How this is possible, none can say, since he was already an old man when the sea claimed Atlantis, and that was three hundred years ago. Hyar Thomel seeks to preserve the legacy of Atlantis by sharing his scientific and cultural advances with the younger races of Thule. The Sage of Atlantis is an excellent source of information; if Hyar Thomel is an enemy, he provides crucial information to the hero's rivals or villains the hero opposes.

## SERVANTS OF R'LYEH

The cult of Cthulhu is ancient and widespread in Thule. The city of Quodeth stands atop the ruins of a prehuman city countless thousands of years old where Great Cthulhu was worshiped; many other secret temples and black shrines lie hidden in Thule's jungles and shores. This continent-spanning cult waits for the day when the stars are right, and Cthulhu is released from his eons-old prison to rule over the Earth once again. Since this day may be long in coming, the Servants work tirelessly to speed it along by hoarding terrible lore, forging alliances with unhuman races, and recruiting the poor, the destitute, and the desperate to join in their blasphemous rites. Cthulhu's followers dream of remaking the Earth in the belief that a paradise awaits.

## THE SEVEN KNIVES

As the largest and most powerful thieves' guild in Quodeth, the Seven Knives are by extension the most powerful thieves' guild in all of Thule. Not only do they largely control the richest city in the continent, the Seven Knives control gangs of thugs and spies in every city of the Inner Sea. The Seven Knives represent what is worst about Thulean civilization: ambition, greed, corruption, vice, and decadence. But they also stand for the ability of the weak to band together and defy the powerful, and the triumph of talent and hard work over low birth and poverty. The Seven Knives control the most extensive spy network in Thule, and can help their friends by providing rumors, resources, or agents to help in causes they care about—for a price, of course.



## EQUIPMENT

Thule is a violent land. The great majority of adult Thuleans go about their business armed, if only with a stout club or a good-sized dagger—and they know how to use whatever weapon they carry. Savages or barbarians must be ready for dangerous beasts or enemy tribes at all times, and city-dwellers face the threat of thieves, assassins, or potentially lethal duels even in the heart of the best-defended cities.

Because Thule's peoples range from savages armed with nothing more than Stone Age technology to citizens of ancient civilizations, Thule's warriors make use of arms and armor not often found in other fantasy settings. Likewise, the sophisticated armor-making of high medieval cultures (and the weapons developed to defeat such armor) are generally absent from Thule. The knight in full plate armor on a heavy warhorse simply doesn't exist in Thule—no one makes fully articulated plate armor, the stirrup hasn't been invented yet, the couched lance is impossible without the stirrup, and the warhorse itself is a rarity in the primeval continent. The "knight" of Thule is a heavy footsoldier in a bronze breastplate and helm, armed with spear and sword.

## NEW ARMOR

While some types of armor are not available in Thule, the civilizations of the continent have developed some new varieties of armor. In general, Thulean armors tend to leave more of the wearer's skin uncovered than suits found in more advanced settings. The differences are purely cosmetic.

**Bronze Cuirass:** The finest armor that is normally available in Thule is the bronze cuirass, sometimes called bronze plate armor. It consists of a snug-fitting sculpted bronze breastplate to cover the torso, a leather skirt or kilt with bronze studs, heavy bronze greaves, shoulder pieces, and a bronze helmet (usually open-faced). It is fitted carefully to the wearer and allows excellent mobility, although for best effect it should be used with a heavy shield. When combined with a heavy shield, the wearer presents his or her enemies with a wall of bronze from head to toe.

**Leather Cuirass:** A leather cuirass consists of a molded breastplate of stiff leather, often sculpted with natural-appearing musculature and decorated with gold or silver personal emblems. A short skirt made of weighted straps covers the wearer to the mid-thigh, and a light helmet of boiled leather is included. It protects better than studded leather armor but offers somewhat less mobility.

**Table 2-3: New Armor**

Armor	Cost	Armor Class	Strength	Stealth	Weight
<i>Light Armor</i>					
Leather Cuirass	100 gp	13 + Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	15 lbs.
<i>Medium Armor</i>					
Mail Cuirass	600 gp	15 + Dex modifier (max 2)	Str 13	Penalty	40 lbs.
Bronze Cuirass	900 gp	16 + Dex modifier (max 2)	Str 13	Penalty	50 lbs.
<i>Heavy Armor</i>					
Scale Coat	40 gp	15	Str 13	Penalty	35 lbs.

**Mail Cuirass:** This is essentially a reinforced chain shirt. The mail is sewn into sturdy leather panels and then shaped carefully to the wearer's torso, providing a better fit and better mobility than regular chainmail and better protection than a chain shirt. Like the leather cuirass, a mail cuirass usually includes a skirt of weighted leather straps studded with bronze or iron to provide some basic coverage to mid-thigh, as well as a light bronze helm.

**Scale Coat:** The scale coat is a simple form of scale mail that dispenses with sleeves and leggings, making it relatively simple to manufacture. Heavy scales sewn to a thick coat provide good protection for the torso and the upper legs, while greaves protect the lower legs and shoulder-pieces or vambraces help protect the arms. The scale coat is usually worn with a bronze or iron helmet. It is the heaviest armor commonly available in Thule, and many city guards or soldiers wear armor of this type.

## NEW WEAPONS

The warriors of Thule wield a great variety of weapons from many different cultural traditions, including a few that are quite rare in other settings.

**Chakram:** An aerodynamic throwing-ring with an edge of sharpened metal, the chakram is hard to master but deadly in trained hands.

**Khopesh:** This sickle-shaped blade is heavy and awkward, but its extreme curve allows the wielder

to trip opponents. When you attack with a khopesh, you can choose to make a tripping attack. You have tactical disadvantage for the attack, but if you hit, you knock your target prone. You can only trip bipedal foes of Large size or smaller using a khopesh this way.

**Mace-Axe:** This weapon features a mace-like head with a single axe blade on one side. It is heavy and hard to wield, but delivers a powerful blow. You can choose to deal bludgeoning or slashing damage with a mace-axe.

**Warspear:** This is a short, broad-headed stabbing spear mostly intended for melee combat. It is too short to brace against a charge, and can only be thrown a short distance. Warspears are popular among Thule's jungle tribes.

## UNAVAILABLE ARMS AND ARMOR

Some more advanced weapons and types of armor simply haven't been invented yet in the age of Thule.

Check with your Gamemaster before you select any of the items listed below for your character.

**Restricted Weapons:** Hand crossbow, rapier.

**Armor:** Half-plate, plate, splint.

**Mounts and Vehicles:** Camel, draft horse, sailing ship, warhorse

**Other:** Ball bearings, magnifying glass, piton, spyglass.

**Table 2-4: New Weapons**

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
<i>Martial Melee Weapons</i>				
Khopesh	20 gp	2d4 slashing	5 lbs.	Heavy, special
Mace-axe	15 gp	1d8 slashing	7 lbs.	Heavy, versatile (1d10), special
Warspear	8 gp	1d8 piercing	4 lbs.	Heavy, thrown (range 20/60)
<i>Martial Ranged Weapon</i>				
Chakram	20 gp	1d6 slashing	2 lbs.	Thrown (range 30/120)



# 3: ATLAS OF THULE

*No map can contain all of Thule's mysteries, nor can any tome catalog all its splendors. The perils of the Lost City of Tentakron or the secrets of Kal-Zinan have obsessed scholars for ages. But one thing is clear: Thule has enough dangers and treasures for several lifetimes of adventures. The explorer who sees even a tenth of the glittering city-states, fell dungeons, natural wonders, and ancient ruins herein will be forever lauded in the annals of civilization. For that is one of Thule's most curious aspects: those in the east know little of what lies to the west, and those in the north are ignorant of the south. Only by crisscrossing this vast and awe-inspiring land, from the Claws of Imystrahl to the Thousand Teeth, from the Highlands of Nar to the Lands of the Long Shadow, can one begin to comprehend the enormity and strangeness of Thule.*

**T**he primeval continent is a land of a thousand different moods. Its character changes drastically from one valley to the next, revealing new wonders or presenting the traveler with unexpected obstacles and dangers. Jungles, glaciers, mountains, volcanoes, sweltering swamps and inland seas . . . Thule offers a bewildering variety of terrain and climate. In a few dozen miles, adventurers might go from a noxious marsh where prehistoric beasts bellow and roar to cool, lofty hills dotted with the ruins of forgotten kingdoms, and then press on to endless plains of windswept tundra where fierce barbarians roam.

While Thule as a whole is difficult to categorize, sages studying the maps drawn by Atlantean explorers generally divide the continent into six great regions: The Claws of Imystrahl, Dhar Mesh, Kalayan the Golden, the Lands of the Long Shadow, the Nar Highlands, and the Thousand Teeth. The nearby islands of Hellumar and Nimoth form a seventh region, because they are geologically and culturally similar to Thule, and they share Thule's history. The borders between these regions are often hard to discern—for instance, is the city of Thran more properly included in Dhar Mesh or the Thousand Teeth? In which region does a nomadic tribe dwell? Still, diversity is the common characteristic of Thule, so it is not surprising that each region harbors within it many examples of the wondrous variety to be found in the continent as a whole.

Each region represents an area in which the people and the lands are more closely linked to each other than to neighboring lands. Barbarian tribes can be found all over Thule, but barbarians of Dhar Mesh are a distinct culture group when compared to the barbarians of the Thousand Teeth. The Dhar Mesh barbarians are tangled up in complicated webs of feuds and friendships with each other, but naturally have little to do with tribes found in other lands. Thanks to the difficulty of travel in Thule, few individuals or events have the power to affect people in multiple regions.

## TRAVEL IN THULE

The swiftest and easiest way to travel from one place to another in Thule is by ship. Thule has almost no good roads to speak of, but the seas, lakes, and rivers of Thule serve as highways of a sort. The River Quosa connects the Kalayan Sea with the waters ringing the island continent, linking dozens of isolated ports that otherwise would never trade with each other. It is only a couple of hundred miles overland from Ikath to Orech, and ten times that distance by sea—but most of the time, the traveler making that trip by sea will reach Orech days before the one who sets out overland, and probably enjoys a safer and easier journey in the process.

The drawbacks of traveling by ship or boat are obvious. First of all, there may not be a body of water that leads in the direction you want to go, or a place where you can land when you get there. Much of Thule's outer coastline consists of extremely rugged mountains with

no harbors to speak of. There simply is no place to land west of Katagia or south of Orech, so anyone who needs to go deep into the Shields of Sunset is going to have to walk most of the way. Secondly, the coasts are poorly charted and subject to dangerous weather from time to time—the Thousand Teeth are littered with the wreckage of unlucky ships. Finally, corsairs are thick in the waters of Thule, and eagerly prey on any unprepared galley that comes their way.

If a sea or river won't serve, the next best option is to join up with friendly nomads heading in the right direction and travel in their company. Many barbarian tribes wander endlessly across the territory they claim. Not only is it safer to travel with large numbers of fierce and well-armed friends, it is a lot more comfortable than foraging in the wilderness for yourself. A barbarian camp may not be quite the same as a palace in Katagia, but it offers a tent over one's head, hot meals, entertainment of different sorts, and the simple pleasure of company. Many tribes can be quite generous to their friends, offering food and shelter without question for as long as needed. Of course, nomads tend to wander where they will, not necessarily where you want them to go . . . and winning the friendship of a barbarian tribe is often a difficult undertaking requiring years of fair trading, shared dangers, and the giving of rich gifts.

The last form of travel worth noting is to join a merchant caravan heading in the right direction. Land-bound trade in Thule is relatively rare, but the so-called "jungle traders" who link the richer and more advanced barbarian tribes to the markets of the great cities must venture regularly into the deep forests. If you have any delusions about an easy ride in a wagon full of pillows, set them aside now—the typical caravan consists of heavily laden musk oxen, elk, or mules, led by drovers on foot. In the warmer climes where most Thulean beasts of burden don't do well, a traveler wishing to join a caravan might have to pay for the privilege by agreeing to serve as a porter, and carrying the trader's wares.

## CLAWS OF IMYSTRAHL

Civilization flourishes in the Claws of Imystrahl more than any other part of Thule. Elves scheme from their alabaster towers, mercantile humans ply their trade through an elaborate network of fjords and rivers, and the surviving Atlanteans fight to preserve a reasonable facsimile of now-sunken Atlantis. Despite that, the Claws of Imystrahl are by no means urban—the region is home to untamed jungles and forbidding mountains equal to any in the continent. There are plenty of bloody-handed reavers, savage beastmen, and sinister cults to go around. The region has more than its share of ancient ruins, dark dungeons, and other prime adventure sites. Whether you dare to ascend the Ten Thousand Steps or delve into the Echoscream Caverns, the Claws of Imystrahl have both perils and plunder in abundance.

The Claws of Imystrahl have the continent's mildest climate, and coastal routes tend to have winds and weather kind to sailors. But "the continent's mildest climate" is relative; it just means that the humidity in the jungles is slightly less oppressive, and climbers on the high glaciers can survive for ten minutes in the elements, not just five. The Claws are Thule's breadbasket, exporting grains over the Starcrown Mountains and to the Golden Sea, where it reaches the rest of Thule. The city-states of the Claws also export finished goods, and like everywhere in Thule, the coastal regions export fish to inland communities.

War has touched the Claws of Imystrahl throughout its known history, even if armies' sandals haven't trod the region much lately. The elves of Imystrahl were aggressive and ambitious 5,000 years ago, warring against the serpentmen and expelling the rakshasas from the continent entirely. More recently, the Atlanteans used the Claws of Imystrahl as their beachhead when they invaded Thule, eventually moving eastward to seize Quodeth and then Ikath across the Golden Sea. Time and misfortune caused the Atlanteans to give back most of those gains even before Atlantis itself sunk, but many in the Claws of Imystrahl long for a resurgence of Atlantean culture and ambition—and not coincidentally a full-fledged "New Atlantis" to govern it all.

The Claws of Imystrahl are a good place to base your campaign—or even just part of it—if you're interested in the theme of civilization vs. wilderness and how those diametrically opposed forces play out. In this region, you'll find communities trying to build civilization out of the wilderness (New Trius and Bren), a culture trying to stay intact after an unthinkable disaster (Nith), and a society in drug-addled retreat from the world outside (Imystrahl).

## IMYSTRAHL, CITY OF THE BLACK LOTUS

Imystrahl, the city-state that gives the region its name, is Thule's oldest realm, and by far its most decadent (and on this continent, that's saying something). The elves of Imystrahl are cruel, capricious, and dissolute, looking inward in search of rarefied pleasures and interacting with the outside world as little as possible. The noble elves in Imystrahl's highest castes don't just spurn the world outside the city's walls—they spend as little time as possible in the conscious world, preferring their own drug-addled dreams as they consume the narcotic known as the Black Milk.

Ordinarily, elves don't sleep or dream in the traditional sense, but Imystrahl's decadence has turned this on its head. The noble families of Imystrahl sleep upward of 18 hours a day, dreaming vividly all the while. Agents of the sinister being known as Nyarlathotep introduced the Black Milk to Imystrahl, and it

quickly overtook the city's other luxuries and diversions. Nyarlathotep's greater purpose for taking control of a city of dreaming, sorcerous elves can only be guessed at. For now, new temples (the only new buildings within Imystrahl in almost 2,000 years) devoted to Nyarlathotep have sprung up across the city, and strange, winged creatures fly from marble tower to alabaster spire, consuming the dreams of the sleeping elves.

Not every resident of the city is addicted to the Black Milk. A caste of half-elves, prized because they have elven blood yet do not succumb to the Black Milk, keeps much of the city running. Though technically slaves, they wield significant influence on their drowsy, decadent masters. Humans and people of other races are generally slaves or "untouchables," when they can even gain access to the city in the first place. The red-plumed guards of Imystrahl's famed Bonedust Gate—half-elven warriors of great repute—demand a truly compelling reason or a truly significant bribe to allow travelers beyond Imystrahl's gates.

Imystrahl is a city-state in steep decline, but that makes it all the more interesting for adventurers. If one needs a sage with obscure knowledge about Thule's distant past, a rare reagent for a magic ritual, or a long-forgotten portal to a far-off corner of the map, Imystrahl is the place to go . . . but beware entanglement in Nyarlathotep's schemes, and know that a cruel elven sorcerer is doubly dangerous when roused from dreamy sleep to black anger.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF IMYSTRAHL

Elves came to Thule via world-gates more than 5,000 years ago. They were a more powerful, ambitious people back then. The elven nations of Imystrahl and Sersidyen went to war against the serpentmen and rakshasas that dominated the continent, and over the centuries, the elves ground out advance after costly advance. The rakshasas retreated to Hellumar and the serpentmen lost their great fortress of Bhnaal Pruth. As the elven numbers diminished through attrition, they bolstered their ranks with humans—sometimes slaves, sometimes mercenaries, sometimes junior partners in alliances of convenience.

The humans learned well from their elven masters, and in time they rebelled. The armies of Quodeth conquered Sersidyen completely, and the elves of Imystrahl retreated to Thule's southern coast. Elven dreams of empire diminished further when the Atlanteans arrived in 307 AR, sweeping elven fleets from the seas and sacking the city of Imystrahl itself. The elves repulsed the Atlantean raiders, but at great cost: the city lay in ruins, and elven armies elsewhere in Thule made their way home to Imystrahl.

Over time, the elves rebuilt, never forgetting the blow struck by the Atlanteans and occasionally using their magic to thwart Atlantis's colonial ambitions in southern Thule. The elves rejoiced in 1906 AR when Atlantis sank beneath the waves, and many would love to see the last survivors of the Atlantean race leave Thule for good.

About 40 years ago, Imystrahl found a new decadence, one that would reshape (and perhaps doom) their society: the Black Milk. Introduced by Suric Dyamath, self-described “harbinger of Nyarlathotep,” this narcotic extract from jungle flowers has the city in its grip. Higher-caste elves spend their days in slumber, dreaming strange dreams. Meanwhile, the city crumbles around them, strange monsters flit from rooftop to rooftop, and Nyarlathotep’s servants have functional control of the city.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

At its height centuries ago, Imystrahl was an inspiring metropolis of marble and alabaster, delicate white spires rising above the deep blue harbor waters. Now the marble is crumbling, much of the alabaster has been stripped to pay for Black Milk, and a layer of soot means the city has literally lost its luster. Stone walls surround the city in all landward directions, and a series of breakwaters protects the harbor from both weather and seaward raids.

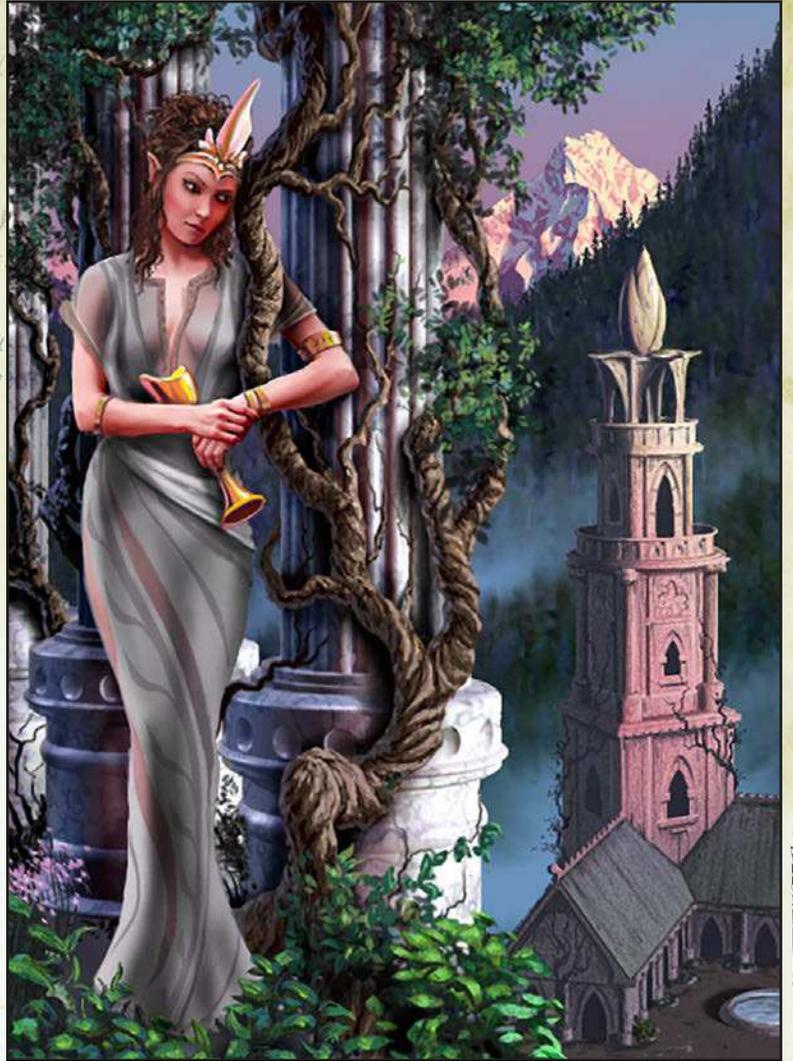
Inside the city walls, Imystrahl is a warren of structures constructed at odd angles, streets that dead-end without warning, and tall buildings that often blot out the sun. For the visitor, it’s a remarkably easy city to get turned around and lost within. Because the elves care for little other than their own narcotic dreams, all manner of monsters lurk in the dark alleys and shadowed balconies of the city—some summoned specifically by Nyarlathotep’s agents to feed on the fevered dreams of the elven nobles.

The city is also eerily quiet, because much of the city is sleeping, day or night. The fastest way to draw attention from the city watch (well-armed and brutal half-elves) or house guards (mercenaries in the employ of a high-ranking house) is to make a lot of noise.

**Bonedust Gate:** The main land entrance to Imystrahl, Bonedust Gate is a fortress embedded within the city walls. It takes its name from the fine white powder on the inbound road—the powdered bones of millennia-old enemies of the elves. It’s hard for ordinary travelers to get past the surly guards at the gate, unless they have black lotus to trade or enough gold to bribe the guards (the bribe amount is variable, but 10–100 gp for a small party is a good starting point).

**Western Dock:** Any ship not obviously Atlantean or hostile can dock at the westernmost pier in Imystrahl’s harbor, but getting beyond that pier and onto solid ground requires rare flowers or gold, just as for the Bonedust Gate above. This dock is Imystrahl’s primary point of contact with the outside world, though it’s mostly trade goods, not passengers, that embark and disembark here.

**Spire of Zaal:** Among the more wakeful of the elven nobility are the arcane sages of Zaal, who study ancient elven scrolls and argue esoteric points of magic theory from within the walls of this slim spire near the center of the city. A product of centuries of magic, the Spire of Zaal is far larger on the inside than it appears from the outside, and even the sages don’t know where every hallway leads (not that they’d admit this, though). The sages



are in the thrall of the Black Milk, though they aren’t entirely crippled by it: they still rouse from their slumber to continue their studies in fits and starts.

The sages of Zaal can be information sources, patrons, or antagonists for the PCs, and the interior of the spire can certainly be an adventure site in its own right. Among the sages’ current obsessions: finding and restoring the World Gate believed to lie somewhere underneath Imystrahl, how to use Black Milk to open a path to the Dream Dimension, and unearthing some lost arsenals from the long-gone elven empire of Sersidyen.

**Gyrann Prison:** Many of the wretches in the dungeonlike prison underneath Imystrahl are common elven and half-elven prisoners, plus a few dissidents troubled by the growing influence of Nyarlathotep. One wing, though, is composed of noble political prisoners—elves who lost political struggles and are now restricted to small but comfortable cells underneath the city. The political prisoners get gifts, including Black Milk, from their families. One prisoner, Dzorik Trenaal, is a botanist trying to grow the black lotus hydroponically underground. If Dzorik succeeds, he’ll win his freedom . . . and cut off one of the few remaining reasons for Imystrahl to contact the outside world.

## **Imystrahl** (Small City, pop. 17,200)

*City of the Black Lotus, the Sleeping Spires, the White Teeth*

Imystrahl, home to cruel and decadent elves, is an important trade hub along Thule's southern coast. The city is falling under the sway of the Black Milk, an opiate supplied by servants of Nyarlathotep, and the elves are increasingly too busy dreaming apocalyptic dreams to care about the outside world.

**Authority:** Vaas Kuruthim is the titular master of the city, but he hasn't been seen awake in almost a year, and the Kuruthim family in general rarely leaves their noble manor. Day-to-day city operations fall to Crothia Zearein, "tyrant general" of Imystrahl's standing army, who has resisted the lure of the Black Milk so far.

**NPCs:** Three quarters of Imystrahl's residents are elves, and most of the rest are half-elves and a smattering of other races.

*Thryn Seklekir* is a half-elf captain of the guard who tries to look outward on Imystrahl's behalf, visiting nearby towns and sometimes hiring adventurers to surreptitiously advance Imystrahl's interests in the region. When he's in Imystrahl, he takes an interest in unusual travelers and seeks news of the wider world. After he develops a relationship with the PCs, Thryn can turn heel, falling under the sway of Nyarlathotep's followers. Then he becomes an obstructive force, trying to harass the PCs and eventually forbid them from Imystrahl.

*Hayerik Muord* is a canny elven trader who plies legitimate goods on the Western Dock and black lotus at Bonedust Gate—and takes pains to keep the two businesses separate. So far, she's been able to sell Black Milk within the city while keeping the followers of Nyarlathotep at bay, but she worries that eventually she'll draw unwanted attention.

*Prath Napratam* and *Suric Dyamath* are the agents of Nyarlathotep responsible for getting as many elves dreaming as possible. Suric understands the alchemical process required to turn black lotus into Black Milk, and Prath distributes it throughout the city.

**Trade:** The only import Imystrahl cares about is black lotus from the northern jungle, though the city can't feed itself and imports fish and farmed goods, mostly by sea, from the rest of the region. They export "antiques," which is a kind way of saying that they're stripping their own homes bare to pay for more Black Milk. An ordinary city would bankrupt itself in a matter of weeks at this rate, but Imystrahl had millennia to gather wealth and craft fine goods.

**Concerns:** A few forward-thinking elves are worried about the Black Milk and the influence of Nyarlathotep, but they have difficulty rousing their fellows from slumber long enough to tell them so. A broader concern among the elves (when they're awake) is that trouble stays far from Imystrahl's walls, so they sometimes order

the city's small but well-trained army into the field to keep nearby settlements in line.

**Secrets:** Prath and Suric, ostensibly the leaders of Nyarlathotep's followers in Imystrahl, understand only the first phase in plans of the Crawling Chaos. Now that the elves are dreaming, those dreams can feed an apocalyptic horror growing within one of the city's towers.

The sages of Zaal are closer than they realize to finding and repairing the World Gate in the catacombs beneath the city. Once they do, they'll have access to the ancestral home of the elves—whatever shape it might be in after 5,000 years—and a few other nodes in a network of portals that once stretched across Thule.

## WINDLASH REACH

Imystrahl's influence to the east extends only as far as the town of Twinharbor, a human town living in perpetual fear that the elves will use "dark magic" on them. The rest of the coast consists of deep harbors that are difficult to reach by land, with thick jungle extending almost to the water's edge.

**Ethebrae:** This seaside town controls nearby Fort Jalri and towns along the road as far as Kiridia to the northeast and Shenemi to the west. Sahuagin raids along the coast are a perpetual problem, and Ethebrae's city fathers have heard rumors of an underwater "city of sharks" in the deep waters to the south.

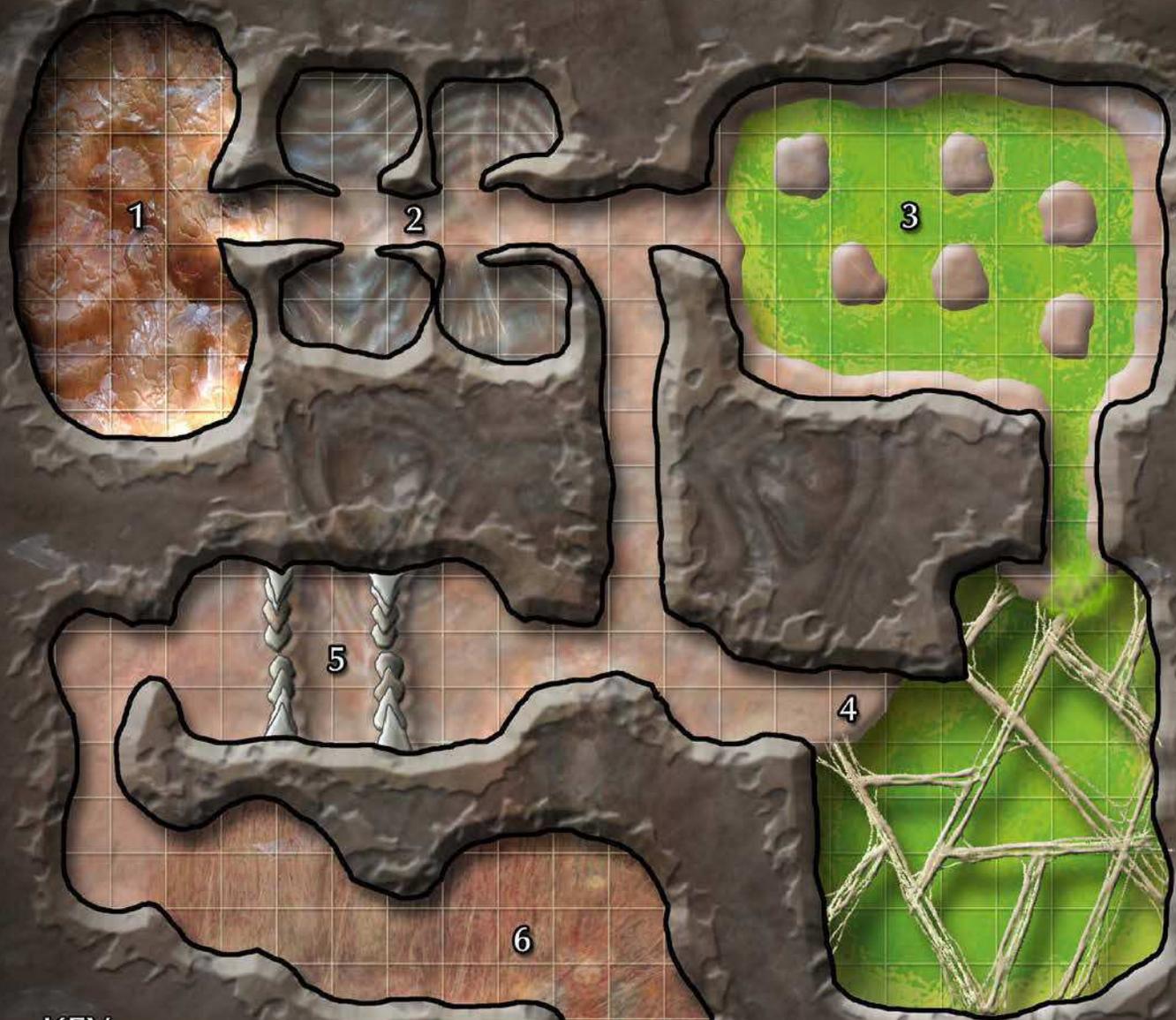
**Doomspire:** The creation of Daor Mu, a sorcerer from Ren Shaar, the Doomspire is a spiked tower of black basalt rising out of the green jungle. Daor Mu provides hospitality and advice for anyone who can brave the dangerous climb to her fortress. Visitors may also meet Daor Mu's son, a being of fiendish heritage and barely controlled magical power. Daor Mu built the Doomspire far from civilization because she feared her child's power would run rampant someday.

**Heartfugue Labyrinth:** Nestled in the Windlash Mountain foothills, this underground labyrinth was a creation of the rakhsasas. In the intervening centuries since the tiger-men left Thule, Heartfugue has been home to vampire clans, mad wizards, and most recently a cult of the Great Old One, Yga-Ygo. No matter where you are within the labyrinth, you can hear your own heart beating.

**Lair of the Anatomist:** Atop a high cliff in the Windlash Mountains is a crumbling tower that emits flashes of light at irregular intervals. The light is a lure—bait set by an insane wizard known only as the Anatomist. A false floor in the tower base drops victims into a series of chambers that mimic parts of a living body: the brainlike arrival chamber, "chambers of wind" that act like lungs, acid-filled chambers that mimic a tumorous stomach and connective tissue, moving teeth that chomp anyone who passes, then finally a smooth, increasingly sloped tube that expels the victims hundreds of feet above the cliff base. The anatomist has various trained oozes and other horrors patrolling his lair, and he takes great delight in the terror of those he traps.

# LAIR OF THE ANATOMIST

CLAWS OF IMYSTRAHL SITE



**KEY**

- 1. Arrival Chamber
- 2. Chambers of Wind
- 3. Tumor Islands
- 4. The Skein
- 5. Mastication Chamber
- 6. Expulsion Chamber

 1 Square = 10 Feet

## NITH

Nith and the surrounding communities (from Seyrik in the west to Putrann in the east) are a nascent city-state of Atlanteans trying to rebuild their home continent's culture, creating a new Atlantis on Thule. Ruled by Vethni Ural, an Atlantean noble who can trace her lineage to Atlantis's monarchs, Nith sees itself as the shining reflection of Atlantis, even as the rest of the region regards that as delusions of grandeur. Vethni is a competent "queen of Atlantis," earning the grudging respect of rivals across the Claws of Imystrahl. New ships of Atlantean design are flying Nith's seahorse-emblazoned flag as they ply the waters of Devilsun Bay, and Nith's small but well equipped army is keeping the roads and rivers safer than usual.

Vethni is a complete fraud, however. She's not even an Atlantean but a doppelganger with enough enchantment magic and gumption to pull off an immense con. When she first adopted the Vethni personality, the doppelganger just wanted to enrich herself at the expense of starry-eyed Atlanteans. But now she finds herself wielding real power, and Vethni is starting to care about Nith's welfare, almost in spite of herself.

Beyond the Claws of Imystrahl, Nith is best known for its shipwrights. The port of Wenkral to the south-east is largely a glorified naval yard. The squat, sturdy war galleys that form the remnant of the Atlantean navies sail from here, though many are showing their age and aren't seaworthy enough to leave Wenkral's docks. Thule's finest naval architects work here, learning all they can from the battered hulks of Atlantis's finest ships.

**Devilsun Bay:** This is Thule's largest network of fjords, easily navigable and more protected from bad weather than the rest of the continent's coastal waters. The bay's navigable waters are under Nithian control, but they can't be everywhere at once, and opportunistic pirates sail from dozens of hidden harbors along the coast.

**The Impossible Obelisk:** Occasionally visible in the mountains north of Nith, this towering obelisk marks a dungeon inhabited by Tessali the Mind-Mage, an inscrutable, inhuman sorcerer described in Chapter 4.

**Peretahn Tower:** This cliffside fortress is home to Sir Helleruk, a self-styled noble with a small fleet of war-galleys. Helleruk uses Peretahn Tower and his fleet to make life miserable for merchants and travelers entering Devilsun Bay, demanding tolls and tribute by sea and by land (along the Kiridia-Arbrell road). Travelers and Katagian merchants loathe Helleruk, but Peretahn Tower is difficult to assault by land or sea.

**Ruby Orchid Isle:** The largest island within Devilsun Bay, Ruby Orchid Isle is home to the Grand Banyan of Ukru-Prah, an ancient treant revered by druids for its oracular wisdom. To the southeast is the Temple of Shahl, recently excavated and expanded by cultists of Tsathogua. The druids and cultists now fight a guerrilla war for control of the isle.

## RURITAIN AND THE ASPTOOTH

The coastal city of Ruritain, one of the first settlements built by the Atlanteans, is under perpetual siege from the surrounding wilderness. The jungles west of the Asptooth mountains seem to breed monsters faster than Ruritain's forces can cut them down, and everything north of the Fortress of Jutana and south of Tervidium is lost to civilization.

The Asptooths (locals know that only outsiders use the term "Aspteeth") aren't particularly tall mountains, but they're among the continent's steepest; the mountain range is an impenetrable wall to east-west land travel.

**Ruritain:** This small city-state exerts control along the peninsula's eastern coast, but the other towns are besieged by monsters coming from the mountains and dissatisfied with Ruritain's promises of protection. Almost everyone who comes to Ruritain does so by sea. Ruritain's troops try to clear-cut the jungles by day and wearily guard the walls of their city by night.

**Tower of the Severed Tongues:** This fortress, originally of elven construction, is now home to Esperain, a warlock who has fallen in love with Shub-Niggurath. Esperain's magic is twisting the already dangerous denizens of the Asptooth mountains into civilization-hating horrors, and he hopes to make the entire peninsula into a "gift" for Shub-Niggurath.

**Tervidium:** This town cooperates with Ruritain on matters of trade, though Tervidium is increasingly worried about the dangerous jungle to the south and wonders whether a closer alliance with Katagia might bring more protection.

**Ruins of Nahyra-Tor:** Until last year, this was a thriving town, and it still appears as a useful harbor on most maps. But the jungle has swallowed it whole, and it looks like civilization left there decades ago. Infested with beastmen, the ruins may still hold treasures for anyone willing to reclaim it.

## PEARL AND DRAKE CHANNELS

The Pearl Channel (to the west) and Drake Channel (to the east) allow maritime access deep into Thule's interior—almost to the base of the Starcrown Mountains.

For the adventurer, three linked dungeons provide limitless opportunity—and peril. First, Torchbane Tunnel was originally the creation of a dwarf clan exiled from Kal-Zinan. The tunnel is wide and gently sloped enough for large trade caravans to pass through—though not without risk. Side tunnels and natural caverns abound in the 20-mile tunnel, and some hold monsters, raiders, or other underground dangers.

Second, Alabaster Citadel is the castle that guards entrance to Torchbane Tunnel—and now a shrine to Mithra. It's under almost constant attack from the lower

jungle tribes, monsters from the surrounding mountains, and bandits who'd like to charge a toll to pass through the tunnel.

Finally, for the truly brave, Echoscream Caverns are another creation of the exiled dwarves, natural caverns containing the ruins of a small city. A keening wail can be heard at all times—a scream said to drive those who hear it mad.

**Ren Shaar:** Originally of Atlantean construction, Ren Shaar has changed hands dozens of times in its history, and today its human-majority populace claims independence while worrying about Katagia to the west, Lomar to the north, and Marg to the east. Ren Shaar's economic importance is easy to see; it connects the southern coast to Thule's interior through a Torchbane Tunnel beneath the Starcrown Mountains. Its position on low river plains makes it difficult to defend, however.

**Marikan:** This town is blessed with some of the best agricultural land for leagues around: the Sendriak Plains. Marikan is also the only place in the region that breeds horses on a large scale. The town controls Yauren Tower to the west and until recently controlled the Iron Spire as well. A rag-tag pirate fleet, the Chicane Corsairs, recently seized the Iron Fortress and the adjacent harbor from Marikan's town guard, sinking Marikan's three war galleys and driving the soldiers into the Poltangan Wilds. The soldiers died at the hands of beastmen in the island's interior, and now the beastmen are gathering for an assault on the Iron Spire and a pirates-versus-beastmen battle.

**Temple of the Eight Eyes:** Ragesea Island is famous for perpetually birthing rain squalls, so sailors give the island a wide berth. Giant spiders hunt throughout the misty jungle, and a barbaric cult worships them as gods. The temple, visible from the sea on a rare clear day, holds riches from Imystrahl's elves—back centuries ago when they were ambitious conquerors.

**New Trius:** New Trius, built on the ruins on an Atlantean settlement that burned to the ground in the chaos when Atlantis sank beneath the waves, is a human town that aspires to become a city-state. A brother-sister duo, Krihen and Sesteria Canatris, rule the town. They're building galleys in the town's shipyard and marching columns of troops between New Trius and two fortresses: Castle Pherea and Anasare Tower. Their resources and manpower don't match their ambitions, however, so the Canatris siblings will make almost any deal that advances New Trius's expansion.

**Reefhook Island:** This hook-shaped island is famous in regional folklore for Zoltarak's Shrine, sacred to Ishtar's followers. A sprawling, white-walled manor on a tropical beach, the shrine promises a thousand pleasures to the faithful who risk the long sea-voyage. The shrine has a secret of its own, however—the priests have fallen under the sway of the Great Old One, Yga-Ygo. Travelers who reach the shrine are slowly corrupted with ever more debased pleasures before the truth is revealed to them. Some pilgrims never return from Zoltarak's Shrine, and others return . . . *changed*.

## BREN

A waypoint on the sea routes between the Claws of Imystrahl and the city-state of Marg to the east, Bren is under siege by beastmen and other monsters coming out of the wilderness. Adventurers going east by land from Katagia and Ren Shaar get the definite sense that civilization is slipping away; the roads worsen, friendly travelers are rare, and settlements are fewer and further in between.

The town of Bren relies on its island location to keep the hostile denizens of the wilderness at bay, with guard towers on the shore every quarter mile. The ferry crossings to the mainland are particularly well-guarded, but the Wilds of Dotra beyond are infested with monsters.

**Chenedor:** This town has a secret: the adult women are in a fertility cult devoted to Shub-Niggurath. The town's men are largely unaware of this, though some suspect smaller-scale reasons for nighttime sneaking-around such as infidelity. The women gather weekly at midnight, performing rituals to keep their cult secret and curse suspicious males. No babies have been born in Chenedor for a year, because the women are hoping that they'll earn enough favor from the Great Old One to become pregnant with inhuman children.

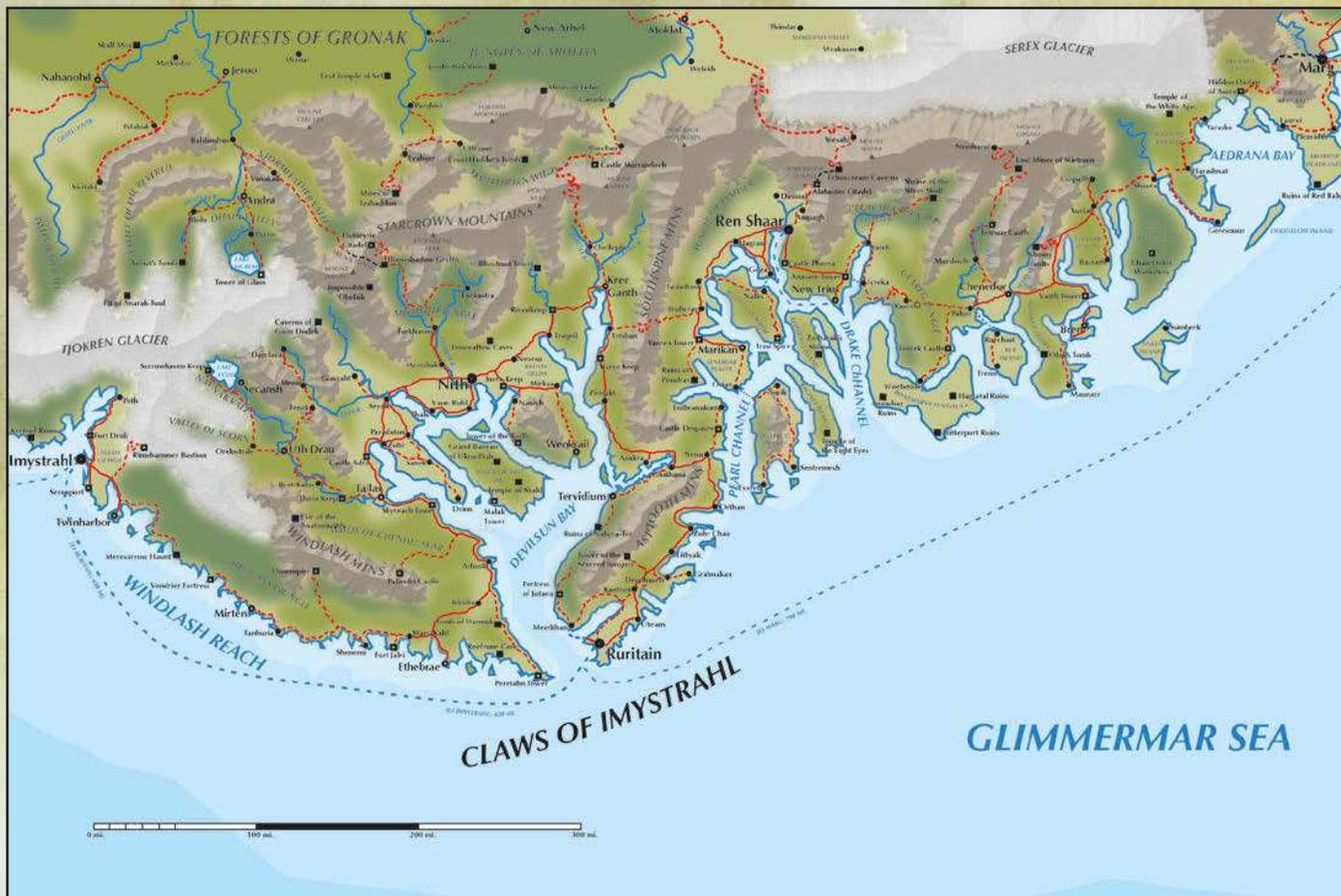
**Khoori Vaults:** This immense cave network is large enough to have its own subterranean ecology, and no one has claimed to have fully explored it. It's described in more detail in Chapter 4.

**Bonemarth Peninsula:** An Atlantean necromancer, Gurian Creed, attempted a coup in the towns across the peninsula as soon as news reached Thule of Atlantis's sinking. The coup was unsuccessful—though it added to the chaos across the region—and Creed lost control of his undead minions. The ruined cities across the peninsula are still infested with undead, though they undoubtedly contain Atlantean riches as well.

## MARG THE CRIMSON, CITY OF SLAVERS

A city built on the slave trade, Marg is one of Thule's richest city-states—and one of its most wicked. Here the coin of the realm is human misery, with slaves suffering under the lash until they're shipped out across the rest of Thule. Many "enlightened nobles" in other city-states openly detest Marg's slaves, even as they discreetly choose not to inquire where their house-slaves have come from. Marg is the city no one likes, but it's also the city everyone secretly trades with.

Many slaves spend only a few months in Marg, but for them each day is a lifetime of anguish and pain. Marg's slavers scour Thule for barbarians, unwary travelers, and other victims to imprison. The newly enslaved come to Marg, where they're trained (often cruelly) in a useful skill, bought and sold (often several times), then shipped off to their new masters (often far from the slaves' original homes). The life of a slave in Marg is nasty and brutish, but rarely short. The slavers care enough about profits to keep their slaves alive and suffering as long as possible.



## “THE ATLANTEAN SHAME”

Marg grew into a city from a collection of human merchant warehouses on the fringe of Atlantis’s colony on Thule—unassuming until an Atlantean exile, Vanadar the Crimson Prince, seized the city in 1114 AR. The Atlantean settlers needed cheap labor—cheaper than shipping help all the way from Atlantis, at any rate. Under Vanadar’s guidance, human merchant companies such as Devrith, Calumnis, and Qurothaq started providing indentured servants to the new arrivals on Thule. As Atlantean conquests expanded, the period of indenture grew longer, and eventually Marg’s merchants started kidnapping entire tribes from the nearby wilderness.

Dealing with Marg was considered uncouth by the Atlantean elites, both because of the exile Vanadar’s presence and because of the slave trade; Atlantean philosopher and historian Graela Tuur called Marg’s very existence “the Atlantean shame.” But as the Atlanteans pushed north and east from Katagia and Devilsun Bay, someone had to till the earth on Atlantean plantations and carry supplies to the advancing Atlantean armies. Marg grew rich on Atlantean ambitions as it supplied those “someones.”

The slaver princes of Marg, gathered into a Crimson Council of eleven wealthy captains, took the chaos of Atlantis’s downfall in stride, expanding their

clientele to include more nobles from the human city-states that grew in strength as the Atlanteans retreated to Katagia. Nearly every city-state buys slaves from Marg, though some are more open about it than others. Marg doesn’t count any city-states as rivals because all of them want the supply of slaves to continue unabated . . . but that doesn’t mean Marg has no enemies. Followers of Asura want to see Marg burned to the ground, and many a barbarian tribe has long memories and would love to sack the city to avenge their kidnapped kin. Among many Kalayan, Dhari, and Nar tribes, nothing unites a barbarian horde faster than a promise to “burn the city of slavers to the ground.”

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Marg is a city of squat, stone buildings, many taking up entire city blocks. The first structures in the city were warehouses along the river, and the city spread out from the riverbanks based on the whims of the slaver princes, not any sort of central planning.

The swampy ground near the city breeds mosquitoes and other insects, which gather in immense clouds to become an actual danger, not just an annoyance. To keep the insects at bay, Marg relies on the smoke from pyres built at strategic points throughout the city. (Slave labor brings a steady

supply of fuel to the pyres, of course.) Those pyres put the entire city under a pall of smoke that keeps the mosquitoes away, and they give everything in the city a reddish cast. Some wonder whether the smoke is worse than the mosquitoes, but once they've seen the insect swarms darken the skies outside the city, they happily accept the discomfort of smoke inhalation.

**Devrith Ward:** Home to Marg's oldest and richest merchant family, this district has a pyramidal fortress at its heart. The Devrith elders haven't left their pyramid in years, using magic to direct their slaver expeditions out in the field, negotiate deals with far-off nobles, and scheme against rival slaver operations.

**Freehold Palace:** This ironically named fortress is home to the figurehead ruler of Marg, Kaz Vurin, a distant descendant of Vanadar, the Crimson Prince. This opulent castle has every luxury provided by the Crimson Council, because the slaver captains want Vurin too busy living in decadence to take an active role in leadership. Their scheme works; Kaz Vurin is disinterested in anything other than the novelties and riches brought as "tribute" by the slaver fleets. His 16-year-old niece, Neira Vurin, is much more interested in making Marg into something more than one big slave camp, but she wields no actual power . . . yet.

**Hidden Harbor of Asura:** Asura's priests want to unshackle as many slaves as they can, but they must work in secret—to aid a slave in escape or to ease a slave's "conditioning" is punishable by death. When Asura's agents free slaves within Marg, the fugitives head through jungle trails to a well-hidden cavern in the high cliffs west of the city, a cave big enough to anchor a galley within. Illusion magic covers the entrance, and so far Marg's authorities don't know how fugitives are escaping their grasp. They'd pay dearly to find out where Asura's hidden harbor is, and Asura's priests would pay dearly to keep it a secret.

**Catacombs of Qurothaq:** Even by Marg's standards, the cruelty and torture delivered upon slaves in this dungeon are legendary. The Qurothaq family sells slaves of all ordinary sorts, but they also offer slaves intended for use in dark rituals, slaves transformed into something beyond human, and slaves who were once important people before they needed to "disappear" and were sent to Marg in chains.

**College of Scribes:** Marg educates many of its slaves, simply because an obedient scribe or seneschal fetches a higher price than an ordinary laborer. A cluster of towers near the city's northern wall is home to the College of Scribes, where brighter slaves learn to read, write, and perform simple bookkeeping for courts and merchants across Thule. The instructors, almost all free citizens, live comfortable lives and are free to pursue their own academic interests when they aren't teaching slaves. The college is thus an unlikely but thriving center of academic learning in Marg.

**Marg the Crimson** (Large City, pop. 34,500; 60 percent of whom are slaves)

*City of Slavers, The Atlantean Shame, Land of Smoke and Sorrow*

This city is essentially a massive slave encampment where powerful families bring newly "acquired" slaves for training, discipline, and resale.

**Authority:** Kaz Vurin is the city's figurehead ruler, but the real power lies with the Crimson Council, the eleven leaders of the largest slaver operations. The four most prominent among them are Gerritt Calumnis, Bran Devrith, Serini Qurothaq, and Vuth Zoser.

**NPCs:** Marg is more than 85 percent human, with the rest being mostly Atlanteans whose families fell in with the slave trade centuries ago.

*Gerritt Calumnis* is the urbane leader of the Calumnis family. Gerritt sees slavery as "the family business," and he doesn't lose any sleep over the human misery he presides over. He's pragmatic and hard-hearted, though unfailingly polite. Gerritt is also an accomplished warlock, though few have ever seen him demonstrate his powers.

*Sankra Rumani* is the high priestess of Asura in Marg—and consequently Marg's most wanted criminal. She's frequently morose, because her small network of allies is only an annoyance to the slavers, not a true threat. Having to choose a tiny fraction of slaves to liberate breaks Sankra's heart, and she'll listen eagerly to anyone with a scheme for hurting the slaver families.

*Gree the Sage* is ostensibly an instructor at Marg's College of Scribes, but he's fallen under the sway of the Great Old One Yog-Sothoth. Under directions only Gree understands, he has assembled a mystery cult within the college and is using enchantment magic to direct the construction of new pyres in a specific constellation across the city. When the network of pyres is complete, Gree believes Yog-Sothoth will reward Marg with "The Great Scintillation."

**Trade:** Marg's primary—and sole—export is slaves: everything from unskilled laborers to concubines to learned scribes to future ritual sacrifices. It imports food and luxuries from across Thule, all to keep the slaves fed and the masters happy.

**Concerns:** Marg's slaver captains have three primary concerns: keeping the slave trade burgeoning across Thule, uprooting the Asuran priests hiding within the city, and gaining the upper hand in conflicts with rival slavers. Marg cares little for what happens in Thule as long as the slave trade continues; the affairs of other city-states are of only mild interest.

**Secrets:** Kaz Vurin's niece, Neira, will become Marg's titular leader if Kaz dies, and she's expressed a distaste for slavery that Marg's true leaders find worrisome. Gerritt Calumnis had Neira's galley diverted to the Ruins of Ghuri several weeks ago. Gerritt hasn't decided whether to simply kill Neira or use magic to make her a more pliable figurehead. Her galley is now several days overdue, and both Kaz Vurin and Sankra Rumani are worried about Neira's fate.

## DHAR MESH

The deepest, darkest jungles in Thule lie in the land of Dhar Mesh. An unbroken canopy of leaves stretches from the Starcrown mountains in the south to the northern coastline and the Sea of Mists. That canopy of leaves covers everything from ancient ruins to bloodthirsty headhunters to homicidal treants to glittering jewels strewn across a riverbank.

Civilized outposts are few and far between in Dhar Mesh, and even those bastions of civilization have an element of urban jungle to them. Ikath is a city of serpents where the unwary are separated from their coins and their lives, a place of both pleasure and peril. Thran is a city of fear, living under the watchful eye of the powerful wizards of the Black Circle. Between those cities is a tenuous network of villages and trade outposts, all living under the threat of barbarian raids, beastman attack, or even more frightening monsters from the jungle.

Yet for all its dangers, Dhar Mesh is a region of opportunity for the adventurer. In the Claws of Imystrahl or along the Kalayan Sea, an ancient fortress would invariably have been reinhabited and rebuilt a dozen times over the centuries, often with little remaining from the original builders. But the jungles and swamps of Dhar Mesh hold ruins untouched from the days of the Atlantean pioneers, Ghedrar the Necromancer, the elven empires, or even the ancient rakshasa and serpent-men kingdoms. Those ruins hold ancient treasures, powerful magic items from a bygone age . . . and horrors that present-day Thule has long since relegated to the stuff of nightmares.

## SWAMPS OF PHOOR

Thule's largest contiguous swamp, Phoor is a nearly trackless wilderness. Most settlements lie on the swamp's periphery, and the interior is left to monsters, beastmen, and vicious headhunters (including the notorious Kyr tribe).

Phoor wasn't always a swamp; as recently as 500 years ago it was a hospitable lowland river valley. Much of Phoor belonged to Ghedrar the Necromancer, a tyrant who ruled central Thule for more than 400 years. Shortly after the Atlantean general Nemruth overthrew Ghedrar in 1673, Phoor started to sink; no one realized that Ghedrar's magic was literally supporting the region. The swamp grew with unnatural

speed, replacing the jungles, lakes, and plantations in a matter of a few decades. Between the chaotic collapse of Ghedrar's kingdom and the appearance of the swamp, many of Phoor's denizens fled, and now the swamps of Phoor have claimed many ruined cities and fortresses.

Many who travel the Swamps of Phoor do so on the Trail of the Left Hand, an X-shaped trail that winds its way through much of the swamp, though parts of the trail are periodically flooded or overgrown. Stone cairns mark the trail every quarter mile or so, and the beastmen leave dismembered left hands of their victims as grisly trail markers, many of which remain after being reduced to bones.

The only other path through part of the swamps is Kal Keor's Folly—and it doesn't go far. Kal Keor the Terrible tried to construct a road through Phoor in 2013 AR to improve his supply lines as he marched eastward. The road sank into the swamp despite the fortune in road materials and captive slaves he sacrificed to make it happen. The Jandar horde ultimately detoured north and south around the swamp.

At the center of the swamps is the Skull Mound—as close to a “home” as the headhunters of the Kyr tribe have. The Kyr tribe is always on the move, but they rarely stray more than a few weeks' travel from this 50-foot high pile of skulls, the results of generations of headhunting. Camp followers and hangers-on are often in residence in huts nearby, making this a useful way-point for travelers—but only if they don't have reason to fear the Kyr tribe.

**Rivek:** A ruined fortress named after the Atlantean family who built it during an early wave of Atlantis's expansion, this castle was razed by Nemruth's army because the Riveks had fallen out of favor with the Atlantean court. Its catacombs are flooded but contain vaults of treasure brought here from Atlantis itself.

**Vault of Khoredir:** One of Ghedrar's trusted lieutenants, the vampire Khoredir retreated here after Ghedrar disappeared. This black castle has sunk thirty feet into the swamp, but Khoredir and his retinue slumber in the upper towers, only awakening to feed on intruders—who then become part of Khoredir's “honor guard.”

**Chalanh:** This stilt-supported village is made up of exiles from Ikath who do their best to live in harmony with the swamp and avoid antagonizing the headhunters or beastmen. Its residents share a secret: they all have serpentman heritage to greater or lesser degree. The more obviously snakelike denizens hide when visitors come, because everyone in Chalanh worries that enemies in Ikath have sought them out.

**Gyrenalem:** This fortress of the Sersidyen elves lies mostly intact within the swamps of Phoor, protected by illusion magic and a small army of magical constructs and undead elves. Even the swamp itself hasn't intruded into Gyrenalem, with only a few underground chambers flooded. In the central citadel is an elven world portal that, if reactivated with the right ritual, would enable instantaneous travel to Imystrahl, other elven ruins around Thule, and the home world of the elves.

If you're looking for a place to put a vine-covered ancient ruin for the PCs to explore, or a path for a difficult wilderness expedition, Dhar Mesh is a good choice. Much of the region is untrammled by present-day explorers, and many of its wonders and perils have never been seen by human eyes. Many a treasure map sold in the marketplaces of Quodeth has “X” marking a spot somewhere in Dhar Mesh . . . whether the map is genuine or a forgery.



**Plondhuk:** This halfling town on the edge of the swamp is perpetually sinking into the mire, at the rate of several feet per year. The residents are adapting by building upward, and the town is a patchwork of different architectural styles, emergency catwalks, and buildings leaning at odd angles. Plondhuk welcomes peaceful travelers, especially if they have goods to trade, but they live under perpetual fear that the Kyr headhunters will attack their town.

**Borenik:** This stilt-village within the swamps is utterly deserted, with half-eaten meals sitting on plates and no signs of violence anywhere. Investigation reveals that the entire population was ensorcelled by minions of Great Cthulhu, and the brainwashed denizens of Borenik are gibbering and capering before a black menhir a few miles away.

## KYR HEADHUNTERS

The Kyr are the largest and most wicked of the tribes collectively known as the Headhunters of Phoor. As you might expect, the tribe cares about one thing: taking heads. They want heads not just as battle trophies, but to fuel dark rituals that add to the tribe's fearsome reputation. Based near the Skull Mound within the Swamps of Phoor, the Kyr are known and feared throughout Dhar Mesh.

Claiming a severed head (generally with a scimitar or axe) is just the beginning for a member of the Kyr tribe. Some heads are boiled, dried with hot rocks and sand, then rubbed down with ash; this shrinks them but preserves them for later use. Whether fresh or preserved, most heads are used in divination rituals, passing on dark wisdom to the Kyr shamans—everything from where to hunt to which tribe members should lead a war party to whether visitors to a Kyr encampment can be trusted. A given member of the Kyr tribe has 1d4 shrunken heads available at any given time and can say with pride where each was collected.

The Kyr tribe has three primary enemies: the beastmen that also call the Swamps of Phoor home, other human barbarian tribes in the region, and the encroaching forces of civilization. In recent years, some travelers from Ikath have befriended the Kyr tribe, bribing them with magic weapons and exotic heads. The Ikathis (who work for the Forked Tongue) can often convince the Kyrs to send a war party out of the swamps to seek “rare heads” elsewhere in Dhar Mesh.

### The Kyr (Small Tribe, pop. 800)

*The Headhunters, the Shrinkers*

The Kyr tribe moves throughout the Swamps of Phoor with impunity; even the beastmen are cunning enough to avoid taking them on directly.

**Authority:** Chief Butho rules the Kyr tribe, though he spends most of his time keeping his more ambitious underlings in line and has little patience for long-term thinking. The head shaman, Vilia, handles anything requiring subtlety and anything involving magic.

**NPCs:** The Kyr tribe is human, though some have sloped brows and stooped posture that suggests long-ago interbreeding with beastmen.

*Chief Butho* is a man of action, capable of severing even an armored head with a single blow from his greataxe. An imposing, tattooed presence, he projects an aura of fear but is more cunning about tribal politics than he lets on.

*Chaara* is a garrulous member of the tribe who scouts ahead of the main war parties. He fancies himself something of a merchant, and he'll sometimes bargain with travelers—especially ones who look too tough for the war party—to acquire heads on the tribe's behalf.

*Vilia* is the most powerful of the Kyr's shamans, accomplished in both divine and arcane magic. She taught many of the key rituals to the rest of the tribe and probably knows more about divination rituals than anyone between Thran and Ikath.

**Trade:** The Kyr tribe is self-sufficient and accustomed to living off the land, but they're always interested in magic weapons and tools, plus heads from creatures they'd have difficulty obtaining themselves.

**Concerns:** Butho is in his mid 40s and starting to worry about who'll lead the Kyrs when he's gone—though he worries even more about keeping those would-be leaders in check for the time being.

**Secrets:** The Forked Tongue syndicate has started using the Kyr tribe as particularly frightening muscle throughout the Dhar Mesh region, though Chief Butho doesn't know how frequent this practice is, nor how far afield the hired headhunters are going.

Vilia has a secret fear: she learned many of the rituals in her youth from a strange traveling wizard in the service of the Great Old One, Nyarlathotep. She worries that the rituals are somehow tainted, or that Nyarlathotep will someday demand some service of the Kyr in return.

## IKATH, CITY OF SERPENTS

Ikath is the pinnacle of Thulean civilization at its most seductive, its most vibrant, and its most corrupt. A cosmopolitan city on the shores of the Golden Sea, Ikath welcomes nearly everyone—though few leave the City of Serpents with as many coins as they arrived with.

Almost anything can be had for a price in Ikath, including authorities willing to look the other way. Thieves, dark magicians, cultists, and schemers call the City of Serpents home. Serpentmen openly walk (and slither) through the streets of their own district and sometimes

beyond, and the undead lurk in the city's shadows at night. Ikath is a cheerfully amoral place concerned only with its own welfare and continued enrichment.

## SERPENTS, MUMMIES, AND ATLANTEANS

An archeologist looking at Ikath would see the city as a layer cake, with each civilization building on the ruins of those that came before. Ikath was founded by the serpentmen of the Empire of Nessk, who used humans only as servants. A series of elven attacks caused the serpentmen to retreat from Ikath, leaving humans in possession of the city because the elves of Imystrahl and Sersidyen wanted nothing to do with it. After the Empire of Nessk was shattered, some serpentmen returned to Ikath, keeping a low profile and intermingling with the humans.

In 1215 AR, Ghedrar the Necromancer rose to power in Ikath, transforming the city-state into the capital of an undead empire that expanded across Dhar Mesh and central Thule. Once again, the living humans became subordinate to Ikath's monstrous masters, this time Ghedrar and the undead in his service. Ghedrar's mummified armies kept the peace in Ikath for almost five centuries, until the Atlantean general Nemruth invaded the city by sea in 1673 AR. The Atlanteans defeated Ghedrar, who disappeared at the battle's climax and remains hidden in the city to this day.

The Atlanteans installed a series of puppet governors—once again reducing the humans to servitude—but their ownership of Ikath didn't last long. Distracted by the war with Lemuria and then the sinking of Atlantis, the Atlantean leadership departed in 1908 AR, and the city has been in human hands ever since . . . at least in theory.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

The City of Serpents is a mix of curved stone architecture (some dating back to the Empire of Nessk) and the more angular designs of the Atlanteans. More so than most Thulean cities, Ikath is a city of wards, each effectively its own urban microcosm. Many citizens of Ikath travel from ward to ward, but few of them *need* to; each ward has its own temples, marketplaces, and residential neighborhoods.

**Jade Temple of Set:** The grandest temple to Set on the continent, the Jade Temple was originally made entirely of jade, but major portions of the temple were destroyed when Nemruth attacked the city in 1673 AR. (The Atlanteans have always been deeply suspicious of Set worship.) Even so, the dark green walls of the temple are a marvel, especially when the noonday sun seems to make the entire temple glow.

**Serpentine Ward:** This district is named both for its shape (it follows the left bank of the Khadoor River) and its denizens: serpentmen. In most places, serpentmen are regarded as enemies of civilization, but in Ikath, they're merely strange neighbors. Few serpentmen dare to walk the streets of Ikath beyond the

Serpentine Ward, but within this district, they outnumber humans and live in relative peace.

**Honor's Mill:** This bawdy taphouse sits well outside city walls, on the outskirts of the great forest of Dhar Mesh. It is a mirth-filled place, well kept, that caters to the woodcutters and trappers who work the forest verge nearby. The proprietors are a retired band of freebooters who call themselves "simple lumberjacks." The group's motto, *Honor still lives*, is burned into the beam above the hearth.

**Atlantean Ward:** This small district features the Governor's Palace (constructed shortly after Nemruth seized the city) and Ikath's famed "Quill Street," a collection of bookshops, fortune-tellers, and sages-for-hire.

**Dancers' Ward:** Ikath's most notorious red-light district (in a city with no less than five wards devoted to adult entertainment), the Dancers' Ward has everything from boisterous taverns to narcotic purveyors to gambling dens to houses of prostitution. The district is largely lawless by night, with the only order provided by muscle hired by district businesses. "One more job, and then I'm retiring to the Dancers' Ward" is the retirement plan for many an adventurer.

### **Ikath** (Large City, pop. 29,800)

*City of Serpents, Gateway to the West, the Rotten Fruit*

Ikath is a sprawling city built on the ruined ambitions of serpentmen, undead, and Atlanteans. For now, it's a lawless pleasure-dome of a city, but it's only a matter of time before someone claims the City of Serpents anew.

**Authority:** Kenner Yauth is Lord-Monarch and titular leader for the city, though in practice his reach extends only as far as his undermanned, underequipped city guard. Three other figures wield just as much power, Dyar Presk, high priest of Set; Marden, boss of the Forked Tongue crime syndicate; and Ghedrar, still clinging to unlife in the catacombs beneath the city.

**NPCs:** Ikath is about 65 percent human. About 15 percent of the population is serpentmen, 10 percent are Atlantean, and the remaining 10 percent are a mix of other races.

*Yendar Kol* is panjandrum to the lord-monarch and handles many of Ikath's day-to-day affairs. If the PCs have diplomatic dealings with Ikath—or if they get arrested for high-profile crimes in the city—they'll meet with "Yendar the Pragmatic," who's well aware of the need to appease the Temple of Set and the criminal syndicates to keep Ikath running. Note that if you're using the "Shadow of the Great Serpent" campaign arc in chapter 4, Yendar is murdered and replaced by Xarvix.

*Marden*, a mixed-blood Ikathi with both human and serpentman heritage, has been the boss of the Forked Tongue crime syndicate for more than a decade—longer than any predecessor within memory. He runs everything from protection rackets to narcotics trafficking to outright theft and assassination.

If you're looking for an urban jungle as a counterpoint to the actual jungles across Thule, Ikath is the place for your game. It doesn't have the inward-turning corruption of Imystrahl or the relentless commerce of Quodeth, but it occupies a middle ground where it thrives as a city-state even as its divided leadership and pervasive corruption keep it from having grander ambitions.

Despite his serpentman heritage, he holds the followers of Set at arm's length; he cares about wealth and power, not worship.

*Ghedrar* was in the process of becoming a lich when the Atlanteans invaded, and his transformation was interrupted. He can manifest corporeally for only two hours per day, so he relies on undead underlings to extend his power from well-guarded chambers in the storm sewers under the city. He seeks a ritual that will complete his transformation into a true lich, then a return to power—first in Ikath, then across Dhar Mesh.

**Trade:** Ikath is the center of the ivory and gem trade across Thule, and it also does a burgeoning business in anything else extracted from the surrounding jungle: beast hides, rare botanical reagents, and produce from the orchards and plantations that surround the city's walls. But its biggest business is entertainment in all its rarefied forms. Many Thuleans come to Ikath seeking pleasure, and few go away disappointed . . . or with any coins in their purse.

**Concerns:** Travel by sea to Ikath is generally safe and pirate-free, mostly because the weather is mild and there are few places along the coastline for pirates to hide. But Ikath doesn't have more than a token navy, and ambitious neighbors could easily shut the city down by sea. Some of the city's merchant princes are considering founding a private fleet to keep the sea routes safe.

Set worshipers can practice their faith openly in Ikath, but some want more than that—they want Ikath as the center of a Set-based theocracy. So far Dyar Presk has demurred, but he'd take advantage of any weakness on the part of Lord-Monarch Yauth or Marden to create a new kingdom encoiled in Set worship. (Presk's ambition is key to the campaign arc in chapter 4.)

Marden is trying to expand the Forked Tongue Syndicate into a regional crime cartel, controlling legal and illegal trade across Dhar Mesh and as far as Renekrit, Nim, and Droum. He's using the headhunters of Kyr to intimidate his way into new territories, but the expansion is going slower than expected.

**Secrets:** Ikath's biggest secret is the one that lives in the storm sewers under the city: Ghedrar himself. Only a few of his trusted lieutenants (mostly death knights and vampires) know his real identity, with the rank-and-file members of his secret society knowing their leader only as the Sunset Lord, so named for the few hours he's available.

## LAKE HAAL

The second-largest body of water within Thule (the Golden Sea is first), Lake Haal is unlike its larger sibling. There's little maritime traffic on Lake Haal because krakens and sea serpents infest the lake, dragging traditional galleys to a watery doom. Flat-bottomed sailboats don't seem to attract the ire of the sea monsters, so travel across the lake is possible. Many in the coastal communities would rather take the risk of hunting in the surrounding jungle than fishing in Lake Haal.

**Yathmokinoop:** This underwater city is home to skum, fishlike monstrous humanoids that rise from the lake to raid coastal communities and carry off kidnap victims. Those victims are taken to be sacrificed at an altar to Great Cthulhu in the center of Yathmokinoop. The skum sacrifices power a ritual that lets them command and ride the lake's kraken.

**Tendroan:** For travelers who want to avoid "Black Circle entanglements," Tendroan is a key waypoint connecting Lake Haal to the River Dynanni and the Highlands of Nar. The town is as much an armed camp as it is a settlement. Its people simultaneously worry about assaults from Yathmokinoop and incursions from Thran.

**Marraki:** Nestled on the eastern shore of the lake, the town of Marraki uses slash and burn agricultural to grow *khava* beans that can be brewed into a stimulating drink popular in Ikath, Lomar, Droum, and Nim. After three growing seasons, the town is thriving, but the local priestess of Kishar has noticed that the jungle is growing back faster each time—now unnaturally fast.

**Vohdani Towers:** These spires a few miles from Lake Haal are 30,000 years old, built with serpentman magic just as the first humans were reaching Thule's shores. They've been occupied and reoccupied countless times since, but some inner vaults contain strange wonders from the Empire of Nessk—for PCs who can overcome the radical druids, militant serpentmen, and cultists of Hastur that currently war over the towers.

**Madraal Nessk:** For a time this ruined city on the Othnan Peninsula was the ancient capital of the serpentman empire, but that was centuries ago. Now it is a place of dark magic and timeless curses, home to a savage tribe of troglodytes awaiting the day when the serpentmen return to reclaim Nessk's ancient glories. If you're using the campaign arc in chapter 4, Dyar Presk makes his final stand amid these ruins.

## THRAN, CITY OF THE BLACK CIRCLE

It's impossible to talk about the city-state of Thran without talking about the Black Circle, the secretive council of powerful wizards who have ruled the city for almost 200 years. The Black Circle has reshaped the city to suit their esoteric needs. The Thran of today is more orderly than any in Thule, but its people live in fear that they'll be obliterated by the Black Circle for a minor transgression, or no discernable misbehavior at all.

The other power brokers across Thule are likewise fearful of, or at least troubled by, Thran. No one knows what the ultimate aim of the Black Circle is—whether they seek temporal power, or whether they want Thran only as a base for their eldritch wizardry. (Everyone assumes they seek to dominate Thule, but the form of that domination is in dispute.)

Thran hasn't menaced its neighbors . . . yet. It doesn't project its power across Dhar Mesh . . . yet. But many in western Thule wonder when the second arcane slipper will drop and Thran will become something even more terrifying than it already is.

## AN EXCHANGE OF TYRANTS

Situated in a position of both economic and strategic importance—the point where the River Dynanni reaches Lake Haal—Thran has long been a trade hub and the gateway between Dhar Mesh and the Highlands of Nar. From its founding in roughly 500 AR, Thran was a bustling town, but it grew into a proper city when merchants and settlers from the then-Atlantean colony of Orech reached Thran in 650 AR, bringing Atlantis's culture and learning with them.

A series of unremarkable local lords ruled the city until Ghedrar the Necromancer's mummified army arrived in 1218 AR, seizing Thran after a brief siege. When Ghedrar's kingdom collapsed in 1673, Thran threw out its undead overlords and again enjoyed independence for centuries. The peaceful years ended when the restive clans of the Nar Highlands united under a single banner in 2011 AR, that of Kal Keor the Terrible. Thran was his first major conquest, but the Jandar horde didn't remain there long, striking out eastward within the year. Kal Keor left behind one of his sons, a petulant child named Kal Menna, and the city's residents suffered greatly under his capricious, cruel rule.

No one celebrated with more fervor than Thran when Kal Keor was assassinated by sorcery in 2035. (Kal Menna was thrown from the palace balconies, then resurrected specifically so he could be thrown from the balcony again). Thran's merchant princes took over the city in caretaker fashion, ruling as a council. But their dominion was short lived.

In 2040 AR, the wizard Bayod Naz revealed the existence of the Black Circle and declared the Circle rulers over Thran. Caught by surprise, the merchant princes capitulated (especially after a few princes were strangled by unseen arcane hands). At first, the people of Thran were ecstatic; many assumed that the Black Circle was behind Kal Keor's assassination. But over time, the Black Circle's ruthless tactics and inscrutable motives have left Thran's populace as fearful as they come.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

As befits its moniker, many of Thran's major buildings are constructed of black granite, pulled from the earth itself by the power of the Black Circle. Many of the city streets are laid out in a hub-and-spoke pattern,



with a ten-story wizard tower at the center of the street network—off limits to the general populace.

Visitors to the city notice how citizens tend to scurry from place to place, and even the outdoor marketplaces have only subdued conversations, not the shouts of competing vendors. City residents make a point of *not* noticing the distorted haze in the air that indicates the Black Circle is scrying on an area. Remarking on the surveillance only increases the likelihood that they'll draw unwanted arcane attention, they figure.

**Tower of the Chimerae:** One of the tallest towers in Thran, this edifice is home to Yiliina Syrth, one of the more ambitious masters of the Black Circle. The upper floors are crowded with dozens of leering gargoyle-like statues, most sculpted in the image of tormented humans whose bodies have been partially replaced with animal or monster parts.

**The Ebon Orb:** This castle-sized marble sphere is where the Black Circle deliberates and performs their arcane rituals. It hovers above the city and has no obvious entrance; the masters of the Black Circle teleport to and from the Ebon Orb.

**Tower of the Helix:** This tower is currently vacant; the master who lived there went insane after an extraterrene ritual gone awry and was “put down” by the rest of the Black Circle. There’s an open invitation from the Black Circle to their promising apprentices: clear out the Tower of the Helix, and you’ll ascend to take the vacant place as a master of the Black Circle.

**Highlanders’ Quarter:** Originally intended as a separate district for visitors from the Highlands of Nar (and the horse manure they left in their wake), this part of the city is the only place where visitors can conduct business without undue scrutiny from the Black Circle—meaning magical surveillance is frequent, but not omnipresent.

## Thran (Small City, pop. 18,500)

*City of the Black Circle, Nar’s Doorstep, Pearl of Haal (little used anymore)*

Thran’s citizens live their lives in fear of the inscrutable and rarely-seen Black Circle of wizards that rule the city. The Black Guard patrols the streets and ruthlessly crushes dissent, while a network of informants, spies, and scrying apprentices ensures that little happens in the Thran that the masters of the Black Circle don’t know about.

**Authority:** High Master Nefron Vir is the current high master of the Black Circle, a position he acquired by violently usurping the last high master, and a position he’ll keep until someone violently usurps him. So far he’s proven adept at keeping would-be high masters at bay, but as he advances into his eighth decade, he knows it’s only a matter of time before he’s replaced.

**NPCs:** Thran’s population is overwhelmingly human, with a small percentage of Atlanteans. A clan of halflings has some prominence in the city, serving various members of the Black Circle as

alchemists and laboratory servants. Due to the Black Circle's dabbling in fiendish magic, a small but measurable segment of Thran's population has demonic blood running through their veins. *Yillina Syrth* is a transmuter and the most outward-looking wizard in the Black Circle. She sees the rivalries among the masters as a zero-sum game and seeks to accumulate power beyond Thran, perhaps even leaving the city someday to rule elsewhere. She keeps her ultimate ambition a secret even as she greedily seeks artifacts, rare spells, and other treasures from across Thule to increase her power.

*Perek-Who-Limps* is an accomplished illusionist and high-ranking apprentice . . . though he shamefacedly admits he's "between masters at the moment." (It's rare to be "between masters" and still alive.) Perek's personal charisma makes him a useful contact for adventurers seeking an audience with the Black Circle. Perek is a motivated go-between; he hopes to prove his worth to a new master by making useful introductions for adventurers who can get things done beyond Thran's walls.

*Tsammar* is the guard-captain and commander of the Black Guard. Ostensibly that means managing the city patrols and keeping the highland tribes and jungle barbarians at bay, but Tsammar spends more effort on the covert side of the ledger. The Black Circle's spies are everywhere in Thule, and while some report directly to various masters, many are part of the Black Guard hierarchy and report to Tsammar.

**Trade:** Thran doesn't trade much with other city-states . . . overtly at least. Various masters use adventurers and summoned minions to scour Thule for rare magical treasures which are then brought back to Thran, but the city neither imports nor exports much. When the fields surrounding the city have a bumper crop of grains or fruits, the Black Circle sends out a fleet of black-sailed trade galleys across Lake Haal (using magic to protect them from kraken attacks), down the Tancreel River, and eastward along the coast to Nim.

**Concerns:** The Black Circle wants anything of magical power; even a rumor is enough to get one or masters mounting an expedition to a far-off ruin or dungeon. Thran's other concern is its own security; sitting at the border between the Highlands of Nar and the jungles of Dhar Mesh leaves it vulnerable to attacks from both jungle barbarians and highland clans. Throughout history those threats have often become a terrifying reality for Thran, but after the Black Circle demonstrated its ability and willingness to obliterate massed attackers in the 2040s and 2050s, the tribes usually give Thran a wide berth.

**Secrets:** The Black Circle is able to present a unified front to the outside world, but internecine duels among the masters are not uncommon, and sometimes such conflicts spill out beyond the Ebon Orb to include each wizard's network of apprentices, summoned minions, and servants.

Loyalty to the Black Circle isn't as complete as Nefron Vir thinks, either. Two of the masters are thralls to Yog-Sothoth, who has promised them limitless extraterrene insights at an as-yet-unspecified price.

## KHAVA COAST

Named for the khava bean grown in plantations there, the northwestern coast of the Golden Sea is a line of green jungle that stretches from the Lands of the Long Shadow to the walls of Ikath.

**Renekrit:** This town, currently the central source of the khava trade, is rapidly expanding as the jungle is cleared for plantations and more residences. Residents hope that in time their town will grow to become a city-state to rival Ikath, Nim, and Droum—all of which have agents in the city plotting its downfall or subversion.

**Sere Monga:** The citadel of the arch-sorceress Monga, this fortress is guarded by ghosts and other incorporeal undead who ignore the elaborate bramble-mazes that surround the central tower. Monga is cruel enough to toy with travelers who arrive uninvited, but she's also wise enough to parley with intruders who could actually threaten her.

**The Stained Shrine:** This ancient statue to Herum is revered by beastmen tribes, who often leave carcasses piled at the ape-god's feet when they're passing by, leaving the stains that give the shrine its name. The animals for miles around seem more feral and apt to attack, and even domesticated animals revert to a wild state if exposed to the Stained Shrine for long. Rituals involving animal transformation or control have unrivaled potency if performed under the auspices of Herum at the Stained Shrine.

## BOLOTANGA WINDRUNNERS

The Bolotangas are a highly traditional and warlike Dhari tribe. The two pillars of tribal custom are veneration of the Forest Gods, and unending war against other tribes, races, city-states, and anything else that'll stand against the Bolotangas on the battlefield. In the Bolotanga view, they are the only people in the world who give proper reverence to the countless spirits of the forest and the elements. All other peoples are enemies until they too learn to revere the spirits of nature.

Unlike most tribes whose oral traditions extend back only a few generations before dovetailing with folklore, the Bolotangas can cite their history back for centuries. The Bolotanga tribe marched with the Jandar horde when Kal Keor the Terrible sacked Ikath and Droum, deciding that the will of the forest was better served by the destruction of cities than war against a hundred united Nar tribes. Even further back, the Bolotangas suffered ruinous casualties in a guerrilla war against the undead armies of Ghedrar the Necromancer, yet remained unbowed.

Today the Bolotangas make war against the beastmen that infest northern Dhar Mesh, occasionally raiding as far as Nim to the north and Ikath to the south. They've steered clear of the headhunters of Kyr for the time being, but both tribes would very much like to take the measure of the other in battle.

**Bolotangas** (Large Tribe, pop. 1,200, including camp followers)

*The Windrunners, The Ghost Warriors*

The Bolotanga tribe is more settled than many barbarian tribes, living in a network of villages throughout northern Dhar Mesh. But they're far from civilized; their villages can be disassembled within a day and rebuilt elsewhere in the jungle.

**Authority:** Matro is the current Horn-Lord of the Bolotangas, so named for the antlered head-dress that serves as his badge of office. His three daughters, all intrepid warriors themselves, advise him and assist with the day-to-day leadership of the tribe. Below Matro's children are the chieftains of the Bolotanga villages, each of whom personally leads at least a hundred capable warriors.

**NPCs:** The Bolotanga tribe is 90 percent human. Nonhumans are welcome as long as they share the tribe's reverence for nature and willingness to fight for their beliefs, but only humans born to the Bolotanga can ever hold leadership positions in the tribe, and the children of nonhuman members aren't considered Bolotangas.

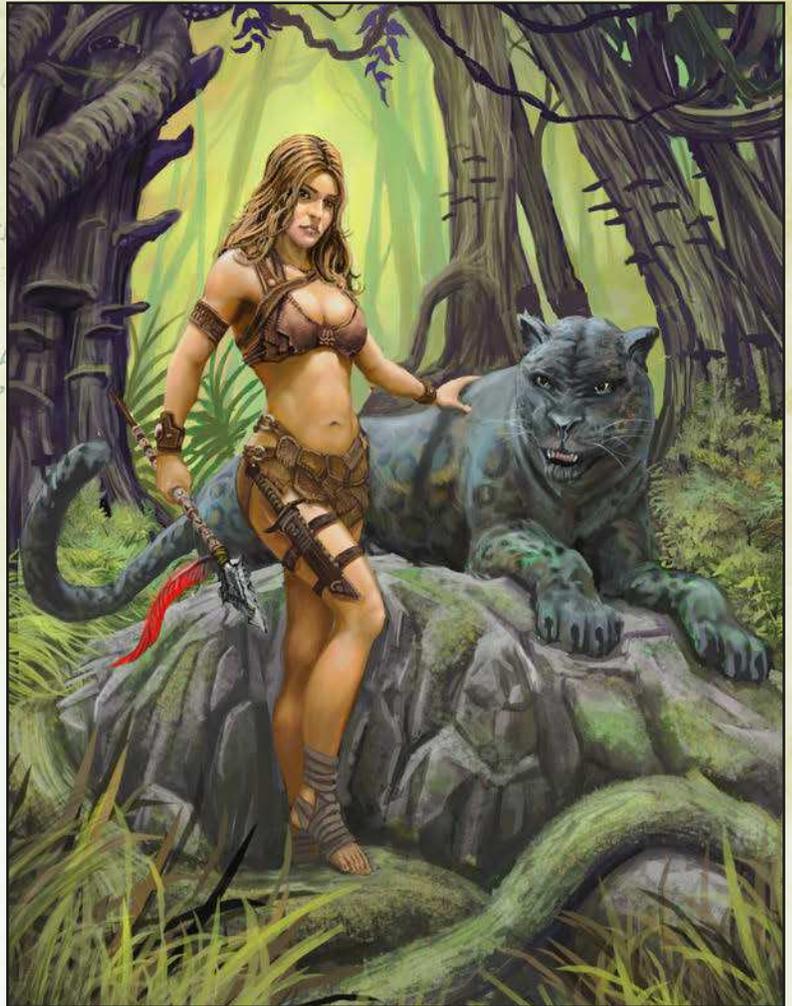
*Kyriah Bolotanga* is Matro's youngest and fiercest daughter, determined to prove herself against any outsider she encounters. She loves the Bolotangas, her black tiger companion, and her own cleverness in that order.

*Zenerek* is a camp follower, healer, and sutler for the Bolotangas, and his family is as close to honorary Bolotangas as anyone. A dwarven exile from Kal-Zinan, Zenerek knows the secret of steel and has been secretly supplying the Bolotangas with high-quality weapons when he can get his hands on pure enough ore.

*Lellerek the Swift* is a hunter and advance scout for the Bolotangas. An accomplished trophy-taker, he delights in slipping unseen into enemy encampments and slaying worthy foes in the midst of their fellows.

**Trade:** In the past, the Bolotangas sold their services as mercenaries, but Matro is reluctant to do so. In recent generations, the tribe has become more traditional, drawing away from others who don't share their complex beliefs even when the opportunity for loot and glory arises. At least a few times a year, however, envoys from a city-state try to entice the Bolotangas to fight on their behalf. They come home disappointed if they come home at all.

**Concerns:** Many of the best warriors among the Bolotangas have been wooing Matro's daughters, figuring a marriage improves their odds of becoming the next Horn-Lord. The daughters want the leadership of the Bolotangas for themselves, however; the tribe has had female



leaders in the past. Any would-be suitor for Matro's daughters must navigate a gauntlet of daughterly suspicion about his real motives—in addition to the tests that the deeply suspicious Matro devises.

**Secrets:** Some of the camp followers who serve the Bolotangas are in the pay of the Forked Tongue crime syndicate, based in Ikath. The Forked Tongue would very much like to have the Bolotangas as the muscle for a regionwide protection racket that would earn tribute from every trade caravan in the region, based on the Bolotanga's savage reputation. But the Forked Tongue spies know that Matro would never knowingly enter into such an arrangement.

## NORTHERN MOORS

The Northern Moors are as swampy as Phoor to the south, but they aren't covered by a dense tree canopy. Most of the northern moors are low marshland, with only the occasional hill or copse of trees to block the view. Almost everyone gives the moors a wide berth, more because they're useless for agriculture or industry than because they're dangerous. The moors aren't without perils of their own, especially at night, and the region has an abundance of ancient ruins left behind by the rakshasa empires of millennia ago.

**Path of the Dark Teeth:** This well-worn path leads south from Zirinashur across the moors, and is marked by black obelisks about 10 feet tall every quarter mile. It takes 24 hours of walking to traverse the path by foot, and local folklore contends that doing so will grant great wisdom to the traveler at the end of the journey.

The folklore is right, but it leaves out a key fact. Anyone walking the path in either direction attracts every hostile monster for miles around, with creatures acting rabid in their desire to kill or drive off the walker. The denizens of the moors attack in waves as the walker approaches the journey's end. Those who survive receive a vision granted from the magic of the path itself (something equivalent to the highest-level divination that a spellcaster of the walker's level could manage).

**Haun Griel:** This town on the edge of the Northern Moors has a secret: the residents are all cattle for Wakira Chunash, the noble who lives in the town's central manor—and a vampire. Wakira and her retinue of vampire spawn feed on the townspeople when no outsiders are looking, and the people of Haun Griel are forbidden to leave the town or tell anyone the truth. The people of Haun Griel live in perpetual fear, but the bolder among them may plead for help should they meet travelers who look like they could defeat a vampire.

**Oruchalee:** This town built on stilts on the tidal flats where the Lower Dwarkangra River meets the Sea of Mists floods twice daily. The buildings are all elevated or float, so the locals barely notice. At low tide many of the town's bravest venture out into the muddy flats to shuck oysters in search of pearls, but doing so is risky. The shape of the Oruchalee bay forms a tidal funnel, and when the tide rises, it hits the outer mudflats as a wall of onrushing water.

**The White Columns:** These ruins are all that remains of a rakshasa fortress from centuries ago . . . all that remains aboveground, at any rate. There's a multi-level dungeon below the White Columns with all sorts of monsters held in stasis by the now-departed rakshasas. If adventurers breach the wards protecting the entrance, the rakshasas of Hellumar notice and send a force to reclaim the treasures of the dungeon.

## THE TAINTED MENHIR

Deep in the jungles of Dhar Mesh is one of the Guardian Menhirs erected by the first druids almost 10,000 years ago. The druids use the Guardian Menhirs to gather the natural energy of the region and tap into it remotely for nature-affirming rituals. But the Dhar Mesh menhir is a corruptive threat—one that recently sent a shockwave through the ley lines that connect all the Guardian Menhirs.

Less than a quarter-mile from the Guardian Menhir is the bloated, pregnant form of a horror beyond

imagining—either the Great Old One Shub-Niggurath, or a powerful avatar of it. Known as the Black Goat with a Thousand Young, Shub-Niggurath is birthing horrid, twisted versions of jungle creatures, and each birth is more powerful than the last. Druids across Thule are marshaling their allies in anticipation of an attack on Shub-Niggurath, but can they muster enough help, and will it arrive before the Black Goat's children are too numerous and too powerful to be stopped?

## FORESTS OF GRONAK

Nestled in a rain shadow north of the Starcrown Mountains, the Forests of Gronak are one of southern Thule's few coniferous forests. The immense trees that grow here are greatly prized for both buildings and ships, but getting them out of Dhar Mesh is a problem. Five centuries ago it was possible to float timber down the River Phoor, but now there's an impassible swamp in the way. The logs must be taken overland—either a short but punishing route south over the Starcrowns or the longer overland route west through southern Nar to Katagia.

The black lotus is another reason to go to the forest, for the flowers grow in abundance there and can be transported over the Starcrown Mountains to Imystrahl, where they're highly prized. In the town of Andra, the leaders have started clearing jungle around the town to make a plantation where the lotus can be cultivated. The jungle's monstrous denizens don't appreciate the clear-cutting, however.

**Ruins of Stelen:** An Atlantean outpost abandoned when Atlantis sank, these ruins are now home to beastmen who found a trove of Atlantean army uniforms. Now they wear them in unintentional mockery of the long-departed army of Atlantis.

**Nahanohd:** This town, long a center for logging, has drawn the attention of hostile treants that want to smash it to splinters. The town leaders have staved off a treant attack for more than two decades by constructing ever more elaborate gardens around the town to appease the treants. Younger residents of the town wonder whether the all-consuming gardening effort is worth it—and indeed whether the treants are still out there.

**Jeroo:** The residents of this town have recently started a mystery cult devoted to worship of a disembodied iron golem head, which they keep on a pedestal in the center of town. The city fathers know—but won't willingly admit—that the strange noises heard in the surrounding forest is the still-animate body of the iron golem, mindlessly searching for its head.

**Tower of Glass:** A symbol of a time when the elves ruled much more of Thule, the lower reaches of this tower are made of smoky glass as strong as steel, while the upper floors have walls of stained glass the equal of any cathedral. The entire tower floats 50 feet above the jungle canopy.

FIRST TEMPLE OF SET  
DHAR MESH SITE



TEMPLE OF SET

CRATER

HILLTOP  
OUTPOST

0 20 40 FEET

WEST

**Xeriat's Tomb:** One of the first Atlantean explorers to strike north over the Starcrown Mountains, Xeriat was a wizard obsessed with alchemy. He developed a wasting disease that limited his ability to travel in his waning years, so his encampment eventually became his final home . . . and then his tomb. Xeriat himself is buried within a spiraling catacomb beneath the jungle floor, one of his last discoveries.

**First Temple of Set:** Reputed to be the place where serpentmen first encountered humans and enslaved them, this primitive stone refuge is infested with serpentmen and various snakelike monsters. All here worship Set, even if they have no connection with the organized religion found in Ikath and elsewhere.

The site of the temple is guarded by a tribe of degenerate troglodytes—perhaps the descendants of primitive humans who bred with their serpentine masters. Scores of the creatures dwell in squalid mud huts nearby, slaying any who find their way to this place unless they know the secret signs of the snake-god. Beneath the temple stretch huge, cavern-like catacombs, reputed to conceal sacred treasures and burial chambers of serpentine high priests dead for thousands of years. No human devotees of Set have journeyed to this place in many long years, but someone or something is engaged in strange sorcery in the catacombs below: In recent months, a sinister purple crystal has emerged from a crater in the ground not far from the troglodyte village, and is growing taller by a few inches a day.

## HELLUMAR AND NIMOTH

The northern islands of Hellumar and Nimoth are two of the three lands that have most influenced present-day Thule. (The third is Atlantis, which sank beneath the waves about 200 years ago.) Hellumar is now the home of exiles, most notably the rakshasas who once had an empire that dominated Thule. Nimoth, on the other hand, is where exiles came from, in particular the Nimothan humans who settled northern Thule when growing glaciers left the island a frozen wasteland.

Though the two islands are very different, they share one aspect in common: a fundamental hostility to life, human and otherwise. Thule may be a dangerous place, but the continent teems with life. Not so Hellumar and Nimoth. Whether scorched by apocalyptic magic or locked in a lifeless polar embrace, these two islands expunge life. Only the brave and well-prepared should venture beyond these islands' shores.

When you're building a Thule campaign, Hellumar and Nimoth are useful because they're distant, hostile lands. What happens on these islands tends to stay on these islands . . . unless the rakshasas get restive, or something cold and implacable gathers in the dark to the northeast.

## AKAL-AMO, CITY OF TEMPLES

The primary outpost of Thulean civilization beyond the continent itself, Akal-Amo is an ancient city that claims the gods themselves once trod its copper-cobbled streets. Each of the nine primary deities has a major temple in this city, with worship and ritual the primary activities. But nine competing faiths means everyone has eight reasons to quarrel, and the city often teeters on the edge of a religious clash.

Every faith's tradition tells the story somewhat differently, but they agree that millennia ago, Akal-Amo was the literal home of the gods, with each of the Nine dwelling within the buildings that now serve as their temples. They argued, they schemed against each other, but they were able to live in proximity to each other as a fractious, dysfunctional family of sorts. Then something happened . . . some say a schism within the Nine, while others (including the Guardians of the Nine) tell of a titanic struggle against the Great Old Ones. Whatever happened, the Nine do not openly manifest within their temples anymore.

Today, each faith maintains a grand temple and hundreds of priests in Akal-Amo. Back on Thule, the faithful are encouraged to take the long sea-voyage to the City of Temples, either as a pilgrimage or for priestly training. For those who worship Kishar, Herum, and Tiamat, the city is of particular importance, simply because dedicated temples to their gods are more rare on the continent.

## VACANT HOME OF THE GODS

The fortunes of Thule's major religions are reflected in the ebb and flow of power on the streets of Akal-Amo. Currently Ishtar and Set have the most priests in the streets, with Mithra, Nergal, and Tarhun occupying a loose second tier and the other gods less represented. A shaky peace exists throughout the city, though shouting matches, insults, and fistfights are common. You can't expect priests of Mithra and Tiamat to share a table in a common house, after all.

There's a small nonreligious population in Akal-Amo; someone has to feed and clothe all those priests, after all. Akal-Amo's harbor is a safe port when the Sea of Mists brews storms, so trade ships call upon the City of Temples from time to time as well. But most of the traffic is passengers: pilgrims and newly robed priests. Few venture beyond the city's walls. As the priests reason, once you're in the greatest temple of your religion, why would you journey onward?

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Akal-Amo's layout is elementally simple. The city consists of eleven clusters of buildings, each surrounding a great temple, each strung along a road that winds back and forth up the steep slopes of



**Tiamat's Temple of the Five Furies:** This star-shaped building features draconic imagery throughout its architecture. In a place like Thule where chromatic dragons are rare, the dragons inspire both fear and wonder.

**Asura's Firstlight Temple:** A collection of eastward-facing towers, Asura's temple stands at the end of the winding road. The gong from the highest tower serves as a call to prayer and timekeeping reminder to all faiths in Akal-Amo, not just Asura's.

## Akal-Amo (Small City, pop. 6,900)

*City of Temples, Where Gods Once Trod, The Copper Streets*

Akal-Amo is a city devoted to devotion—worship of the nine primary deities of Thule.

**Authority:** When they can agree on anything, a council of the nine high priests is the ultimate authority in Akal-Amo. As a practical matter, the faiths do their best to keep to themselves; it's in no one's best interest to send the City of Temples spiraling into chaos.

**NPCs:** Akal-Amo's population mirrors that of Thule itself: predominantly human, with just enough Atlanteans, elves, and dwarves to make it interesting.

*Breke the Druid* is a rarity in Akal-Amo: someone who worships none of the Nine. A fervent follower of the Forest Gods, Breke divides his time between trying to raise funds for a small shrine to the Forest Gods within the city walls and undertaking long journeys into Hellumar's forbidding interior. If the PCs are looking to travel inland, Breke is known throughout the city as the best guide, despite his out-of-date religious beliefs.

*Fennerek* is a sea-captain who sails her passenger galley, *Spy's Demise*, between the Thule mainland (generally Nim and Orech) and Akal-Amo. She has remarkably flexible religious convictions.

*Thoa-Waan* is the high priest of Nergal and equally accomplished as a cleric and necromancer. He believes that he can create an undead host of unsurpassed power if he can obtain the bodies of nine high priests (one from each faith) who died within Akal-Amo. Through deceit and murder, Thoa-Waan has acquired five bodies. He plans three more murders and will make himself the ninth high priest to die in Akal-Amo.

**Trade:** The nine temples are responsible for feeding their faithful, so supply ships from the mainland arrive daily. Akal-Amo's only export is religion itself.

**Concerns:** Pilgrims and priests bring their grudges and prejudices with them when they come to Akal-Amo, and just because the city's never descended into a religious war doesn't mean it's never going to. The high priests have pulled their followers back from the brink of open conflict before, but it may be inevitable that the copper-cobbled streets will run red with blood.

**Secrets:** Ishtar's priesthood is convinced that the goddess herself is walking the streets of Akal-Amo, disguised as an acolyte. They haven't breathed a word of this to the other faiths, because if there's a way for a god to physically manifest in the world again, they would rather that the other faiths not find out about it.

A cabal devoted to Hastur has reached across the Sea of Mists to infiltrate the priests of Herum. Many of the new rites in their temple are actually furthering the designs of the King in Yellow, not the Ape-God.

## FIRES OF HELLUMAR

The twin mountain ranges on Hellumar's southwest peninsulas are steep and actively volcanic. Their glow at night is sufficient for sailors in the western Sea of Mists to navigate by. By day the smoke, ash, and fire makes the land arid and the air almost poisonous. Hardy indeed is the life that clings to the shores of the fires of Hellumar.

The biggest town in the region is Drang, situated between the volcanoes to the west and the glaciers to the east, which means it's too hot half the time and too cold the other. The Drangir tribe (described below) calls this harbor home, and their battered longships sail from here every spring on missions of battle and plunder.

**Beelakhan:** This outpost on a rocky peninsula is rebuilt from rubble every morning by a powerful earth and fire elementals, but then destroyed every night by waves and storms created by water and air elementals. The elementalist who first summoned these monsters planned to construct a fortress away from the prying eyes of civilization, but she lost control of her summoned creatures and perished when they began to fight among themselves.

**Old Thag:** Explorers who reach this ruined town find a mystery: every building reduced to rubble, and the shards of giant eggs gathered in the town square. Few remain long enough to discover whether whatever hatched is still around . . .

**Seirena:** This town has a deep, well protected harbor and a clan of halflings who dwell in an elaborate set of cliff dwellings above the port. The halflings are beset by demons and other monsters coming from the volcanoes, and they'll be exceedingly grateful if traveling adventures can offer them some relief.

**Jubilialia:** This shoreline village is a bucolic, peaceful place—except that all the residents are obviously devils. The devils have been ensorcelled by a mischievous enchanter who lives in a cottage on the edge of town, and they'll deny that they're actually devils even with presented with obvious evidence (like a mirror). Violence results if visitors dispel the enchantments.

## DRANGIR REAVERS

The Drangirs are the quintessential tribe of raiding barbarians, equally at home on land or sea. As soon as the ice breaks around their Hellumarian harbors, they set forth for Thule in their longboats. Some make quick raids along the Thousand Teeth and are back in Drang in less than two weeks. Others reach Thule and head inland, carving a path through mountains and jungle alike, remaining in the south throughout the summer and well into fall.

Almost everyone on the shores of the Sea of Mists has reason to fear the dark furs and bloody axes of the Drangirs. They've toppled tyrants, sacked cities, overthrown kingdoms, and sent ships full of treasure back to their home in Hellumar. But Thule has its revenge against the Drangir in unusual ways—many a fearsome Drangir barbarian has fallen prey to the many vices of Ikath, the madness of Orech, or the mellowing influence of civilization in Nim.

**Drangir Tribe** (Large Tribe, pop. 3,000, including raiders at sea)

*The Northern Terror, the Last True Nimothans, Hearts of Ice*

Nimothans through and through, the Drangir tribe raids the length of the Sea of Mists every year, burning and looting as they go.

**Authority:** Orik the Gargant is the chieftain of the tribe, but practical authority begins and ends with the longboat captains, who are chosen by Orik every spring. Those captains—roughly fifty of whom set sail each year—retain their authority whether on land or sea. Orik himself leads a raiding fleet every spring, but he's usually back in the town of Drang by the start of summer.

**NPCs:** All the Drangirs are Nimothan humans.

*Gurada the Clench* is a longboat captain known for her black temper and her ruined left hand, left in a permanent fist after her brief capture and torture by slavers as a child. She's spent her entire life wreaking personal revenge on every slaver ship she encounters.

*Borsek* is a Nimothan merchant who helps supply the longboats each spring—being handsomely repaid when the longboats return full of treasure. Though not technically a Drangir, he has the ear of Orik the Gargant and sometimes accepts payment in exchange for “sugging” targets for the Drangir raids.

*Janko Vuth* is a longboat captain who'd very much like to lead the Drangirs, and he argues with Orik the Gargant on one key point: Janko believes that the Drangirs should move to Thule's northern shore permanently.

**Trade:** The Drangirs rely entirely on summer plunder to keep the tribe fed and equipped throughout the year; they export looted goods and import everything else, in other words. They engage in some ice fishing and seal hunting in the winter months, but that's more to stave off boredom than anything else.

**Concerns:** The “stay in Hellumar or move to Thule” question is just a fireplace argument for now, but if more longboat captains see things Janko's way, it could split the tribe. For his part, Orik is growing a little concerned about reprisals from his victims; over recent years the Drangirs have assembled a long list of enemies.

**Secrets:** A Drangir cleric of Tarhun has a sea-chart that purports to show the resting place of a sunken fleet of Nimothan “winged longboats.” If they could be raised from the sea-bed and restored, the Drangir could raid year-round—and from the skies.

The rakshasas of the Striped Empire have used illusion magic to infiltrate Drang each year, and they are making plans to assault Drang in midwinter, seizing the entire Drangir fleet, which they'll use in the spring to return to Thule. For now, it's just a contingency plan for the rakshasas, but if the Striped Empire grows in power it could become very real indeed.

## THE BRACKISH MIRE

This swamp in Hellumar's interior is a mystery. The water seems to seep upward from underground—and it's salt water. Even though it's more than 50 miles from the coast, the reeds and grasses resemble what you'd find on the shore. But traveling across the Brackish Mire is no day at the beach; quicksand is common, as are glowing clouds of poisonous swamp gas. The local predators are as fierce as any you'll find in Hellumar.

At the center of the Brackish Mire is the ancient battlefield of Mereriedel, where ancient elves of Sersidyen, on a vengeful crusade against the rakshasas, were overwhelmed by rakshasas and their demon servitors. The bones of the elves glow white in the moonlight, and many haunt the mire as incorporeal undead. Half-buried in the muck is the elves supply train, full of ancient magic and weapons the elves never got the chance to use.

**Bok Tooma:** For centuries, the barbarians of this village solemnly cared for and venerated a Guardian Menhir constructed by the druids millennia ago. But last year they disappeared, and the village lies empty and forlorn. The druids haven't checked on the menhir or the village in some time, and they'll be quite concerned when they realize that Bok Tooma lies empty.

**Ughrana:** The barbarians of this tribe are adept at taming dinosaurs to perform all sorts of tasks—everything from steeds to dray animals to childrens' pets. In exchange for finished goods from the civilized world, they'll part with trained mounts for PCs who want something exotic to travel Thule with.

**Mefanoo:** The westernmost outpost of the rakshasas, this palatial tower leans to one side—the consequence of unstable ground. The rakshasas use scrying magic to watch the approaches to their tower, but they don't go deeper into the Brackish Mire without a good reason.

This region is a good choice for when you want a prehistoric “Lost World” where the PCs can go dinosaur hunting. (Much of Thule is good for that, but the Brackish Mire is quintessentially prehistoric.) Because it’s inhospitable, poor in resources, and difficult to travel through, even the ancient empires of the world bypassed the Brackish Mire. The secrets it holds are so old that no one knows to seek them out.

## JHI ANOOL, THE STRIPED EMPIRE

Almost 4,000 years ago, the elven legions drove the rakshasas out of Thule and into Hellumar—and the rakshasas are still seething about it. The remnants of the rakshasa empire of Jhi Anool live in scattered settlements and citadels in the glacial valley east of the Brackish Mire. Their “Striped” (pronounced as two syllables by the rakshasa) Empire dreams of reclaiming Thule and crushing dissent under their backward-facing claws.

The rakshasas have a long way to go, however. Though individually powerful and possessed of ancient magic, they don’t have the numbers to claim Thule directly. So they scheme from within their elegant towers, using subterfuge and cat’s-paws to keep the continent divided against itself. The rakshasas’ plans are sometimes at odds with each other, so the Striped Empire cannot claim progress toward their goal yet. But the tiger-men are patient, and they look forward to someday ruling Thule again—if only by proxy.

The capital of the Striped Empire is Maj Keili, which claims to be welcoming to visitors, and indeed the few who travel here are extended every courtesy. But travelers soon learn that hospitality has its price: the rakshasas want agents to act in Thule on their behalf. At first, PCs who come here will hear earnest entreaties and offered bargains. If they decline, though, the rakshasas will resort to coercion or magical enchantment to get the PCs to do their bidding.

The Striped Empire is not without its dissidents among the rakshasa, The warlord Cluvatham, for example, believes that the rakshasas cannot reclaim Thule on their own, but they can do so if they ally themselves with demon hordes as they did 4,000 years ago. From his lair at Moor-Lahn he plots ever-grander pacts with demons from beyond this world.

Another set of dissidents can be found at the monastery of Po Hokuur, where the rakshasa believe that ambitions of empire are folly, and that the rakshasas cannot return to prominence (in Hellumar, Thule, or anywhere) until their souls are purified. Needless to say, this doesn’t endear them to the rest of the Striped Empire. The monks of Po Hokuur take the hostility as a test of their patience as they continue to meditate and train within their ivory walls.

**Juramatang:** This castle is the lair of a rakshasa necromancer, Juram, who believes that the rakshasas’ numbers are too few to allow any to travel to the afterlife—not when Juram can add them to his legion of undead rakshasas. If a rakshasa dies anywhere within the Striped Empire—or sometimes beyond—Juram will be there to collect the body and begin his dark rituals.

**Cheledangir:** This towering fortress has two masters: the Atlantean wizard Merkhidia and the rakshasa warlock Pondar. They are relentlessly researching something other sages regard as an impossibility: time travel. The duo believes they’re close to a breakthrough, but they need magic that comes from the time period they want to visit. Merkhidia and Pondar are starting to argue; Merkhidia wants to use time travel to undo the sinking of Atlantis, while Pondar wants to reverse the rakshasas’ fortunes in their war against the elves.

**The Crater of Raal:** Until one night ten years ago, this was a palatial citadel of the rakshasa astronomer Koor Biri. Then a falling star obliterated the citadel and everything else for miles around, leaving a crater a half-mile across and strange, glowing shards scattered across the valley. In his last letters to other rakshasa sages, Koor Biri spoke of an experiment to “harness the heavens,” and now more than a few of Thule’s arcane masters want to know if Biri’s experiment can be repeated . . . and aimed. The answers, of course, lie below the smoke that covers the crater floor.

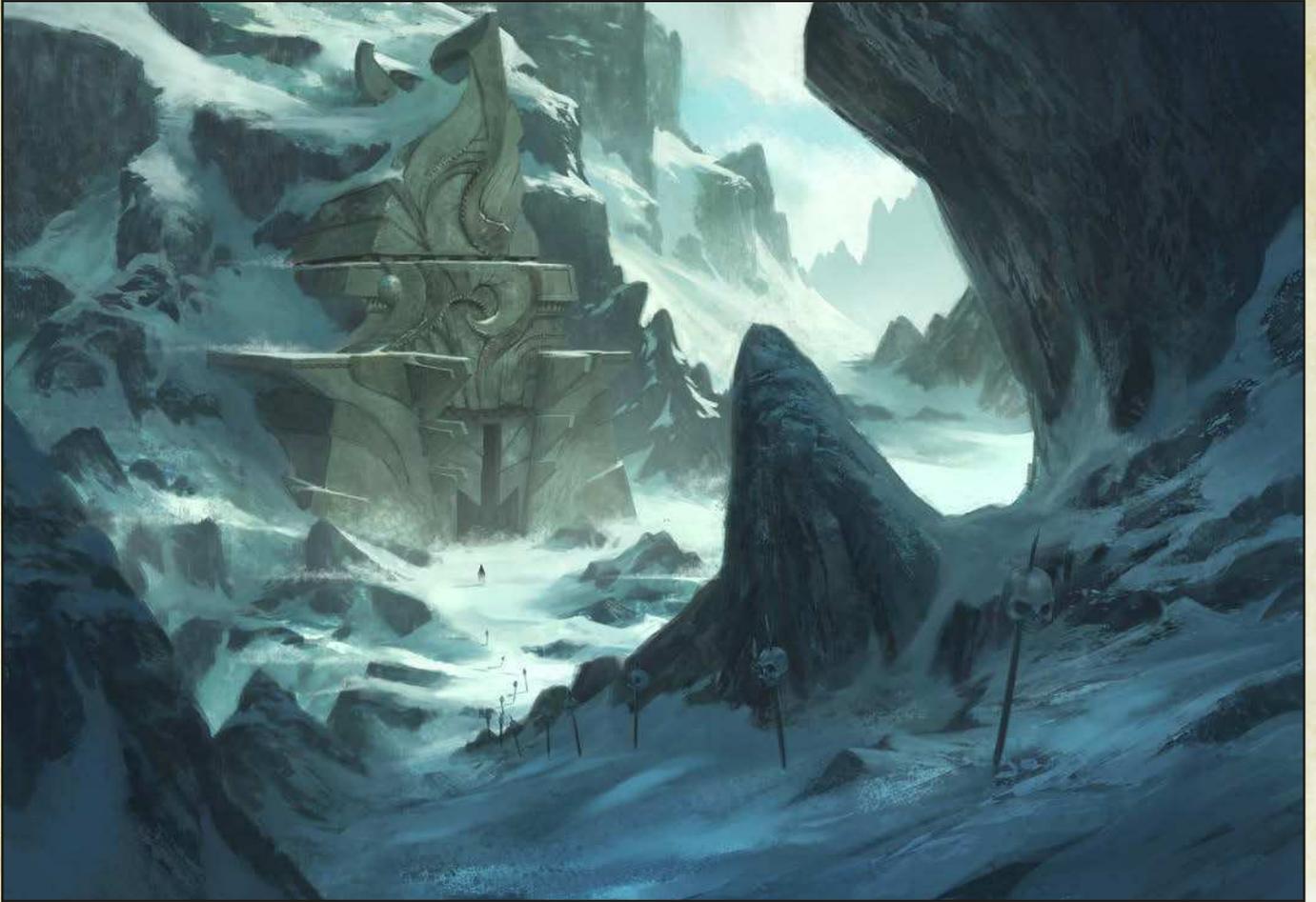
## THE CURSED GRAY

North of the Brackish Mire lies a vast plain of rolling hills and gray tundra stretching as far as the eye can see. This region is cursed, and it’s been cursed for so long that sages cannot agree on the source of the curse or its nature. In the middle of the Cursed Gray is the Lost City of Tentakron, but the almost featureless plain contains other strangeness as well.

The only settlement within the Cursed Gray that can remotely be considered ordinary is the village of Quen Quiir, home to the Quen tribe of barbarians. Born blind, they hunt and gather as best they can, sharpening other senses to compensate for their blindness. They have no idea that their skins are covered with elaborate, tattooed glyphs that change and grow over time.

**The Grasping Earth:** Some long-ago army was caught in the field when this land was accursed, and they never escaped. Under this gray plain they lie, except for their rotting arms, which grasp at the sky and cling to anything solid they touch. Not truly alive or even undead, the arms can burst from the earth without warning.

**The Perpetual Cyclone:** A powerful tornado follows a circuitous but repeated path across this part of the Cursed Gray. The Quen Quiir believe that anyone who



can stand upright as the cyclone passes by will gain control of the cyclone and can set it on a new path.

**Pavilion of Kahroo:** This stone platform atop a low hill is the home a powerful efreet named Kahroo. The efreet stands atop the pavilion impassively until a group of at least five stand before him, at which point he kills four of them and grants a wish to the fifth. The pavilion is well known in folklore, and pilgrims occasionally try to cross the Cursed Gray and take their chances with the efreet.

## LOST CITY OF TENTAKRON

If you'd like your campaign to take a turn toward science fiction, the Lost City of Tentakron offers the chance to explore mysterious machines, magical constructs, and a hybrid of technology and magic. Believed to be made by the Hyperboreans, tall humanoids who supposedly live far to the north, Tentakron has been a ruin for millennia. No explorers have returned with treasures from the city, but many remain trapped in stasis within.

Tentakron was once a city atop a plateau in the middle of the Cursed Gray, but then some cataclysm destroyed most of the city, leaving a great crater in its wake. A few of the buildings were protected by shields of such potency that they survived the blast and now

hang in midair exactly where they were before the rest of the city was vaporized.

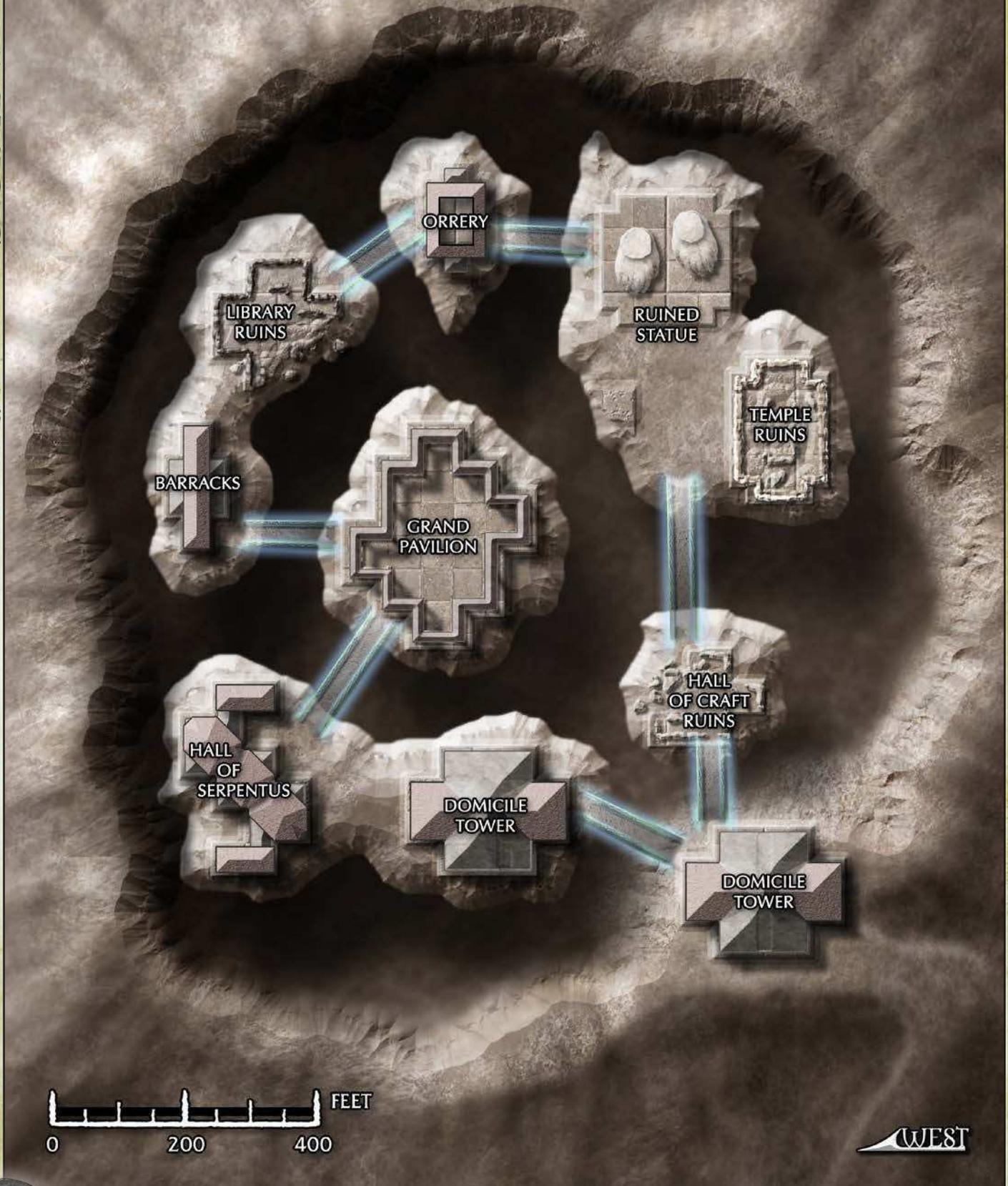
Over the millennia, a few brave explorers have tried to pry loose Tentakron's secrets, only to discover one of the most chilling secrets of all: those who would otherwise die within the city are instead trapped in stasis, where they remain until disturbed by future intruders. Those who ascend to Tentakron's strange buildings must contend not only with the city's defenses, but the newly awakened explorers who've come before them.

**Domicile Towers:** These huge buildings are like grand apartments on a scale unlike any found in even the most densely populated city-states in Thule. Each has more than a thousand rooms, all connected with mazelike hallways and spiral staircases that wind and unwind of their own volition.

**Hall of Craft Ruins:** The walls of this structure have largely collapsed, but the giant machines are still intact and still semi-functional, emitting blasts of energy and extruding strange substances at irregular intervals.

**Temple Ruins:** The building has been blasted away to the point that it's impossible to tell what god or gods were worshipped here, but a *detect magic* spell reveals overwhelming divine magic throughout the area. A group of rakshasa explorers has been trapped in stasis here for centuries.

# LOST CITY OF TENTAKRON



*[Faint, illegible handwritten text or script at the bottom of the page.]*

**Ruined Statue:** The statue is gone, but two paw-like feet remain. The rakshasas believe that the statue depicts a feline ancestor race.

**Orrery:** This elaborate mechanism tracks the path of planets and stars, but anyone with a passing knowledge of astronomy can tell that they don't correspond to the planets and stars found in Thule's sky—not even close.

**Library Ruins:** The ground is covered with fine parchment—as if thousands of books had their pages ripped out one by one. The pages themselves are still legible, however, though written in a script unknown to any Thulean sage. Trapped in stasis here is the Atlantean explorer Hekronothos and his well-armed retinue.

**Barracks:** This intact building has weapons and armor used by the denizens of Tentakron, and it's well guarded by golemlike constructs that adapt to the enemies they face.

**Grand Pavilion:** This building is immense, but it's even bigger on the inside, with vast chambers that seem to simulate different worlds, each with phantasmal weather and the convincing illusion that one is actually outside.

**Hall of Serpentus:** The twisting hallways of this building double back on themselves in loops. Gravity is a decidedly local phenomenon, and explorers can find themselves walking on the ceiling of a passageway where they previously trod on the floor. A cabal of sorcerous serpentmen are trapped in stasis here; they believe that this hall is proof that Tentakron was the mythical “first nest” of their people.

## NIMOTH

The island of Nimoth is almost entirely covered with glaciers, with just a small band of tundra and a habitable coastline remaining. The glaciers descended from the north about 200 years ago, engulfing the Nimothan civilization and forcing it to migrate to northern Thule. The glacier movement across Nimoth was unnaturally rapid, but magical investigations haven't uncovered a malign intellect like that of Kang the Pale to the south. Whether the Nimothan glacier isn't sentient, isn't sentient yet, or is able to hide its true nature so far is unknown.

Beneath the glacier lies the former kingdom of Nimoth, ground to dust by the glacier's weight. But some flout the conventional wisdom about Nimoth's demise and believe that parts of Nimoth's capital, Beothoe, remain intact under the ice. A crew of Nimothan refugees and hired dwarves, the Beothoe Project, believes that magic preserved at least part of the city, and they're trying to bore through the ice with a massive drill to reach Beothoe. The effort to cut through the ice progresses in fits and starts because the crew has to contend with the ice refreezing, monster attacks from Nimoth's interior, and barbarian raids from the sea.

**The Sonorous Caves:** This elaborate network of ice caves has magically resonant acoustics capable of amplifying ritual magic performed here. A powerful bard

and illusionist named Scariabus lives here, composing a musical work called *The Final Ecstasy* that he hopes will find favor with Hastur by driving everyone within a hundred leagues mad.

**Viondor:** Carved from stone amid the icy coastal mountains, this stronghold contains many Atlantean relics, but it's guarded by the magical automatons built by a long-dead Atlantean wizard exiled here.

**Dragons' Graveyard:** Traditional chromatic dragons are exceedingly rare in Thule, but they were once more common. This stretch of tundra is littered with the intact skeletons of scores of dragons. Sages argue about what drew them here to die, while necromancers wonder what undead, draconic horrors could be summoned into existence here.

**Neratat:** This coastal village is inhabited by faeries who are hospitable to travelers and sailors seeking refuge from Boreal Sea storms. They have one quirk, however—they use teeth as currency. A tooth is more valuable when extracted from a living humanoid, and almost priceless when extracted from a humanoid who gives it up willingly.

**Skuth Andar, City of Clocks:** This town used to be much more populous, when it was regarded as one of the wonders of Nimothan culture. An elaborate system of water-wheels drew energy from the Kamber River to power Skuth Andar's workshops and noble manors. Visitors would delight at the complex clocks and moving statues in the city square. When the glaciers advanced southward, the river's flow slowed—then stopped when it froze solid. The remaining residents have tried all sorts of mechanical and magical schemes to get the river flowing again, but to no avail so far.

**The Frozen Fall:** This hundred-foot-tall frozen waterfall is notable for its transcendent beauty in the sunlight—and for the three storm giants obviously trapped within it. Nimothan folklore contends that the trio of giants will emerge from the waterfall only to pledge fealty to an authentic Nimothan monarch.

**Iribesk:** This coastal community was famously home of the Nimothan skald known as Gorrek the Throat. Gorrek predicted the coming of the glaciers for years and was ignored by his people, but then they turned on him, blaming Gorrek for the glaciation. His spirit still haunts this quiet village, though the residents speak of him only reluctantly. Gorrek possesses much wisdom about Nimoth of long ago, but he wants revenge in exchange for his counsel.

**Haut Horik:** A group of druids tends the cliffs near this forbidding shore. They hope to someday construct a new Guardian Menhir here to replace the ancient one now buried under the glacier, but some of the secrets of menhir construction have been lost over the millennia, so the druids are experimenting with rituals to finish the menhir.

**Shrine of the Twice-Paid:** This sea-cave, sacred to Tiamat, promises the Mother of Dragon's blessing to anyone seeking revenge. To obtain the blessing, however, the supplicant must defeat a monster chained inside the cave, then replace the slain monster with a new monster (magically bound or transported here in chains).

## HIGHLANDS OF NAR

More than any other part of Thule, the Highlands of Nar represent a break with the dominance of jungles and glaciers. While the region has forests (the Gloamwood) and mountains (the Shields of Sunset), most of Nar is broad, rolling plains—the continent's only wide-open land.

The region is known as a birthplace of conquerors, most notably Kal Keor the Terrible, who united the clans of Nar into the Jandar Horde, then marched west, sacking multiple city-states and founding a short-lived empire before being assassinated by sorcery in 2035 AR. Many of the clans of Nar claim Kal Keor as an ancestor, most notably the Kal Keori (described below).

Along the northern and southern coasts of Nar are two unusual city-states: Katagia, Last Bastion of Atlantis, and Orech, City of Mazes. Each city has a particular obsession. Katagia will stop at nothing to return to the glory days when Atlantis was a center of learning and culture. Orech, fallen deeply under control of Hastur, is a city that literally drives its denizens mad in service to the King in Yellow.

At the center of the Highlands of Nar are the Jandar plains, named for the broad, glittering River Jandar that flows from the foothills of the western mountains along the length of Nar, emptying into Lake Haal near the city-state of Thran. For most of its journey, the Jandar acts as both the metaphoric spine and circulatory system for the region. Every tribesman hunting game knows in which direction the river lies almost instinctively, and vast herds of mammoths and bison spend their entire lives within a day or two of the Jandar.

The river's flow varies greatly by season, rising when spring snowmelt makes the river flood, then tapering off throughout the summer and slowing to a trickle by winter. The variable flow makes the river less useful for both travel and irrigation. Kal Keor himself hired sages to study how waterworks could tame the Jandar River, but he died and his empire fell apart before those plans could come to fruition.

At any one given time, dozens of wandering barbarian tribes follow the great herds, making war against each other and sometimes roaming as far as Dhar Mesh or the Claws of Imystrahl. The two most powerful are the Narthans and the Kal Keori, though a third tribe, the Mudrak, has emerged from the Gloamwood and ravaged the northeastern reaches of the Jandar Plains.

**Narhame:** The home settlement of the Narthan tribe, Narhame swells to the size of a large town when the mammoth migrations are nearby, but it's only a village once the mammoths move on. The Narthan are hunter-gatherers at heart, but they use metal tools and weapons, and it's impractical to bring a blacksmith's forge from camp to camp. The tribe's artisans and crafters remain in Narhame when most of the tribe moves on.

**Cairn of Kal Keor:** After Kal Keor the Terrible's death in 2035 AR, his courtiers brought him back here so he could "rest in Nar for eternity," as he requested. For the last 200 years, the Kal Keori tribe has set an honor guard around this massive pile of stones; it seems every two-copper necromancer in Thule has designs on Kal Keor's bones.

**The Bonfires of Reth:** Magical creations of the now-extinct Reth tribe, these bonfires serve as navigation aids so the clans of Nar can travel by night. They also serve as impromptu meeting places and good encampments for nomadic tribes. By custom, the bonfires are a place of peace to the tribes of Nar—but some clans will break that custom given a good reason to do so.

**Melenos's Plateau:** Atop this broad plateau once stood Castle Melenos, the creation of an Atlantean noble who tried to settle there. Beset by monster attacks and barbarian raids, Melenos returned to Atlantis in shame, and his castle fell into ruin. Among many of Nar's tribes, it is a rite of passage to send youths up the plateau to survive a night in the ruins, bringing back a gray granite stone as proof they did so.

**Shrine of the Widest Sky:** This small temple to Mithra is a pilgrimage destination; the clerics here use weather magic to ensure that clouds never block the sun overhead. Warriors dedicated to Mithra often pray at the shrine before heading out into the surrounding grassland, where herds of wild horses roam. From time to time, horses of exceptional quality seem to seek out pious and true champions of Mithra, and serve them loyally thereafter.

## THE NARTHANS

The mammoth hunters of the Narthan tribe are among Thule's bravest, attacking creatures a hundred times their weight with only spears and axes. Consummate hunter-gatherers, the Narthans use mammoth hides, mammoth fur, mammoth bones, and mammoth tusks in their tools, art, and structures. And the mammoths are not just prey to be hunted; some Narthans tame the mammoths to use as dray animals or war-mounts.

The Narthan tribe has trod the plains of Nar for centuries; the eldest among them claim that the name of the region is taken from the name of their tribe. While few Narthans can claim Kal Keor in their lineage, Kal Keor's second wife was a Narthan, and present-day Narthans regard the long-ago conquests of the Jandar Horde with some pride.

Most Narthans are content to spend their lives crisscrossing the Highlands of Nar, following the herds of mammoths wherever they go. It's a large tribe, though, and some clans among the Narthan aren't above raiding civilized settlements, making war on other tribes, and even exploring the jungles of Dhar Mesh.

**The Narthans** (Large Tribe, pop. 4,500)*The Mammoth Hunters, Tribe of the Tusk, Yaira's Brood*

The Narthan tribe is the archetypical tribe for the region, distinguished mostly by their numbers and their heritage in the region.

**Authority:** Chief Rohei is the direct descendant of Yaira, Kal Keor's second wife and one of his closest advisors. He's been the chief for less than a year and is still trying to consolidate support among the various clan heads (many of whom are his aunts and uncles, which makes that effort require some delicacy on Rohei's part).

**NPCs:** The Narthan tribe is almost entirely human, but there a few families of half-elves, descendants of a wandering clan that allied with the Narthans centuries ago.

*Dendor* is a clan leader among the Narthans, known as "The Frowning One" even to his own family. Moreso than most, he worries about the threats that other tribes and outside influences pose to the Narthan way of life. Conversely, he's a loyal ally and friend to anyone who has the interests of the Narthans at heart.

*Zahiri* is the best Narthan blacksmith, and in his old age he's become obsessed with the dwarven secret of making steel. He'll pay a steep price for examples of dwarven metallurgy, and he daydreams about somehow convincing a dwarf to share those secrets with him.

*Joskala* was once one of the Narthan's greatest mammoth hunters, but she's decided that the great beasts no longer pose a sufficient challenge. She sneaks away from the other Narthans whenever she can to hunt more dangerous game, including monsters and well-armed travelers. PCs who attract Joskala's attention may find themselves fighting a guerilla war against an elusive huntress as they cross the Jandar Plains.

**Trade:** The Narthans are largely self-sufficient, but they trade extra mammoth tusks to the civilized world in exchange for finished jewelry and iron tools and armor.

**Concerns:** The Narthans' biggest concern is more frequent incursions from the Kal Keori—and more insulting behavior from them when the two tribes gather at the same bonfires. At this point, it won't take much for the hostility to erupt into all-out war.

Recently Joskala and some other scouts have seen giants watching the mammoth herds from atop nearby hills. Where did the giants come from? And are they guarding the mammoths, or hunting them as well?

**Secrets:** While Tarhun is the de facto patron deity of the Narthans, Chief Rohei and some of the other leaders have begun making sacrifices to Nergal in secret, bid to do so by a pride of black lions that appeared in the savannah as they were hunting one afternoon. Rohei was deeply shaken by the black lions, whom he regards as a bad omen, and he prays to Nergal in hopes that the God of the Underworld will leave the Narthans in peace.

Nar is almost the only place in Thule where horses or common (or, indeed, useful). If you're looking for vistas that stretch miles to the horizon, conquering hordes, cultured Atlanteans, or an insane asylum the size of a city, then Nar is the place for you.

**THE KAL KEORI**

The Kal Keori are a dark mirror of the Narthan tribe—more warlike, more bloodthirsty, and more vulnerable to internal dissent. They hunt and gather across the Jandar Plains and the Highlands of Nar just as the Narthans do, but they're more apt to raid civilized settlements on the fringes of Nar or make war on the other highland tribes.

The tribe believes that they are the only true descendants of Kal Keor the Terrible and the only ones capable of uniting the tribes under the banner of another Jandar Horde. The other tribes are unwilling to follow the Kal Keori very far, however, which just adds to the resentment on all sides.

The Kal Keori spend their days hunting and raiding, but at night, they sit before their campfires and dream of sacking the city-state of Thran on the edge of Dhar Mesh. Rightly or wrongly, they blame the Black Circle for Kal Keor's assassination, and the Kal Keori have elaborate dreams of revenge should they ever get their hands on a black-robed wizard. So far they lack the power to withstand Thran's arcane magic. But with enough allies, their long wait for vengeance might finally end.

**The Kal Keori** (Large Tribe, pop. 3,800)*Keepers of the Pillaging Flame, the Pallbearers, Spearpoint of the Horde*

Direct descendents of Kal Keor the Terrible, the Kal Keori hope to gather the tribes into a new Jandar Horde and sack the city-states to the east.

**Authority:** "The Great Kal" leads the tribe, taking the hereditary title and spurning any former names. The current Great Kal is an immense, bearded man in his late 40s who is beginning to despair that the Jandar Horde will never be re-formed in his lifetime. He's willing to consider increasingly risky schemes if they'll ensure that his life's dream doesn't slip away.

**NPCs:** The Kal Keori are entirely human, and they look down on any nonhumans, who by definition don't have the blood of Kal Keor the Terrible running through their veins.

*Kal Sirin* is the tribe's most influential shaman and a trusted confidante (and lover) of the Great Kal. Sirin is greedy when it comes to eldritch knowledge and will make any bargain that gives the Kal Keori a magical edge.

*Motroh* is one of the honor guard at the Cairn of Kal Keor, though he often wanders afield to hunt or to keep an eye on nearby travelers. The youngest of the honor guard, he often gets permission to act as a guide for travelers; Motroh and his chieftain split the pay for this service.



*Kal Inna* leads one of Kal Keori's more warlike clans, using illusion magic to hide from the rest of the tribe the fact that she's a succubus. For the last two years, Inna has been using a combination of seduction and blackmail to get chieftains of other tribes to fall in line with the Kal Keori. So far she's accomplished more than the Great Kal has using more direct means. Some other clan leaders wonder why Kal Inna spurns amorous advances from within the tribe.

**Trade:** The Kal Keori bring animal hides, tusks, and looted goods to Katagia and occasionally Orech in exchange for the products of civilization. The Keori chieftains warn their envoys ahead of time to resist the charms of urban life, but sometimes those envoys never come back.

**Concerns:** The Great Kal is making headway with the other tribes suddenly—success he attributes to his personal charisma, not Inna's seduction and blackmail. The day will come when his "personal magnetism" fails him and he can't understand why.

**Secrets:** Inna's true nature is the biggest secret, but Kal Sirin has a secret of her own. Sirin has been exchanging ritual reagents and magic items with agents of the Black Circle, the tribe's sworn enemies. Sirin is confident that the Black Circle is being played for fools in these exchanges, but the Black Circle is equally confident that Sirin is the one being duped.

## SHIELDS OF SUNSET

So named because much of Thule sees the sun set behind these jagged peaks, the Shields of Sunset keep the weather somewhat pleasant across the Highlands of Nar. The mountains collect much of the snow and rain that then feeds into the Jandar River, reducing precipitation for a hundred leagues to the east.

Early Atlantean settlers tried in vain to find a pass through the Shields of Sunset that was gentle enough to accommodate a wagon train; eventually they gave up and sailed farther down the coast to Katagia and later Orech. Even today the mountains serve as an effective barrier for all but the most adept climbers. It's possible to live a lifetime on the west side of the Shields and never see the east, or vice versa; most born in the town of Ragadusa never see the ocean that's only 30 miles away.

Settlements are rare in the region; bad weather on the shore and heavy precipitation in the mountains keeps all but the hardest folk away. But underground it's a different story; the Shields of Sunset are riddled with natural caverns and carefully constructed dungeons. No one cares about the storms when they're protected by hundreds of feet of stone.

**Catacombs of Anir'etak:** Once a temple complex with a golden pyramid stood here, but now only rubble (and lingering divine magic) remains. Constructed by Atlanteans who had fallen under the thrall of the Great Old One Nyarlathotep, the

catacombs are still intact and contain the final resting place of hundreds of Atlanteans, including wealthy scions of the empire buried with their wealth. Cultists of the Crawling Chaos have been moving the rubble, and they've almost broken through to the catacombs themselves. The excavation crews can hear something digging its way upward to them as well, which fills the cultists with glee.

**Urashima:** This city of the sea-elves exists entirely underwater and ignores the affairs of Thule as much as possible. It does have a functioning World Gate, however, so Thuleans could find themselves in Urashima by passing through the gate underneath Imystrahl or using one of the other World Gates found in elven ruins across Thule. The Atlanteans in particular would be fascinated with the elves of Urashima and would pay any price for Urashima's help in visiting now-submerged Atlantis.

**Source of the Wind:** This shrine to the Great Old One known as Ithaqua the Wind-Walker sits atop the Shields' highest peak. Every thirty days, a robed figure with white fur appears at the shrine and begins walking eastward, eventually disappearing into the mountains' eastern foothills. Sometimes the robed figure speaks a cryptic prophecy to any thralls of Ithaqua assembled at the shrine, but once the figure starts downhill, it ignores anything that doesn't block its path.

## HRUNIAK COAST

The southern coast of Thule, extending as far as the Claws of Imystrahl, was the first landing point for Atlantean colonists. Earlier explorers landed in the westward stretch of the coast, while later explorers headed east to find better harbors. The Hruniak Coast has few deep-water harbors before Katagia or the Windlash Reach beyond Imystrahl. But in good weather, or for a desperate captain, many of the small bays here will do in a pinch.

**TeVakhin:** After an apprentice wizard's mishap, this fishing town fell under an unusual curse. The buildings themselves are animate and occasionally consume residents or visitors, their doors turning into mouths with eldritch teeth. Lifting the curse requires performing a reversal of a botched animation ritual—the formula for which lies within the town's great hall. Would-be saviors of the town will have to be intentionally chewed up and swallowed by the building to get at the ritual scroll.

**Palla Jark:** This ruined fortress, built by the Atlanteans, was destroyed by beastmen more than a thousand years ago—shortly after the Atlanteans sacked the elven city of Imystrahl. The beastmen never discovered the underground vaults containing treasures looted from Imystrahl and bound for Atlantis. The ghosts of the Atlanteans still want to keep their treasure safe for the Shining Empire, and they'll attack anyone who tries to breach the vaults.

**Larran's Cove:** This well-hidden sea-cave is big enough to hold several galleys, yet almost invisible from offshore. The smuggler Larran uses it as a refuge

from Katagia's navy as he evades their tax collectors and cargo inspectors. Larran also does a brisk side business helping fugitives travel along Thule's southern coast—no questions asked.

## KATAGIA, LAST BASTION OF ATLANTIS

It's been three centuries since Atlantis sunk beneath the waves, and Katagia is still coming to terms with that disaster and what it means to Atlanteans when Atlantis is no more. Once the capital of Atlantis's colonies in Thule, Katagia is determined to reclaim the glories of the Shining Empire. The difficulty is that few Katagians can agree on how to accomplish that.

Some Katagians are determined—some say *too* determined—to live life as if Atlantis still ruled. Others lash out at anything non-Atlantean, blaming the rest of the world for the loss of their home. And some are trying to take the best of Thule under the Katagian banner, combining the strengths of their new continent with the traditions and learning of the old.

## FROM COLONY TO CAPITAL

The Atlanteans landed on the southern shores of Thule in 307 AR, only three centuries after Emperor Evenor founded the empire. Despite the forbidding terrain and the even more forbidding natives, the Atlantean colonists made steady progress, founding Katagia in 495 AR and eventually reaching the Golden Sea in 1673 AR. But a costly war with Lemuria distracted Atlantis, and Thule's natives started to chip away at the colonies' borders.

The Atlantean colonies on Thule fell into chaos in 1906 AR when Atlantis sank beneath the waves, with most native Atlanteans fleeing for the relatively safety of Katagia. Native Thuleans reclaimed most of the Atlantean conquests, but the banners of Atlantis still flew above Katagia—and they still fly there today, even if the rest of the continent is only dimly aware that Atlantis once existed.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Katagia's dominant feature are its walls—not just the stone battlements that surround the city, but the many internal walls that separate neighborhood from neighborhood. The product of overzealous military planners when the Atlantean colony on Thule was expanding rapidly, the walls sometimes bisect a city block and in a few memorable instances run right through the middle of a building. The walls, built and rebuilt in a variety of architectural styles, give the city an insular feel and contribute to one of the city's nicknames: the Honeycomb. A visitor to Katagia experiences the city only a few blocks at a time, making the city seem much smaller than it actually is.

**The Bronze Locks:** Named for the once-shiny fittings now turned green with age, the Bronze Dam

was originally built to regulate the Tambur River's flow into Devilsun Bay but quickly became a means for Katagia to extract tolls from merchant traffic heading up and down the river. Today the Bronze Locks are a prize for whichever faction is ascendant in Katagian politics; the tolls from river traffic fund all sorts of factional ambitions.

**The Tidal Wards:** The three southernmost wards in Katagia have sunk beneath sea level, so residents get from place to place via canals rather than streets. Most basements are flooded, and the loathsome fish-men known as skum have started moving in, creating their own secret settlement underneath the flooded parts of Katagia.

**Blackfalcon Tower:** Home of the Soursane family, one of the political factions grasping for power in Katagia, the tower is the tallest and most imposing in the city. Made entirely of black granite shipped from Atlantis at ruinous cost, the tower has upper reaches forbidden to all but family members and a dungeon below where the Soursanes dispose of their enemies.

**The Winged Tower:** Asura's greatest temple on Thule, the Winged Tower is so named for the trained wyverns that roost among its balconies and buttresses. The great brazier atop the tower—lit at all times, no matter the weather—is visible throughout the city and even to ships at sea. If the flame were to be extinguished, the bad omen would ripple throughout Asura's faith across the continent.

**The Grand Orrery:** Located in a walled-off section of central Katagia, this artifact was built five centuries ago to show how moons and constellations cross the sky. It's in constant motion, though it no longer corresponds to the actual sky and no one seems to know how to recalibrate it, or what would happen if the orrery worked properly once again. As a matter of civic pride, most Katagians would very much like to get the orrery working again, and they still use its gleaming copper arms and spheres as a meeting place and chaotic bazaar.

## Katagia (Small City, pop. 22,500)

*Last Bastion of Atlantis, the Twitching Limb, the Honeycomb*

The only city to still consider itself "Atlantean" after Atlantis sank beneath the waves, Katagia is torn between those who want to restore Atlantis's glory and those who want to build a new civilization here on Thule.

**Authority:** Lord Protector Denech Soursane heads the political faction that is (temporarily at least) ascendant in Katagia; the Soursanes represent a conservative faction that wants to protect Atlanteans and preserve Atlantean culture at any cost. Denech's efforts are often thwarted by the Diluvials, a collection of activist families that want to declare a formal Atlantean monarch, found a new dynasty, and raise an army to conquer the Claws of Imystrahl and eventually Thule. Also influential are the Sea-Barons, a cabal of merchant princes who want to rebuild a powerful Atlantean fleet but don't hold

territorial ambitions, and the New Katagians, a coalition of families—many human, not Atlantean—who want Katagia to become a stable Thulean city-state without all the trappings of Atlantis.

**NPCs:** About two-third's of Katagia's population is Atlantean, with the remaining third divided in half between humans and everyone else.

*Krufa Soursane* is one of Denech's trusted nephews and a committed Atlantean supremacist, although he holds no particular animus toward individuals of other races. He's always plotting against the other factions and rival city-states, and he fancies himself a spymaster, hiring cats-paws like the PCs for all sorts of missions.

*Beritt the Withered* is one of the Sea-Barons, accomplished in weather magic. Too old for long sea voyages, she manages her trading company's affairs from Katagia. If something happens in a far-off part of Thule, Beritt is often the first Katagian to hear of it.

*Vrokath* is a noble scion of Katagia and one of the more radical firebrands among the Diluvials. He wants Atlantis to return to its rightful place in the world—no matter that the continent rests on the ocean floor. He's begun to make inquiries about a powerful ritual connected to Great Cthulhu that could raise Atlantis above the waves, sinking Thule in its place.

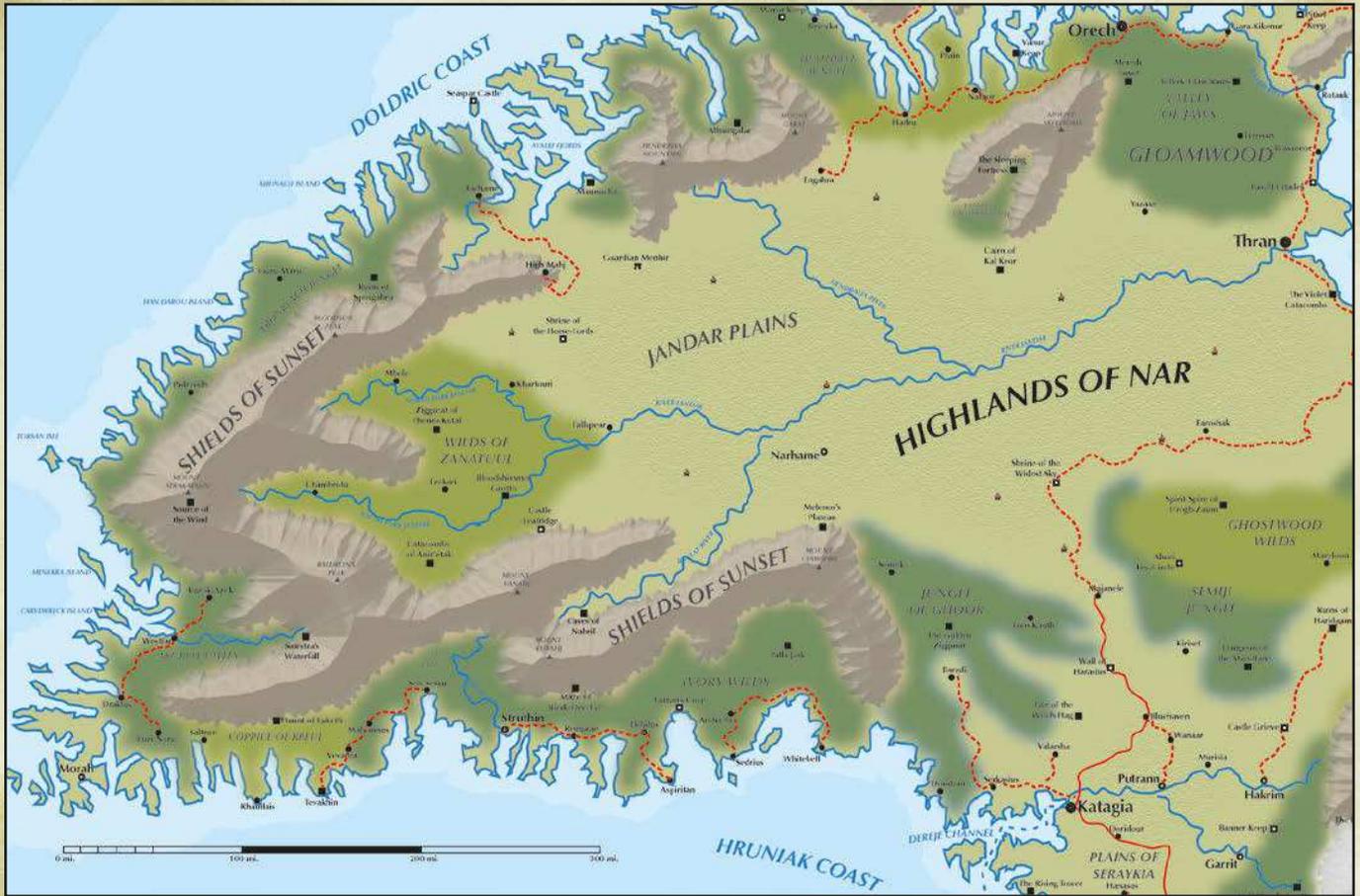
**Trade:** Katagia's artisans are some of the finest on the continent, especially when it comes to art, sculpture, and other luxury goods. The sculptors, jewelers, painters, and clothiers of Katagia keep Atlantean styles and techniques alive, and the rest of Thule pays dearly for such craftsmanship. Katagia imports some food and raw materials from upriver, and the various factions are always seeking conscripts for their private armies.

**Concerns:** Recently the priests of Tarhun have been struggling with traditional fight trainers for control of the gladiatorial "pit fights" of Katagia; the priests have always blessed the duels and healed the gladiators, but now they want a greater say in how the fights are run—and perhaps a share of the profits.

The New Katagians are reaching out to the human towns of Putrann, Garrit, and Hakrim to the east, inquiring about the possibility of a mutual defense pact.

**Secrets:** Beritt the Withered isn't well-informed just because she gets reports from her sea-captains; she's also in possession of artifacts called the *Ebon Scrolls* that multiply the potency of her divination magic. Krufa Soursane knows Beritt has the *Ebon Scrolls*, and he's scheming to take them from her.

Unbeknown to any of the four factions, the skum underneath the Tidal Wards are in contact with Great Cthulhu, and they plan to eventually seize the city, repair the Grand Orrery, and use it to foretell Cthulhu's return.



## DOLDRIC COAST

The northwestern coast of Thule is difficult to navigate—the winds tend to be light and capricious, deserting the sails without warning. Many trade routes tack deeper into the Sea of Mists, where the weather might be worse, but at least it's more consistent. The strip of coastal jungle is among Thule's least-traveled places. Infested with beastmen, debased serpentmen, and other dangers, the Doldric Coast is land that neither city-states nor ancient empires seemed to want.

The Doldric Coast's biggest landmark—other than the city-state of Orech described below—is the Gloamwood, the largest woodland west of Dhar Mesh. This deciduous forest is teeming with beastmen and other monsters, and even the highland tribes avoid it if possible. An unnatural pall covers the forest by day, making it difficult to for humans to see without torches or other illumination. But by night, fireflies the size of songbirds emerge, and it's lighter among the boughs of the Gloamwood than it would be during the day. At the center of the Gloamwood is the Valley of Jaws, named for the stone outcroppings on the surrounding ridges. This valley is the ancestral home to the Mudrak tribe (see below), although the tribe is out raiding and absent half the time.

**Meredi Tower:** This humble keep has stood amid the trees of the Gloamwood for 400 years, built by the Caritains, a family of noble Atlanteans. The

tower lies so deep within the forest—and the beastmen attacks are so frequent—that the family has had almost no contact with the outside world. Incredibly, they don't realize that Atlantis sank beneath the waves, and they'll react with anger and disbelief if someone suggests it. Decades of inbreeding has inflicted eccentricities and outright madness on the Caritains, and they're paranoid about the continued survival of their bloodline.

**Lyrisaan:** This treehouse village of the wood elves is home to the only force capable of standing up to the Mudrak tribesmen—and even the Lyrisaan elves engage in hit-and-run tactics, not straightforward battle. Accomplished climbers, the Lyrisaan can travel for miles through the Gloamwood without touching the ground, leaping and clambering from tree to tree.

**Nathor:** This fishing village is deserted, but corpses are strewn throughout the streets, each drained of blood. Some victims barricaded themselves inside their huts, but it apparently did them no good. A band of adventurers that stumbles across this terrible scene might assume vampires are responsible, but the true culprit is a massive flock of stirges that arise out of the surrounding jungle each day at dusk.

**Maunucha:** Once a castle on the coastline, now only rubble remains. If seen from the air or the top of the rising foothills to the southeast, it's apparent that a giant foot—some hundred feet across—stepped on the castle. Looking to the south reveals a second

footprint in the jungle almost a quarter-mile away, and there may be others deeper in the jungle.

**Biriekka:** This primary authority in this town is Gurisel, a cleric of Ishtar who is trying to “civilize” the beastmen in the jungle south of town. She’s convinced some to wear fancy human clothes, pray at the shrine, and otherwise behave “properly,” but the beastmen are getting restive. The other townspeople are increasingly nervous despite Gurisel’s promises that they’re completely safe.

**Alhaingalar:** This ruin, described in more detail in Chapter 4, has sorcerous flowers flourishing on vines that cover every edifice in the city, plus monsters from the surrounding jungle that devour any who try to plunder the city’s ancient secrets.

## THE MUDRAK

The ultimate tribe of outcasts, the Mudrak throw themselves headlong into battle, equally fearless and suicidal. They live in the Gloamwood but frequently travel throughout the northeastern parts of the Nar Highlands, hunting and making war on anything they come across.

The Mudrak represent something that almost never occurs in Thule: interbreeding between humans and beastmen. Their mixed blood means they’ll never be accepted in most human societies, while beastmen smell the “stink of man” on them and attack without other provocation. The only friends the Mudraks have are each other; they believe Herum put them on this world to oppose all other thinking peoples.

The Mudrak accept members of all races and even have some intelligent monsters at their campfires, but “accept” doesn’t mean “welcome.” Anyone captured by the Mudrak is stripped and tortured. Those who show some resilience and dignity during the torture are asked, “Join or die?” Those who join the Mudrak are subjected to a ritual that magically erases their old, civilized identity—to the point where divination magic and scrying can no longer detect them. Then they receive a new Mudrak name and are expected to fight and pillage with the rest of the tribe.

### The Mudrak (Large Tribe, pop. 2,700)

*Mongrels, the Nameless, the Blood-Mad*

The Mudrak Tribe, a mix of humans, beastmen, and cross-breeds, lives in the Gloamwood but is known for its savage raids throughout the Highlands of Nar.

**Authority:** Ondotahl claims authority over the Mudrak by right of being the “Chosen of Herum,” a title he earned by outwrestling a girallon deep within the Gloamwood. He cares about one thing: where the Mudrak will fight next.

**NPCs:** About a quarter of the Mudraks are mostly human, about a quarter are mostly beastmen, and the remaining half are other races, monsters,

or have parentage so indeterminate that they themselves have no idea what race they are.

*Nyu Narr* is a shaman who inculcates the rest of the tribe into the ways of Herum and the one that performs the Unnaming Ritual for new tribe members.

*Tucodede* is a warband leader who tries to befriend visitors and new tribe members. He is enthusiastic, even pushy, about the Mudrak breeding with each other “for the good of the tribe.”

*Ganda* is a shaman who professes affiliation with Herum but is actually a thrall of Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat with a Thousand Young. She’s distrustful of outsiders; Shub-Niggurath has warned her in dreams that they could spell the downfall of the Mudrak.

**Trade:** The Mudrak are entirely self-sufficient, which is good—no one would willingly trade with them anyway.

**Concerns:** The Mudrak have made many enemies among the tribes of the Highlands of Nar, and it’s only a matter of time before one or more come into the Gloamwood looking for payback.

**Secrets:** Aside from Ganda’s true affiliation, the biggest secret the Mudraks possess is the Ritual of Unnaming. Many other power groups in Thule, from the Forked Tongue crimelords in Ikath to the slave-freeing priests of Asura, would love to give people the magical equivalent of a clean slate.

## ORECH, CITY OF MAZES

Orech is at once the safest city in Thule—street crime is relatively rare—and its most dangerous. Anyone who remains within the city walls for more than a few weeks puts sanity at risk. The residents of Orech are all insane in one way or another, every last one of them. For some, the insanity manifests as harmless eccentricities or minor compulsions; for example, many Orechians are obsessed with geometric patterns, and lose themselves for hours in contemplating meaningless designs without even realizing it. Other citizens have only a casual relationship with reality; the homicidal, the schizophrenic, and the maniacal walk the streets of Orech on a daily basis. Only the Yellow Priests seem immune to the city’s unusual curse, and they exert a strangely calming influence on their fellow citizens. In their presence, no one seems to care about bizarre behaviors.

Perhaps the strangest element of Orech’s curse is that those who have succumbed to the city’s insanity are incapable of noticing the oddities that are obvious to the visitor. City guards might dress as clowns or elderly people may hurl themselves from high windows, but the Orechians react as if such occurrences are ordinary. Then again, in Orech they are.

## DESCENT INTO MADNESS

An Atlantean colony founded in 616 AR, Orech represented a second path to the riches of Thule—one explorers hoped could be easier than the journeys overland from Katagia and points south. The City of New Splendors rose in prominence as Atlantis's fortunes on Thule increased, but at the height of Orech's splendor, disaster struck. A plague of madness in 1744 AR struck the city's citizens without warning, and angry mobs turned on each other and the city they once loved.

The Yellow Priests of Hastur were there to restore a semblance of calm to the city, a calm the people of Orech welcomed. Assuming control over the city, the priests restored commerce and public safety. Most Orechians were too grateful to think overmuch about what started the plague in the first place or why the Yellow Priests were so ready to cure it. After a few weeks of normality, even the curious and suspicious stopped caring about the plague of madness and got back to working and living . . . but with a new outlook.

The plague of madness never left Orech. It seeped into the city's stones and now drives everyone who remains there mad. The Yellow Priests simply devised an outlet for the madness, crafting an elaborate spell that infected many people with an obsession for patterns and mazes; with one mild form of madness they save a good portion of the citizenry from far more destructive illnesses. Of course, the result is a city whose architecture is a map of obsession.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Orech is known as the City of Mazes for good reason. For centuries, many of its citizens have been obsessed with building structures and laying out streets that match the endlessly repeating images trapped in their minds. Homes, palaces, workshops, markets, all of them have been subdivided into warrens of geometrically perfect (and often impractical) layouts. It is rare to find a passageway or street that runs more than thirty or forty feet in a straight line before turning at a precise right angle. Whole city blocks are enclosed within ever-narrowing mazes. Visitors find the place almost impossible to navigate, and even native Orechians have a difficult time outside of their home neighborhoods.

**Temple of Hastur:** Under construction in the city center, this labyrinthine building has had laborers scurrying over it for decades. No one knows when it'll be finished, nor why the workers seem to tear down structures as often as they put them up.

**Grand Harbor:** Built by the Atlanteans, the city's harbor has a high seawall and a throng of piers for ship traffic of all kinds. Orech doesn't have a navy to speak of, but pirates have heard the folktales about the city and give it a wide berth.

**Hall of Arts:** This combination library, museum, and theater housed many treasures of Atlantean culture, but the chaos of 1744 AR and the experiments of the Yellow Priests since have left the collections disorganized and incomplete. The people of Orech put on dramas here almost every day; residents enjoy them greatly but visitors find them confusing and often disturbing.

### Orech (Small City, pop. 14,100)

*City of Mazes, Where Madmen Dwell, City of New Splendors (little-used anymore)*

The city of Orech, controlled by the Yellow Priests of Hastur, literally drives mad anyone who stays there for more than a few weeks.

**Authority:** The nameless Yellow Priests rule this city, and no one has the cognition or motivation to challenge their rule.

**NPCs:** The city is a roughly even mix of human and Atlantean, with most of the humans arriving at the invitation of the Yellow Priests in the last few centuries.

*Kiri Yeng* is a merchant ship-captain who regularly visits Orech, trading food and building materials for treasures looted from the Hall of Arts. She knows the layout of the building well, but she's nervous about staying in the city more than a few days.

*Boroyawp* is a bard who wanders the city, improvising songs on the spot about the people he encounters. Some of his songs suggest that though mad, he possesses oracular wisdom.

**Trade:** Under the watchful eye of the Yellow Priests, surveyors from Orech exchange the city's treasures (Atlantean antiquities and finished goods from the city's workshops) for food and building materials (to complete the temple and feed the general population's mania for maze-making).

**Concerns:** When the Yellow Priests took over, the onset of madness was three weeks long. But as the priests make progress on the temple, madness comes quicker to those in Orech.

The conventional wisdom among merchants is "don't stay in Orech for more than a week." But the day is coming when that will no longer be good advice.

**Secrets:** The progress on the Temple of Hastur depends on events elsewhere in Thule—in many ways the temple structure is a blueprint representing Hastur's machinations across the continent. The more Hastur's efforts are disrupted, the more Orech's temple will need rebuilding.

## KALAYAN THE GOLDEN

The heart of Thule is Kalayan the Golden, an inland sea that fills the central basin of the continent. The Kalayan Sea and the lands surrounding it are home to great cities, deep jungles, steaming volcanoes, windswept tundra, and fierce barbarian tribes. In this great crossroads many of the cultures of Thule meet—sometimes in peaceful trade, and sometimes in bloody warfare. Over the centuries, each of the races of Thule has settled the shores of the Kalayan Sea or voyaged over its wide expanse. Scores of villages, outposts, towns, strongholds, and cities have taken root and flourished for a time in these warm and fertile lands. Many of these settlements are forgotten ruins now, but others still thrive.

There is a good deal of debate among sages about which of Thule's realms and cities are Inner Sea lands, and which belong to the neighboring regions of the continent. The best definition includes the southern coast of the Kalayan Sea from Ikath eastward to the lands claimed by the Riders of Hurgan. Everything between the Starcrown Mountains and the Kalayan Sea is included in this broad expanse, along with the Quosa Vale and the southern slopes of the Zinandar Mountains. These are the richest and most populous lands of Thule, although vast reaches still consist of unexplored mountains and jungles.

## AMMURATH

The homeland of the Ammur barbarians, Ammurath lies in the eastern foothills of the Starcrown Mountains. The Ammurans are a proud, warlike Dhari tribe who live in well-fortified hill-villages, using simple but effective fieldstone walls to guard their holds and high pastures. They are a relatively advanced people with metalworking, agriculture, counting and figures, and a strong oral tradition of tribal law; the chief differences between the Ammurans and their more civilized neighbors are the Ammurans' lack of a written language and their veneration of nature spirits rather than the gods of civilization.

Located more or less between Lomar, Quodeth, and Marg, the Ammurans are frequently wooed by one city-state or another to take sides in their wars. The barbarians have little reason to like any of them: Lomar has tried to conquer Ammurath on two occasions, Quodeth's naked mercantilism strikes Ammurans as dishonest, and Marg's slave trading outrages them. Despite this distrust for the ways of civilized lands, hundreds of Ammurans take service as mercenaries in the various armies of the nearby cities, and pride themselves on giving good service for their coin.

**Ammur Barbarians** (Small Tribe, pop. 6,700)  
*The Hill-People, the Stone-Carvers, the Eagle People*

The Ammurans are a clannish barbarian tribe that lives in well-defended hilltop holds among the eastern foothills of the Starcrown Mountains.

**Authority:** Each hold or village has its own headman. There is no central authority in Ammurath.

**NPCs:** Ammurans are humans of Dhari descent. They are suspicious of strangers in their lands, but can be firm friends and generous hosts to those who win their respect.

*Belanthe the Beautiful* is sometimes called the "Princess of Ammurath." She is the daughter of a powerful and influential clan-chief named Argul Longrunner. She will bring her father's clan and its many allies into any marriage, so most Ammurans chiefs and hetmans are trying to present their own sons or brothers as suitors. Belanthe, however, has no interest in marriage.

*Hetman Rarno Red spear* is an old, traditional village leader who has his warriors kill or chase off all non-Ammurans wandering into his territory. He wants nothing to do with civilized folk or their wicked ways.

*Warthar Snowcloak* is an old, widely respected druid who is at least ninety years old but still hale and vigorous. He is one of the Guardians of the Twelve Stones, and watches over a stone circle that stands on a high hilltop deep in Ammurath.

**Trade:** The Ammurans are mostly herdsmen and subsistence farmers, keeping flocks of sheep and goats and raising corn and potatoes. They trade wool, meat, and cheese to the nearby civilized people in exchange for textiles, beads, earthenware, and jewelry.

**Concerns:** Settlers from Lomar and Quodeth are encroaching on the frontiers of Ammurath. Some clans are becoming very friendly with the newcomers and adopting more of the trappings of civilization, leading to tensions with more traditional clans. Old serpentman ruins are common in Ammurath, and many of these places still harbor cursed treasures and dark magic.

## CORSAIRS OF THE GOLDEN SEA

A terrible scourge threatens the Kalayan Sea and all the lands adjacent to it: piracy, bold and bloody-handed. Dozens of corsair galleys prowl the waters of the inland sea, hunting down careless merchant ships and launching one violent raid after another against any poorly defended village or town within an easy march of the seashore. Worse yet, these vile sea-reavers are largely united in a great league known as the Golden Brotherhood or the Corsairs of the Golden Sea. Instead of single ships hunting down prey they can take on alone, the Golden Sea corsairs operate in flotillas, with several ships sailing together and cooperating to capture even well-protected merchant galleys or landing hundreds of corsairs at once to attack targets on shore.



While the corsairs generally prey on anything they can catch, they sometimes hire themselves out to warring cities as seagoing mercenaries. More than once they have joined with Lomar or Ikath to threaten Quodeth's naval superiority in the Kalayan Sea, only to prove fickle and unreliable when battle loomed close. Many turn smuggler and seek to slip valuable cargo into dangerous places if worthwhile targets for piracy are hard to find.

Life in a corsair crew is dangerous, but frequently rewarded with shares of rich prizes. The Golden Brotherhood is surprisingly democratic, and captains who abuse their crews or make stupid blunders rarely hold their positions for long—corsair crewmen vote with their feet, and go join the crews of more successful captains. The corsairs have several anchorages and secret harbors scattered around the Kalayan Sea, but their major base for now is the outlaw city of Rime, on the shore of the Lands of the Long Shadow.

Some of the more notable corsairs include:

**Jade Viper:** A powerful trireme based in Ikath, the *Jade Viper* is commanded by an intimidating sorcerer-captain called Hyardeth the Viper. He is a ruthless mercenary who often sails as a "privateer" under a royal commission from Ikath. Hyardeth is not affiliated with the Golden Brotherhood and preys on his fellow pirates as well as any non-Ikathan merchant ship that crosses his path.

**Nightdrake:** Distinguished by its black sails and black-painted hull, the *Nightdrake* is a swift xebec under the command of the charismatic captain known as Lady Midnight. Most ships do not sail at night, but Lady Midnight carefully trains her crew to sail and fight in conditions when no other captain would dare raise anchor.

**The Slayer Fleet:** A flotilla of four pirate galleys that operate together, the Slayer Fleet is under the command of the brutal warlord Dreth the Slayer. No other corsair captain in the Kalayan Sea commands such a powerful force, but with four ships to divide the loot, no individual sailor ever sees anything more than a token share of the fleet's plunder. As a result, Dreth resorts to brutal discipline to keep his crews in line. Only the most desperate men willingly sail with the Slayer.

Want to run a pirate-themed game? The Kalayan Sea is the perfect place to do it. There is an excellent mix of rich cities such as Droum or Ikath providing merchant shipping to prey on, a first-rate pirate haven in the city of Rime, and plenty of mysterious islands, jungle-covered coasts, and ancient ruins to explore. Plus, the Corsairs of the Golden Sea offer an excellent selection of rivals or allies for player character pirates to deal with.

## GHAN PENINSULA

This wide, jungle-covered peninsula forms a large portion of the southern shore of the Kalayan Sea. It is home to some of the densest and most dangerous jungle east of the great expanse of Dhar Mesh. The great city of Lomar lies at the western end of the Ghan, while at the eastern end the small trading town of Ghanport sits at the mouth of the Ghan River. Between these two outposts of civilization lie a hundred miles of virtually impassable wilderness roamed by hungry beasts and savage tribes. Bold jungle traders maintain tenuous lines of communication with some of the friendlier tribes, but there are many places in the Ghan where no civilized men go—or, if they do, never return.

The Ghan Peninsula is home to many mysterious ruins, as well as hidden caverns of enormous extent. A long time ago, this area was home to a kingdom known as Kal-Ne-Moz ruled by janni—a race of humanlike genies. The janni governed many subject tribes in this area, and their strongholds and temples dot the coastal hills of the Ghan. Their realm fell almost three thousand years ago, but some of their ruins still conceal dangerous secrets (see the *Cavern of Golden Tears* adventure in Chapter 5).

## HURHUN

Formerly a large and prosperous city at the eastern end of the Kalayan Sea, Hurhun became embroiled in a series of bitter wars with the city of Lomar that culminated in the defeat of Hurhun in 2087 AR, about 120 years ago. The Lomari sacked Hurhun, carried its people off in chains, and put the defeated city to the torch; Hurhun is now a sprawling ruin where few people go. Only a handful of scavengers and outlaws lurk in the city's deserted streets. These ragged survivors avoid the city's lower districts, since man-eating monsters such as manticores and chimeras are known to lair in the heart of the old city.

## THE KALAYAN SEA

A vast freshwater lake, the Kalayan Sea (sometimes known as the Inner Sea, the Golden Sea, or Kalayan the Golden) is the dominant feature of central Thule. Dozens of major rivers flow down into the Kalayan from the high mountains ringing the inland sea. Two major outlets—the Quosa River, which flows southeast to Quodeth and the Atlantean Ocean, and the River Iyul, which flows northeast under the glacier Kang to the Boreal Sea—drain the giant lake, preventing it from



becoming salty. The waters are warmed considerably by submerged volcanoes, especially in its eastern portions.

While the Kalayan Sea offers easy access to much of interior Thule, it is not a particularly safe voyage. Corsairs plague its waters, as noted above. In addition, its waters teem with many dangerous aquatic predators, including beasts that should have perished millions of years ago such as giant freshwater crocodiles, plesiosaurs, and mosasaurs.

**Anibhuraal:** A sunken city fifty miles north of the Ghan Peninsula, Anibhuraal lies in water so shallow that its star-shaped ziggurats and mushroom-shaped towers break the surface, creating a weird stone forest in the middle of the sea. Some of the towers and ziggurats offer access to vast, half-flooded vaults beneath the seabed. The architecture and proportions of the city are distinctly inhuman, and some believe that Anibhuraal was a city of an alien race such as elder things or mi-go that was destroyed in a war against a rival race of beings. Whether any of the city's builders (or its foes) survive in the lower vaults none can say, but mariners report that terrible piping sounds can be heard from the stone ruins at certain times of year.

**Isle of Woe:** The slaver city of Marg faces the Atlantean Ocean, but Margish slavers are active throughout Kalayan the Golden. The black, jungle-covered isle known only as the Isle of Woe serves as their main base in the Kalayan Sea. Here Margish galleys bring their captives from the shores of the Inner Sea, holding hundreds of captives in a strong stone fortress overlooking the island's natural harbor. To bring their captives to market in Marg, the slavers must either pass through Quodeth and pay a hefty toll, or land their captives in the Ghan and march overland through Ammurath or the Nissurian Hills. Either route takes time to arrange, so many captives are held for weeks or months here before they are sent onward to Marg.

**Sunrise Bay:** This large gulf in the southeastern part of the sea serves as the source for the Quosa River. The great river is only about one hundred miles long, but it is deep and wide, and navigable for its whole length. By this passage ships from the Inner Sea can reach the Atlantean Ocean, and vice versa.

**Yezeqhar, the Fuming Island:** This large, round volcanic island is ringed by sea-cliffs several hundred feet high, and crowned by a jungle-covered volcanic cone that frequently emits plumes of steam and ash. It has a palpable aura of menace, and most sailors avoid lingering nearby. Landings on Yezeqhar are difficult due to the high cliffs, but on the eastern side of the island there is an old stone quay and weathered steps climbing up to the top of the cliff. The island is sacred to cultists worshipping the monstrous god Lorthnu'un, and some say that Lorthnu'un itself lies dormant in a deep fissure beneath Yezeqhar's steaming volcano.

## LOMAR

Home to a proud and warlike people, the city-state of Lomar dominates the southern coast of the Kalayan Sea. Lomar's warriors guard rich fields and rice paddies stretching for more than fifty miles across the western end of the Ghan peninsula, and its sleek dromonds patrol the waters for three days' sail in all directions. Within the city walls, noble commanders practice their martial skills constantly, reigning over an elite class of free warriors who in turn control a large but docile population of slaves and servants. Monuments tower over each of the public squares in the city, commemorating more than two hundred years of military supremacy.

While the celebration of military triumph and the martial virtues lies at the center of Lomar's public life, the city is more than a simple armed camp. Lomar is an important center of commerce, a gateway through which the tribes and settlers of the southern Kalayan highlands are linked to the great trade routes of the Inner Sea. Lomari merchants compete with traders from Quodeth, Ikath, and Droum for control of the valuable gold and ivory trades in the central Kalayan, and the city's artisans produce exceptional woodwork and metalwork. Perhaps most importantly, Lomar is a city of laws. Most other cities in Thule are hopelessly corrupt and inefficient, but Lomari pride themselves on their honorable dealings and upright ways.

## THE CITY OF INVADERS

The story of Lomar begins thirty years after the sea took Atlantis. In 1939 AR, a wandering tribe of seafarers descended from the survivors of Lemuria attacked the old Atlantean haven of Katagia. The defenses of Katagia proved too strong for the Lemurians to overcome, but rather than return to the sea with the rest of the fleet, a charismatic warlord named Zosheer Loh decided to lead a large band inland to found a kingdom of his own in Thule's wilderness. For years the band migrated through Dhar Mesh, Phoor, and the southern coastlands of the Kalayan Sea before settling down in a fertile river valley at the west end of the Ghan Peninsula. There they founded a city in 1980 AR, and named it in honor of Zosheer Loh, who had died only a year before their wanderings ended.

In the 223 years since its founding, Lomar has grown into a major power. A little more than a century ago, Lomar fought a bitter war against the city of Hurhun and laid it in ruins. Fifty years ago, Lomar's legions landed before Droum's walls and defeated the armies of that city, imposing a ruinous tribute as the price of peace. Within the last twenty years, Lomari centuries have led the city's legions to less conclusive battles against Ikath, Marg, and Quodeth, and it is only a matter of time before the Emperor orders Zosheer's Bell sounded once again to call the legions to war.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Lomar is a well-fortified city that stands a short distance inland from the Kalayan Sea on the banks of the Yissu River. The riverfront serves as the city's port, since the open waters of the Kalayan are only eight miles to the west. High walls surround a semi-circular city laid out like half of a gigantic wagon wheel, the main streets forming the "spokes" that meet in the great Triumph Square. The Emperor's Palace (more a fortress than a palace, really) stands on a hill just to the east, overlooking both the square and the river.

**The Blue Pelican:** A large inn and taproom located in Lomar's river district, the Blue Pelican is named for a local variety of fishing bird with striking blue plumage. Many foreigners arriving in Lomar by sea take rooms here. It's not cheap, but it is clean and safe, which is more than can be said of similar establishments in many other cities. The proprietor is an old Lomari man named Bahdurbo, who is a servant of the Magh family and runs the Blue Pelican for his masters.

**Tower of Zosheer:** The central citadel of Lomar contains a great golden bell in a high tower, visible from just about everywhere in the city. By tradition, the bell is struck to announce that Lomar is going to war and to celebrate reports of victory by Lomar's armies. A famous prophecy predicts that Lomar will fall within the year if the bell should ever be lost or broken, so guards stand watch by Zosheer's Bell around the clock.

**Triumph Square:** Eleven great avenues lead from Lomar's gates to Triumph Square, the central plaza of the city. This vast stone square is a good five hundred yards wide, and its perimeter is lined with scores of monuments to great Lomari champions, generals, and emperors. City law prohibits the establishment of any permanent place of business in the square, but many vendors set up tents or carts every day, making Triumph Square a busy marketplace from sunup to sundown.

**Wohdwa Palace:** Two miles outside the city walls lie the ruins of a great estate. The Wohdwas were high-ranking nobles who won glory in many of Lomar's old wars, but the family declined under some mysterious curse. The last of the Wohdwas was a warrior-princess named Yilar, who led a legion in the war against Hurhun to great success, but felt that she was denied the honors her victory merited. She plotted against the ruling emperor with a mysterious warlock named Rashmi, but the plot was discovered. Yilar was put to death, Rashmi vanished, and Wohdwa Palace was abandoned. The place is now said to be haunted, perhaps by things the warlock summoned long ago.

**Lomar** (Large City, pop. 24,200)

*City of Triumphs, City of Shining Spears, City of the Golden Bell*

Lomar is an aggressive and militant city-state that seeks to expand its dominions through campaigns of conquest.

**Authority:** Emperor Deondro Shurh is the reigning monarch, the third ruler of the Shurh line. He wields near-absolute power; unlike many Thulean cities, Lomar possesses a strong monarchy.

**NPCs:** Most people in Lomar are (naturally) Lomari. In fact, citizenship is denied to anyone who is not of the Lomari race, although a few people of other races are permanent residents and hold important positions in commerce or industry. Most non-Lomari are slaves, although Lomar's laws protect slaves against many abuses and even allow them to own property and work in their chosen trades.

*Lorjeen the Lion* is the most famous warrior in the city. Lomar's warriors do not fight in the city's arena, but instead compete in frequent games and mock battles and fight many duels.

Lorjeen, a giant of a man over 7 feet tall, has never been defeated.

*High Warpriest Mordju* is the high priest of Nergal at the Hall of a Thousand Victories. Cruel and ambitious, Mordju is one of the principal agitators seeking to push the emperor into a new war.

*Ghoro Gai* is the city's foremost merchant. Short and fat, he was never much of a warrior, but he commands a merchant fleet of a dozen galleys and is more widely traveled than most of his countrymen. He quietly serves as the chief spymaster to Emperor Deondro.

**Trade:** Lomar produces cotton, rice, jewelry, woodwork of all kinds, and bronze arms and armor of exceptional quality. The city imports gold, ivory, wine, and silk.

**Concerns:** Lomari look to war as a means to win accolades and riches, but it's been nearly twenty years since an emperor has ordered the striking of Zosheer's Bell. The city's nobles (and quite a few of its free warriors) are spoiling for a fight. Pressure is growing for Emperor Deondro to lead the city's legions in a bold new campaign.

**Secrets:** A cabal of shape-changing serpentmen secretly influences Lomar's affairs; a dozen or more important nobles and panjandrums have been replaced by serpentman doubles, who are conspiring to kill the emperor and ensure his successor is one of them. The Blue Jaguars are a royal guard of hand-picked centurions who undertake many sensitive missions for Lomar—including some Emperor Deondro doesn't know about. They are seeking throughout Thule for Atlantean artifacts based on strange resonating-crystal technology, and have already collected a number of such devices. What the Blue Jaguars need or want with these old Atlantean treasures is unclear.

## NESSK

Thousands of years ago, eastern Thule was the cradle of a great prehuman civilization—Nessk, the empire of the serpentmen. A dozen great serpentman cities slumbered in the steaming jungles of Dhar Mesh, the Yissurian Hills, the Quosa Vale, and the isles of the Kalayan Sea, along with scores of outposts, shrines, and other such communities. In the early days of their race, serpentmen were coldly rational creatures that devoted themselves to mastering the world and its natural forces. They saw no purpose in malice for its own sake. But over the long millennia of their dominion, the race slipped into decline, becoming cruel and decadent. They took their superiority over less advanced peoples as nothing less than their racial birthright, and deemed humans to be fit only as slaves or fodder for their own unhealthy appetites.

Even though Nessk easily crushed or enslaved the first human tribes to wander into its territory, as the centuries passed, the serpentman realm continued to decline, and the human tribes grew more numerous, more advanced, and more aggressive. The final blow for Nessk was the arrival of the elven hosts in Thule. These civilized warriors from another world commanded magic equal to the serpentmen's own powers, and together with the barbaric human tribes, they brought about the final fall of the serpentman empire. Most of Nessk's cities were sacked, their scaly masters put to the sword or scattered. By the time Atlantis was founded, the serpentman realm was already in ruins.

While Nessk is no more, the serpentmen still linger in Thule. They dwell in the ruins of their once-great cities or lurk in remote vaults and caverns hidden from their human foes. Serpentman priests and mages still worship at the broken altars of Set's temples, plotting the destruction of the human world. Nesskian ruins are often guarded by primordial monsters of bygone ages or even servitor races of the Great Old Ones—in the empire's dying days, serpentman spellcasters reached across the ages to conjure saurian beasts and made alliances with alien powers, hoping to find the strength to preserve their empire.

Most of Nessk's cities and shrines are long forgotten by humankind, but a few sites are relatively well known. The city of Quodeth was built almost on top of Bhnaal Pruth, a Nesskian fortress at the mouth of the Quosa. Likewise, the city of Ikath lies over the great serpentman city of Kayaask. The ancient capital city of Madraal Nessk—a fearsome and haunted place where terrible monsters lurk—lies in the jungles of the Othnan Peninsula, while the strange ruin known as the Tower of Golden Scales once belonged to a mighty Nesskian sorcerer. No doubt various savage humans in Phoor and Dhar Mesh know of other sites unrecorded by the sages and scribes of the Thule's cities.

## QUODETH

The largest city and busiest port in Thule, Quodeth does not actually lie on the Kalayan Sea. Instead, it's located at the mouth of the Quosa, a good hundred miles downriver from the Kalayan. However, the Quosa is wide and deep, easily navigable from the source (Sunrise Bay in the southeast Kalayan Sea) to its mouth on Sarvin Bay. This makes Quodeth a major Inner Sea port as well as an Atlantean Ocean port, and master of a crucial trade route.

Quodeth is described at length in Chapter 5.

### Quodeth (Metropolis, pop. 66,400)

*City of Merchants, City of Thieves, City of a Thousand Bridges*

Quodeth is a mercantile powerhouse located at the mouth of the Quosa River. Its merchants trade throughout the Inner Sea and along the outer coasts of Thule.

**Authority:** The young Queen Deyane Hayeda is the current occupant of the Peacock Throne, but she is a figurehead. The real power lies in the hands of the Royal Council—and the powerful and influential thieves' guilds that infest the city.

**Trade:** Quodeth imports raw materials such as ivory, hardwoods, furs, gold, and gemstones from the wilderness of central Thule. The city exports grain, silk, and common metalwork and tools.

**Concerns:** Quodeth has many enemies, both within and without. The city's merchant and noble classes are corrupt, thieves' guilds dominate large portions of the city, and justice is nowhere to be found. The powerful cities of Lomar and Katagia are bitter rivals to Quodeth and work against Quodethi interests.

## RY MAR

A large island in the central Kalayan ringed by sandy beaches, Ry Mar is known for its mysterious ruins. A walled town known as Caetirym once stood on the southern shore, home to Atlantean merchants and scholars who intended to civilize central Thule. Many carvings and reliefs throughout the ruins of Caetirym depict Atlantean people engaged in footraces and other athletic competitions. They were also skillful mages, and powerful spells still linger over the ruins. Some terrible curse fell over the town long ago, driving its people out into the surrounding jungle. There they devolved into mindless undead ghouls or zombies, hungry for human flesh. Each month at the dark of the moon, these foul monsters rise and shamle forth from their overgrown crypts, eagerly hunting any living humans foolish (or unlucky) enough to be caught on the island at the wrong time.

While most seafarers give the accursed island a wide berth, mariners from Ikath or Quodeth sometimes land on the island to harvest the extensive pitch seeps found in the swamps of its western end. These wide



tar pits produce high-quality bitumen useful for a variety of purposes, although the job is hot, messy, and dangerous—if the hungry dead lurking in the jungles are disturbed, the creatures are capable of overwhelming even large and well-armed parties.

## TIYERNA

A small town on the eastern coast of the Daray Peninsula, Tiyerna grew up at the feet of the great Three Pillars Monastery, a fortified abbey located amid the striking karst hills of the area. The monastery is dedicated to the faith of Mithra and is said to commemorate the place where Mithra defeated Set in a long-ago battle; it was established several centuries ago by a Droumish high priest, and is now an important pilgrimage destination and holy site to Mithrans throughout Thule. The town itself has long catered to Mithran pilgrims, although its people also grow rice in the surrounding valley and fish the waters of the Kalayan.

Sixty years ago, Tiyerna was sacked by a great raid of beastmen from Ur-Ghom, although the beastmen were unable to fight their way up the miles of stairs and winding paths leading to the Three Pillars Monastery itself. In the aftermath of the raid, Tiyerna looked to Lomar for protection, and a powerful Lomari garrison is now stationed here. It is said that the monks of

the Three Pillars guard an unholy relic of some kind, keeping it locked away in a vault protected by powerful forbiddances and magical wards.

## UR-GHOM

Beastmen rarely gather in tribes more than a couple of hundred strong, but in one place in Thule these vicious brutes have built a city of sorts: Ur-Ghom, the City of the Beastmen. Here thousands of beastmen warriors, their mates, their young, and their hapless human captives live in a permanent encampment carved from the walls of a winding jungle canyon. Ur-Ghom might lack buildings, laws, or marketplaces, but the sheer number of beastmen gathered here and the absolute power of the *khur-za-khur* (or great chieftain) Ghom means that outsiders willing to deal with the beastmen can come and trade here . . . at their own risk.

Ur-Ghom lies in the heart of the Yissurian Hills, the rugged jungle-covered foothills of the Starcrown Mountains. Endless knife-edged ridges covered in impenetrable jungle and sheer green gorges carved by racing white rivers plunging down from the mountains make the Yissurian Hills one the most rugged and inaccessible regions in the continent. No roads lead to Ur-Ghom, only tortuous and winding jungle trails that thread their way up and down ridge after ridge. Numerous tribes of beastmen have hunted these hills

since time immemorial, and no humans have ever tried to settle in the area, although some nomadic Dhari or Kalay tribes sometimes pass through the area. They give Ur-Ghom a wide berth.

## THE BEASTMAN EMPIRE

The caves of Ur-Ghom's canyons have always been a sacred place to the local beastman tribes. For centuries they have come here to honor their cruel gods with vile and bloody rites. By tradition beastman tribes that met here did not fight. About sixty years ago, a particularly strong chief named Huur—perhaps inspired by what he had heard of human civilization—hit upon the idea of massing many tribes together for a “great raid” against the nearby human realms. Using the truce of the sacred caverns to explain his idea to the individual tribes as they came to honor their gods, Huur persuaded hundreds of warriors to join him on an attack against the town of Tiyerna. The success of the raid won Huur great renown, and the clever beastman made a point of absorbing warriors whose chiefs had been killed in the fighting into his own tribe. By the time Huur died, he was virtually king of the beastmen of the Yissurian Hills, and beastman raids had become a constant threat in the borderlands of Ikath, Lomar, and even Katagia.

Today, the warriors of Ur-Ghom are still divided between their native tribes. A tribe wanders into Ur-Ghom, remains a few weeks or months, and then returns to their home hunting grounds. At any given time, ten or fifteen nomadic bands are here, along with the huge, semi-settled tribe of Huur, the permanent residents, from whom the khur-za-khur is always chosen. Many of the tribes kill each other on sight out in the jungle. But within the city, beastmen do not fight beastmen, and the word of the khur-za-khur is law.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Hardly a city at all, Ur-Ghom is a meandering canyon with hundreds of caves excavated from its walls. Rickety ladders and scaffolds of bamboo and light planks form the “streets” of Ur-Ghom.

**The Path of Skulls:** The main trail leading into the gorge of Ur-Ghom is lined with thousands of human, beastman, and animal skulls. Some stand on stakes leaning over the path, and some are set on ledges carved from the gorge walls where the path winds near, and many others simply lie in jumbled heaps wherever there is a suitable patch of level ground. The beastmen display the skulls of their enemies (or victims) as an expression of strength and contempt for all others. A group of white-painted shamans known as “Skull Keepers” tend the grisly monument, and pass down many stories about noteworthy skulls.

**The Slave Pens:** Humans captured in beastman raids are brought back to Ur-Ghom and thrown into the city's dismal slave pens—sheer-sided ravines and gorges walled off by thick bamboo bars. Some captives are killed and eaten, while others are kept alive to serve

as thralls and drudges, carrying away the city's waste and refuse, tending pigs and goats, toting heavy pails of water to the higher caves, or scraping at the stone with crude chisels to expand and improve the city's caves. The beastmen are brutal beyond belief, and few captives survive more than a few months of such treatment.

**The Throne Cave:** Ghom dwells in a large cavern near the center of the city with his huge and unruly household and a small horde of loyal guards. The khur-za-khur has dozens of mates, scores of children (the oldest of whom are formidable warriors in their own right), and hundreds of miserable human slaves in his household. The throne itself is a massive stone chair ringed by animal pelts, heaps of gold coins and treasures, and captured banners and trophies taken in beastman raids throughout the Kalayan region. The throne and its surrounding caves have been improved by generations of careful stonework performed by captives of the beastmen.

## Ur-Ghom (Large Town, pop. 4,870)

### City of the Beastmen

A sprawling maze of caves and bamboo platforms built into the sides of a canyon, Ur-Ghom is a permanent encampment of brutal beastmen.

**Authority:** The massive brute Ghom is *khur-za-khur*, or Chief of Chiefs, over the beastmen of Ur-Ghom. The name of the city literally means “Ghom's Place,” although just a few years ago it was Ur-Jod, and when Ghom dies it will be called by some other name.

**NPCs:** Ur-Ghom is a city of beastmen. Few folk of other races would willingly venture within twenty miles of the place, but a handful of hardy traders and outlaws have succeeded in convincing the brutes to allow them to visit or trade in the beastman city.

*Dhak Skullbreaker* is a charismatic (for a beastman) war-leader and raider. He is an ambitious creature who wants to use traditionalists' suspicions to depose the khur-za-khur, then lead Ur-Ghom's warriors in a new wave of bloody raids across the Kalayan Sea region.

*Lord Bagreel Sahn* is a Lomari freebooter and outlaw who ingratiated himself with Ghom by bringing the khur-za-khur the head of a hated rival. He is introducing many innovations in weapons and tactics to the beastmen, hoping to build up Ur-Ghom into an army he can lead against Lomar or Ikath.

*Zura the Old* is the Urgalah, the chief shaman and priestess of Ur-Ghom. She is a withered old crone of a beastman (so to speak) who has seen half a dozen khur-za-khurs come and go. Zura is a traditionalist who despises anything new or innovative, and she currently sees *Dhak Skullbreaker* as a useful tool.

**Trade:** Ur-Ghom produces nothing other cities want, but beastmen are wide-ranging raiders, and they capture many captives and seize a fair amount of plunder. Unscrupulous traders can buy slaves or stolen valuables cheaply in Ur-Ghom, trading the beastmen weapons, tools, or pretty baubles.

## VOOR DARAYN



*[Handwritten notes in a cursive script, likely a runic or ancient language, are visible at the bottom of the page.]*

**Concerns:** Beastmen constantly squabble and fight for power. It's only a matter of time before some ambitious chieftain—or, perhaps, a strong and evil outsider—attempts to seize the *khur-zakhur's* bony throne.

**Secrets:** An important Katagian nobleman named Daron Amarith and his three surviving companions are currently held in Ur-Ghom's slave pens; they would bring a rich reward if freed. The deepest caves in Ur-Ghom lead to lightless caverns where a gigantic purple worm with a strange sentience feeds on the city's refuse.

## VALLEY OF DHUOTH

Near the headwaters of the Yissu River lies an accursed valley where a monstrous being from the stars lurks: Dhuoth, the Giver of Eyes. This terrible creature has inhabited this remote valley for thousands of years, slowly poisoning and altering the landscape, changing the healthy jungle into a foul morass of alien orange vegetation and wriggling fungal beasts that have no place on Earth. Worse yet, a luckless tribe of human nomads ventured into the valley a few years ago while fleeing from a fierce battle against beastmen. The nomads fell under Dhuoth's malignant control, and emerged from the creature's demesne with horrible alterations in body and mind. These so-called "plague nomads" have been slowly spreading Dhuoth's corruption across the Kalayan region ever since.

Dhuoth and its minions are described in more detail in Chapter 6.

## VHAUG

In the southern slopes of the Zinandar Mountains lie the ruins of a long-vanished prehuman kingdom, the troglodyte realm of Vhaug. Unlike the advanced civilizations of the serpentmen or the rakshasas, the denizens of Vhaug were simple brutes whose technological achievements consisted of little more than fire, stone tools and weapons, and the ability to pile up great walls of loose rock to make crude fortifications. The primitive kingdom of Vhaug was destroyed in long years of warfare against the powerful human cities of Quodeth and Hurhun many hundreds of years ago, but a number of troglodytes still skulk in the ruined stone strongholds of Vhaug, waylaying travelers and occasionally raiding outlying settlements.

In addition to the troglodytes of Vhaug, there are several other prehuman ruins scattered throughout this region, including the brooding fortresses of cyclopes, gnolls, and minotaurs. Most of these savage creatures are gone now, and those that do survive seek to avoid humans—or to make sure that humans who do stumble across their lairs never escape to spread the tale.

## VOOR DARAYN

Many strange and forgotten things lie lost amid the jungle-covered karsts of the Daray Peninsula, but none are as mysterious as the ruins of Voor Darayn—the "Jewel of the Daray" in the language of the serpentmen. An alabaster palace perched atop a great stone outcropping, Voor Darayn is surrounded by crumbling walls, artificial lakes, and stone plazas overgrown by dense jungle. The white palace atop its hill is only one small part of a whole hidden city now swallowed by the forest.

The overgrown temples and plazas ringing the hill were once a sacred city of the serpentmen who ruled over Thule before humans ever set foot on the primeval continent. They are covered in weathered glyphs and

### THE PALACE OF VOOR DARAYN

Voor Darayn stands on the level surface of a natural monolith hundreds of feet high. Wide stairs lead up from ledge to ledge along the hill's flanks. Some of the more well-known features of the wizard's palace and its grounds include the following.

**1. The Warrior's Court.** The main avenue leading through the old serpentman ruins around the palace ends in this wide stone plaza, now covered by dirt and overgrowth. The statue of a warrior in strange armor glowers over the court.

**2. The Dragon Stair.** The path ascending the steep sides of the hill begins here with a wide set of stairs. To the south, a great rock pinnacle is carved with weathered images of serpentman triumphs, and another statue—this one depicting a great dragon poised to defend the stair—stands to the north.

**3. The Mausoleum.** This round building is ringed by a colonnade and sealed by a heavy bronze door. Inside, dozens of Tur Nyaan's fallen enemies are interred in sealed tombs.

**4. The Whispering Passage.** Here the ascending path enters a tunnel cut through the limestone of the hill. A stairway to the west leads up to the level top of the monolith. Unnatural whispers seem to linger in the air, warning of doom; they seem to be strongest near a subterranean shrine on the east side of the passage.

**5. The Upper Court.** The stairs from the Whispering Passage emerge onto the top of the monolith in front of the palace proper. To the south lies a garden full of strange (and dangerous) plants. To the north stands the Dark Shrine.

**6. The Dark Shrine.** This accursed edifice is made of plain, unadorned stone blocks. It contains a shrine dedicated to the bloated toad-god Tsathoggua and the quarters reserved for the acolytes who tended the idol.

**7. The Great Hall.** The grand entrance to the palace of Voor Darayn, this chamber is dominated by an ever-changing sculpture of water that slowly twists and flows above the central pool. A passage to the south leads to servant quarters, kitchens, and a small banquet room. To the north, the passage leads to Tur Nyaan's workrooms, libraries, and personal quarters.

**8. The Conjury.** This wing of the palace is devoted to the wizard's ritual chambers and summoning rooms. Magical portals in the inner chamber lead to other worlds, if explorers can figure out how to activate them. Most destinations are quite dangerous and unpleasant.

disturbing carvings that depict the rites and gods of the serpentmen. The hilltop palace and its surrounding buildings are of more recent origin: They were constructed about four hundred years ago by the legendary wizard Tur Nyaan, a prince of Katagia who dabbled in black magic. No wizard in centuries has equaled Tur Nyaan in the dark arts, and during his lifetime all of Katagia lived in dread of his powers. A devoted worshiper of the foul god Tsathoggua, Tur Nyaan eventually tired of the suspicions (and clumsy assassination attempts) that troubled him in Katagia. He left the city with his slaves and servants, and chose the isolated Daray Peninsula for his hidden retreat. Legends say that the alabaster palace of Voor Darayn was built in a single night by enslaved elementals or genies.

Tur Nyaan laid heavy demands for tribute on all nearby cities, and used terrible summonings and curses to punish those who did not pay. Katagia, Imystrahl, Ikath, and other cities all were forced to accede to his demands. For two centuries or more, Voor Darayn was known as a place of dark sorcery and mocking evil. More than a few heroes came here to slay Tur Nyaan (or to pillage his fantastic riches) and died, slain by his demonic servants or trapped in webs of enchantment and illusion that surrounded the palace and its gardens. Then, in the year 2052 AR, the tribute caravan from Katagia arrived and discovered no living person at Voor Darayn waiting for their treasure. The wizard's summoned minions were gone, and his human servants—most of them torn to pieces—were lying dead in the lower city. Of Tur Nyaan there was no sign. In terror, the tribute-bearers dumped their treasure at the palace gate and fled.

For the last hundred years, most travelers have avoided Voor Darayn. By all accounts a vast amount of treasure must still be hidden in its vaults, but many of Tur Nyaan's old magical defenses still ward the palace—dreadful monsters summoned out of thin air have been known to appear and attack any who venture too close. Whether Tur Nyaan was destroyed by some reckless spell he cast, devoured by his patron Tsathoggua, or left Thule altogether to explore strange and distant spheres, no one can say.

## LANDS OF THE LONG SHADOW

The seers and sages say that doom, icy and terrible, is coming to Thule. In the centuries to come this entire continent is fated to fall beneath a blanket of endless winter, or so it is whispered in the wine sinks and marketplaces of a dozen cities. So far, there is little sign of this grim fate in the long summer twilight of Nar or Kalayan the Golden, but in northern Thule the ice is coming. The great glaciers already cover the lost kingdom of Nimoth and the eastern shores of the Inner Sea. Across a vast march of land winding for hundreds of miles from the Thousand Teeth to the Zinandar Mountains the forests have

died, leaving windswept tundra where the deadly white icy ramparts glitter on the northern horizon. These are the Lands of the Long Shadow, and here the doom of Thule is at hand.

The Lands of the Long Shadow form a belt about one hundred to two hundred miles wide, which runs from northwest to southeast along the northern shores of the Inner Sea. Here the warm climate of the Kalayan gives way to cool summers and bitterly cold winters. The relentless glaciers creeping down from the pole loom ominously over the northern edge of this belt, a grim shadow of what is to come—hence the name of this wide and wild region.

Most of the cities and towns that once stood here have been abandoned. Civilization recedes as the ice advances year by year, leaving desolate wilderness behind where few people travel. The cold plains and windswept hills of the region now belong only to tribes of nomads and vast herds of great beasts that can endure the cold. Beyond this borderland lies the great polar desert of ice, a deadly and terrible realm where few people willingly go. Magnificent palaces and the treasuries of abandoned kingdoms lie buried in the snows and ice, but these belong to the glaciers now.

## AGDA JAND

On a high headland overlooking the northern shores of the Kalayan Sea stands the ruined temple-city of Agda Jand. Long ago this was the capital of a powerful rakshasa kingdom that ruled over much of northern Thule, a rival to the serpentman empire of Nessk and the early elven realms of Mesildye and Sersidyen. The rakshasas and their beastman armies were finally defeated by the combined strength of the elven cities and the human barbarians who took service in their armies, and Agda Jand was burned. However, powerful rakshasa spells and wards survived, protecting many hidden vaults and conjuring chambers in (and below) the ruins.

Agda Jand is widely considered to be haunted and possesses an evil reputation among the nomads and seafarers who occasionally pass nearby. There are also stories of vast treasure and powerful magic buried for a dozen or more centuries still waiting to be found in the ruins. But these tales may soon be impossible to test, for the glaciers have now advanced to within a few miles of the old rakshasa city. It seems likely that Agda Jand will be swallowed within the ice within a few more years.

**The Red Tavern:** Along the old road that leads to Droum stands an isolated inn and waystop that caters to the few ivory caravans that still pass by this way. The proprietor is a man called Red Rhys, and according to tales whispered in nearby Droum, he acquired the place by organizing a band of freebooters to come and kill the outlaws who had been hiding out here. Adventurers interested in Agda Jand often stop at the Red Tavern in search of the latest news—as do rakshasa spies, who want the secrets of the city to remain unplumbed.



## DROUM, CITY OF TUSKS

Once rich and powerful, Droum is a city slowly falling into ruin. The changing climate has turned its great grainfields and pastures to tundra, and with each generation more and more people abandon Droum. Worse yet, some dire curse lies over the silent streets of Droum. Here the dead do not rest as they should, and packs of fearsome ghouls roam the desolate quarters of the dying city.

While life in Droum is becoming impossible, a few thousand stubborn souls still inhabit the city. The plains beyond the city walls may no longer be suitable for growing grain, but the Droumish now keep great herds of aurochs, elk, sheep, and mammoths in their pastures. These provide a rich trade in ivory, horn, leather, and hide that sustains the city. The Kalayan Sea is home to thriving fisheries, yielding smoked fish and roe for sustenance and trade. Finally, some of the friendlier barbarians in the area come to Droum to barter valuable furs for the city's metalwork and finished goods. People with a stake in these trades are willing to fight for them. The worst parts of the abandoned city are walled off or barricaded, and the priests of Tarhun and Mithra are fighting to unearth and consecrate the tombs from which the hungry dead emerge.

## A LONG DECLINE

Droum is nearly thirteen hundred years old. It was founded by Kalay tribes that settled on the northern shore of the Inner Sea, and quickly grew strong and prosperous. For a time it dominated northern Thule, but Ghedran, the Necromancer King of Ikath, defeated Droum six centuries ago and incorporated the city into his growing empire. Ghedran was defeated by the forces of Atlantis near Droum, and the Droumish regained their freedom—but their fields were already beginning to feel the growing effects of the changing climate. The city weakened slowly, until two hundred years ago, Droum was conquered again by Kal Keor, the chief of the Jandar barbarians. Although Kal Keor's reign did not last, large parts of Droum were laid waste and huge numbers of its people slaughtered. Many of the undead plaguing the city come from the huge ossuaries where Kal Keor's victims were interred.

The city was defeated a third time just sixty years ago, this time by Lomar. Droum still pays tribute to the City of Triumphs, sending a treasure fleet laden with gold and mammoth ivory to Lomar every ten years. The next tribute draws near, and it seems likely that Duke Torion, the ruler of Droum, will be unable to meet the Lomari demands this time. What that will mean for Droum is anyone's guess.

The Lands of the Long Shadow are the place in Thule where the themes of doom, retreat, and the approach of eternal winter loom largest. Here barbarians roam among the ruins of abandoned cities now beginning to fill with snow. Set your campaign here if you want to highlight cold-themed monsters and dangers in your game.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Droum is a walled city that stands on a low hill half a mile from the shores of the Kalayan Sea. Its port lies two miles to the east of the city proper, and the two are connected by a wide road. Abandoned farmland and dead orchards lie for several miles around the city, now replaced by the shelters of herdsmen. Within the walls, newly built barricades made from razed stone buildings isolate several virtually uninhabited districts.

Many of Droum's public buildings and towers are made from a local limestone that takes on a distinctly blue-gray hue in sunlight, and roofed with tiles of blue clay. As a result, Droum is sometimes called the City of Blue Towers.

**The Ivory Tower:** Lavishly decorated with a fortune of carved mammoth ivory, the Ivory Tower is the stronghold and court of Droum's rulers. Whole wings of the palace are closed off and no longer used. The servants, slaves, and guards are only a handful of what the palace could accommodate. Droum has been ruled for almost two hundred years by the Vhaar family, whose leaders take the title of Magnate.

**The Drunken Vulture:** The proprietor of this ramshackle establishment is a vile criminal named Aarman. When he is not pouring ale from his questionable taps, he actively deals in slaves. Aarman's favorite tactic is to arrange for loners and people down on their luck to drink themselves into a stupor, at which point he imprisons them and sells them to Margish slavers when they come to town. Locals know not to venture into the tavern with the vulture-and-tankard sign, but many foreigners learn that lesson the hard way.

**Old One-Tusk:** This inn and taproom is the busiest public house in the city. Droumish folk make for stern and sullen drinking companions, but the Old One-Tusk caters to many barbarians from the nearby tribes visiting to trade in the city, and they are a more lively crowd. The inn takes its name from a huge bull mammoth that killed many would-be hunters a generation or two ago, and a great mammoth skull hangs in the common room.

**The Silent Courts:** A sprawling necropolis underlies most of the eastern half of the city. The Silent Courts are a collection of vaults and passages linking several immense ossuaries—bone pits—where thousands of Droumish men and women were laid to rest after the wars and massacres of the Jandar horde, two hundred years ago. The Silent Courts seem to be the epicenter of the undead troubles in Droum, but even after repeated (and dangerous) expeditions to clean out the vaults, the plague persists.

**Temple of Inar:** This great temple fell into disuse centuries ago. In Droum's early years, Inar (the god of the hunt) was regarded as a patron and protector of the city. The faith died out, but the ruined temple still stands, and some believe that its catacombs hold hidden treasure.

## Droum (Small City, pop. 9,440)

*City of Tusks, City of Ghouls, City of Blue Towers*

Droum is half-abandoned, and whole quarters of the city are empty. Ghouls and other undead roam the ruined districts at night despite many efforts to quell the plague of undeath, but strong barricades and locked doors protect at least some of the city—for now.

**Authority:** Magnate Torion Vhaar, a sullen and brooding warrior, holds the throne. His seneschal is a seer named Qath Niyal (see below).

**NPCs:** Droum's people are humans, mostly of Kalay descent (although a number of Dhari live here, too). They are taciturn, stubborn, and somewhat gloomy in outlook.

*Qath Niyal* is the city's seneschal, and the right hand of Magnate Torion. He is a frightening old man who claims to wield magical powers effective against the city's ghoul threat. So far, Qath Niyal's spells and wards seem to be at least somewhat effective, although he has failed to end the threat altogether.

*Ayena Durach* is a successful ivory trader. She is half-Hurgan, and has family and friends among that tribe. Ayena constantly presses the duke and his seneschal for more action against the undead of the Silent Courts.

*Zuur, King of Ghouls*, is the unliving master of Droum's ghoul packs. Reputed to be a ghoul of great size and intelligence armed with magical powers, Zuur may be nothing more than a story, since no living Droumish man or woman has ever seen the creature.

**Trade:** Droum trades extensively with nearby barbarian tribes. The city exports furs, ivory, leather, and meat from its herds to the south, and imports grain, metalwork, and textiles. In addition, fishing the Kalayan has become a major industry in recent years.

**Concerns:** The climate is growing too cold to sustain the city here; Droum is weakening, and the barbarian tribes of the nearby lands are growing stronger. But these troubles pale in comparison to the mysterious curse that causes the dead to rise as bloodthirsty monsters.

**Secrets:** Qath Niyal is experimenting with methods of magically controlling Droum's ghouls in the hopes of fielding an undead army against Lomar. Unfortunately, the seneschal doesn't realize he is in over his head: The cause of the plague is Ghedrar, the long-undead Necromancer King of Ikath, who hides in the City of Serpents. Six hundred years ago Ghedrar concealed the Ebon Brazier, a powerful necromantic artifact, in the vaults under Droum after his final defeat. Its influence poisons and corrupts burial vaults throughout the city.

## HURGAN RIDERS

The strongest barbarians of the Lands of the Long Shadow are the Hurgan tribes, Kalay nomads who roam the tundra and the cold hills in eastern Thule. They claim territory stretching from a few miles outside Rime's icy walls almost to the Quosa Vale, a scant hundred miles from Quodeth itself. Hurgans are among the friendlier barbarian tribes, and generally do not trouble travelers after stopping to ask a few questions about who they are and where they're going. However, they can be proud and touchy, and they aren't above organizing large, fast-moving raids against civilized folk when the opportunity arises.

Horses do not do well in the cold lands the Hurgan tribes roam, so they have domesticated mounts of a different species: The great Thulean elk. As large as the biggest warhorse, these gigantic deer are more surefooted in tundra and snow, and armed with an impressive set of antlers to boot. The Hurgans follow the great herds of caribou (or, more rarely, mammoths), harvesting the animals for meat, hides, bones, and sinews—almost no part of the animal goes unused.

The ruined city of Hurhun lies near the southern border of Hurgan territory. The Hurgans are in fact largely descended from people who fled from the destruction of the city more than a hundred years ago and took refuge with their nomadic cousins. They are now completely assimilated into the tribe and have forgotten whatever they knew of their civilized ways, except for one thing: A deep and abiding hatred for Lomar and its people. Hurgans generally attack Lomari on sight, and don't take Lomari prisoners. A warrior known to be a friend to the Hurgan people might just barely succeed in convincing a band of Hurgans to spare a Lomari he or she vouches for, but it would sorely test the friendship.

### Riders of Hurgan (Large Tribe, pop. 13,500)

*People of the Elk, Elk-Riders, Long Shadow Nomads*

The Hurgans are a large, nomadic tribe of caribou- and mammoth-hunters roaming the eastern portion of the Lands of the Long Shadow.

**Authority:** Bhosa Khagan is the "great chief" or "khan of khans" of the Hurgan tribes. He is a man of 66 years noted for his patience and wisdom, but several younger khans are beginning to maneuver to replace him.

**NPCs:** Hurgans are humans of Kalay descent.

*Chundun Khan* is the young, warlike chief of the Wind-Elks, one of the larger Hurgan tribes.

He has led his warriors on several violent raids into the Quodethi borderlands, seeking to provoke Bhosa Khagan and thereby bring about the old khagan's replacement.

*Ishiir of the Stone-Wolves* is perhaps the most skillful hunter and tracker of all the Hurgans.

She is a heroic young ranger who rides a great white elk, and has already earned a reputation as a monster-slayer.

*Gachun the Mad* is a deranged shaman who has abandoned the natural spirits to worship Ithaqua, the Wind-Walker. He has succeeded in establishing an Ithaqua cult among the Snow-Hare tribe.

**Trade:** The Hurgans trade hides, leather, horn, and ivory to the nearby civilized people in exchange for cotton, silk, and metalwork tools and weapons.

**Concerns:** The winters are growing colder, and their lands are shrinking as the glaciers continue to press southward. Terrible monsters are becoming more common in Hurgan lands. The tribes are growing apart and strife may soon turn to violence.

## KAL-ZINAN, CITY OF THE IRON GATE

In the heart of the Zinandar Mountains lies the fortress-city of Kal-Zinan, the largest dwarven stronghold to be found in Thule. Here the secretive ironmasters of the dwarves forge arms and armor unmatched anywhere in the world, using the molten rock of the Zinandar volcanoes to smelt their ores and fire their furnaces.

Contrary to legend, dwarves cannot eat rocks or drink molten iron, so many levels of Kal-Zinan are devoted to other trades. Vast subterranean granaries and storehouses ring the city's central forges, protected within Kal-Zinan's mighty ramparts. The mountainsides and vales surrounding the city are home to high pastureland, hayfields, and terraced gardens, where dwarven herdsmen and field workers provide Kal-Zinan with a basic level of subsistence in times when it proves impossible to import grain and vegetables from the human realms of Thule.

### THE MOUNTAIN REDOUBT

Dwarves are relative newcomers to Thule, and were the last of the major races to arrive in this land. A barbarian race of fierce warriors, they settled in the defensible vales of the Zinandar Mountains, battling the native cyclopes, minotaurs, and subhuman troglodytes that haunted the region and isolating themselves from the world outside. Kal-Zinan was established as the stronghold and hall of the dwarven chief in the year 833 AR, and over the centuries the hardworking dwarves continued to carve out its galleries and expand its defenses. Around 1200 AR, the dwarves of Kal-Zinan discovered the secret of smelting iron, and they quickly mastered the working of ever more challenging alloys.

Kal-Zinan maintained a policy of strict neutrality in the affairs of other Thulean cities down through the years. The dwarves profited by selling arms and armor to all customers, as well as organizing mercenary companies to fight in others' wars. They became so set in their ways that they stood by and did not intervene when Lomar's army attacked Hurhun, the longtime trading partner and friend to Kal-Zinan. But that neutrality was sorely strained just this year when raiders from Marg pillaged a caravan

bound for Quodeth and seized many dwarves, including an important Master, as slaves. This was not the first time Marg had acted in this way, and it provoked great anger in Kal-Zinan. The Council of Masters is now divided between traditionalists who want to ransom the abducted smiths and merchants, and militants who want to ally with Quodeth or Lomar to punish Marg for its actions.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Kal-Zinan is carved into a mountainside. The great gates at the foot of the mountain lead to a grand stair that ascends through a magnificent gallery chamber until it emerges on a plaza open to the air two hundred feet above the gate. Broad ramps suitable for aurochs-drawn wagons lead from the gates to the city's storehouses and stables. Most of the Kal-Zinan's dwellings lie along balcony-like "streets" high above the city's massive gate and are open to the sky, although workshops, granaries, and the great forges are located deeper in the mountain.

**Houses of Waiting:** Visitors to Kal-Zinan are not allowed to wander around without escort. The Houses of Waiting comprise a small, guarded foreigners' quarter where guests are expected to remain until summoned or granted permission to leave. The Houses include half a dozen small inns and taprooms, along with several shops where dwarven goods are displayed, a bazaar, a shrine dedicated to the Nine, and meeting-chambers where visiting merchants can discuss their business with Kal-Zinan's masters.

**Red Shield Company:** One of the leading mercenary companies of Kal-Zinan, the Red Shields are a band of one hundred veteran dwarven warriors who have fought all across Thule, from Katagia to frozen Nimoth. The Red Shields specialize in siegecraft and military engineering, although they take any sort of work that comes their way. The master of the company is Groma Narn, a fierce dwarf woman of middle years who took over the Red Shields when her husband was killed in battle ten years ago.

**Road of Smoking Waters:** To facilitate trade, the dwarves of Kal-Zinan built a great stone road from their mountain stronghold to the city of Hurhun long ago. Steaming hot springs, geysers, and roaring fumaroles line the road for the last fifteen miles or so before it reaches the Iron Gate. Hurhun was destroyed in 2087 AR by the legions of Lomar, but the road remains intact. Merchant caravans coming or going from Kal-Zinan skirt the dangerous ruins.

### **Kal-Zinan** (Small City, pop. 7,320)

*City of the Iron Gate, City of the Dwarves*

Home to the legendary dwarven iron masters, Kal-Zinan is a mountain fortress surrounded by the geothermal features of the Zinandar Mountains.

**Authority:** The city is governed by High Master Bhul Drez-Kath. He is the head of the Council of Masters, the city's governing body.

**NPCs:** The vast majority of Kal-Zinan's inhabitants are dwarves, although a small number of human merchants from Quodeth, Lomar, and Marg are usually visiting at any given time.

*Aybrell Arn* is a young human woman who makes a comfortable living in the Houses of Waiting as a broker and go-between, arranging agreements between visiting merchants and the masters of Kal-Zinan. She is acquainted with most of the city's ruling masters, and can be very valuable to visitors who otherwise might not know how to approach the right dwarf.

*Durmuth Ursk*, High Servant of the Gray Lord, is the high priest of Nergal in Kal-Zinan and the foremost priest in the city. Many mercenaries and armsmakers look on Nergal as their patron, and few would take on a new task of any significance without seeking Nergal's approval first. He leads the council's militant faction and pushes for war with Marg, and any human power that gets in the way.

*Tarm Orth-Nhul* is an example of a very rare breed, a dwarven sorcerer. He is known to hire out his services for the right price. Most of Tarm's magic deals with earth and stone, and he is sometimes known as Tarm Stonebreaker.

**Trade:** Kal-Zinan is renowned for its metalwork, especially ironworking and other advanced alloys. The dwarves also excel in stonework and often sell their services as roadbuilders and engineers. In return, Kal-Zinan imports foodstuffs, textiles, and luxury goods.

**Concerns:** The dwarves of Kal-Zinan seek to guard the secrets of advanced metallurgy, hoping to maintain their monopoly. Knowledge of ironworking is already well established in the human world, but they vigilantly guard the techniques for making steel and more exotic alloys.

**Secrets:** A cult worshipping Lorthnu'un of the Golden Chalice has taken root among the poorer dwarven miners, who believe that the Great Old One can guide them to untapped veins of gold and gems. An evil artifact known as the *Eye of Braug*—the mummified eye of the last cyclops king in Zinandar—is buried in a vault deep in the city's treasury, but the priest Durmuth Ursk is searching for it and wants to claim its powers for his own.

## KANG, THE PALE DEATH

The greatest glacier in Thule is known as Kang, the Pale Death. Covering the northern half of the Zinandar Mountains and slowly marching west and south around the northernmost shore of the Kalayan Sea, Kang already covers almost a tenth of the continent, and every year its advance continues. The ice is dangerous to traverse: Deep crevasses lie hidden beneath thin crusts of snow, arctic mirages can play tricks on the eye, and bitterly cold winds can spring up out of nowhere and instantly raise an impenetrable blanket

of blowing snow and ice crystals to blind and scour unprepared travelers.

While Kang's physical dangers would be enough reason to avoid the great glacier, there is something even worse at work here, a malign spirit or evil sentience that hates all other things. The glacier *wants* to kill those who venture within its grasp, and bends all of its terrible malevolence to preventing the escape of those who attract its attention. A few of the bolder guides and hunters of the nearby lands are willing to cross a small expanse of the Pale Death to reach a goal or skirt its edges if necessary, but none willingly venture into the heart of the glacier, for Kang is cruel and deceitful.

**Frost Palace:** An eerily beautiful formation of delicate frost and needles of ice, the Frost Palace stands in the middle of a wide and featureless plain of snow in eastern Kang. A mysterious sorcerer is said to reside there, but how he (or she) survives without provoking the wrath of the glacier is not clear. The formation appears to be natural, although those who are sensitive to magic say that it is a powerful locus for cold magic.

**Gyar Gun Vodd:** This primitive and terrible ruin lies amid the rugged hills and broken ice fields of western Kang. Once it was a city of giants, with twenty-foot doorways and steps three feet high, but it was abandoned long ago, perhaps even before the coming of the ice. Whether the builders were frost giants, cyclopes, gugs, or some other gigantic race is not clear, since the ruins are so badly weathered that no distinguishing markings other than their phenomenal size remain. Huge wells or pits lead down into dark vaults below the surface ruins, where some of Gyar Gun Vodd's original builders may still linger.

**Mount Niith:** The highest peak within Kang's expanse, Mount Niith stands near the center of the glacier. It is a black, fortress-like maze of rock and ice that rises several thousand feet above the surrounding ice field. The mountain is crowned by eerie, blue-green auroras in the winter months, and the few travelers who have ever ventured there have reported that sprawling ruins and ramparts made from gigantic stone blocks can be found high on the mountain's slopes. Strange and terrible beings lurk amid these cyclopean walls—elder things, mi-go, stranglers from Nheb, or something even worse.

**The Singing Ice:** Near the eastern edge of the glacier there is a plain of wind-sculpted menhirs of ice. The sound of the wind blowing through these fluted columns carries for miles across the glacier. Some dire enchantment lies in the eerie, piping notes, slowly mesmerizing those who linger too long within earshot. Those who fall prey to the enchantment are often compelled days or even months later to return to this place and listen again. Few who give in to the urge to return are ever seen again, although sometimes they are found, frozen and half-devoured, at the feet of the singing columns.

## LENDOSK

The Nimothan people first came to Thule in the sixth century after the founding of Atlantis, establishing small villages and realms in Nimoth (the island from which they would later take their name) and northeast Thule. One of these small realms was Lendosk, founded in the vales of the River Iyul. In its early days, Lendosk was blessed with a warm climate, and the river vales were home to grainfields and orchards. The barbaric Nimothans settled down and became more civilized over the centuries, as wooden halls gave way to stone towns and roving sea-traders became prosperous merchants.

At its height, Lendosk was a league of half a dozen towns that together were almost as rich as Hurhun or Quodeth. But four or five hundred years ago, the climate began to change. Winter snows lingered later and later into the spring; the orchards produced smaller, bitterer fruit as the growing season shortened. The snows mantling the high hills and peaks surrounding the realm never melted at all. Then, in the winter of 2096 AR, the glacier Kang surged forward twenty miles or more in a single season, engulfing almost all of Lendosk. Hundreds of people fleeing the valley were killed by some dire emanation from the approaching ice, literally flash-frozen in mid-stride and left standing as dead-white corpses. From this terrible onslaught the glacier Kang gained its nickname: "The Pale Death."

The glacier has not crushed Lendosk out of existence, but instead seems to have surrounded it. Lendosk's towns and towers lie buried under deep drifts of snow or encased in clear, gelid ice, only a few feet below the surface of the glacier. Death descended on the realm so suddenly that many of its people's treasures no doubt lie within Kang's icy grasp . . . if anyone dares to search for them.

## RIME, CITY OF ICE

Hidden behind icy ramparts, the secret port of Rime lies on the northeast shore of the Kalayan Sea. The city is surrounded by towering glaciers, but the rugged hills of the coast serve as a shield of sorts, channeling the glaciers away from the town's docks and smelters. Some shelters or workshops are even built right onto the ice or carved from the glacier walls, although few of these last more than a year or two before the moving ice forces the owners to relocate away from the edge again. Nothing but inhospitable wasteland and endless ice fields surround Rime, cutting it off from most overland travel—only a handful of foolhardy prospectors and barbaric hunters venture far from the city on foot.

Located in a freezing wasteland, Rime would seem to have little reason to exist; nothing grows here, and its fishers and hunters can't come close to supporting its population. There are three reasons Rime is here: First, the surrounding hills are rich in gold

and gemstones; second, the city is a good jumping-off point for adventurers hoping to salvage something from the snowy ruins of the kingdom of Lendosk, which once stood here; third, and most importantly, Rime is a notorious pirate haven, and the chief base of the Golden Sea corsairs. The city is virtually overrun with violent reavers and hard-hearted mercenaries; few honest people willingly come to Rime.

## AN EXILE'S STRONGHOLD

Rime was once known as Nenth, a small town and stronghold of a kingdom called Lendosk. More than a century ago, the glacier Kang descended on Lendosk and overran most of the realm in a single winter. The survivors fled, and Nenth was abandoned. But fifty years ago, an exiled Lomari princess named Jara Boh decided to make a new home for herself and her household in the ruins of Nenth. She renamed the town Rime, and she and her household carved out a small robber barony from the cold wasteland. Princess Jara harbored a good deal of resentment toward those who had driven her out of Lomar, so she made corsairs, outlaws, and exiles from all other lands welcome in their haven.

With Rime as a secure base, the corsairs of the Kalayan soon organized themselves into the Golden Sea Brotherhood, a league of ruthless pirates and freebooters who now terrorize the waters of the Inner Sea. Princess Jara died years ago, but her grandnephew Yasheem Boh now rules in her place, claiming the title Prince of Rime.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Most of Rime is protected from the surrounding glaciers by the high, steep hills that ring the town. However, year by year outlying parts of Rime are abandoned to the shifting ice—a building here, a street there, a market square next—and new structures are rebuilt on the other side of the haven, soon to be engulfed themselves. In time, the ringing ice will wall off the harbor and force the town to be abandoned again, but for now Rime's port remains open.

**The Blue Anchor:** This squalid alehouse is the largest and most popular of Rime's many pirate dens. Scores of Dreth's crewmen can be found here every night. They have a habit of beating and robbing strangers, or even murdering them if the newcomers fight back too hard.

**Hall of the Sea Queen:** Few of Rime's denizens are pious at all, but quite a few corsairs regard Tiamat as their patroness and protector. The Hall of the Sea Queen is Tiamat's temple in Rime. By tradition, a corsair captain returning from a successful voyage chooses a rich prize from the loot and lays it on the Dragon Queen's altar as a sign of respect. The high priestess of the temple is a woman named Eyane; she seems thoroughly mad, with half her face covered in terrible burn scars.

**River Iyul:** On the outskirts of Rime, a deep chasm slices into the glacier's snout. Here a narrow but swift

and deep river, the Iyul, snakes its way into the ice and disappears. What only the folk of Rime know is that the Iyul actually passes beneath the glacier and connects the Kalayan Sea to the outer ocean, emerging at the head of Icewall Sound. The warmth of the river forms a tunnel-like chain of ice caverns, open chasms, and passages that is nowhere narrower than eighty feet, and offers a good thirty feet of clearance throughout its length. Galleys can step their masts and pick their way through the sixty-mile passage in a few hours. The passage is dark and dangerous, since the shifting glacier frequently drops tons of ice into the river, but it offers the Golden Corsairs access to the seas surrounding Thule as well as the continent's interior waters.

## Rime (Large Town, pop. 3,320)

*City of Ice, City of Corsairs*

Rime is a secret pirate haven, hidden in the icy fjords where the glaciers reach the waters of the Inner Sea.

**Authority:** Prince Yasheem is the ruler of the town, but the fractious Golden Council (a body composed of the captains of each corsair vessel based here) is difficult for him to control.

**NPCs:** The denizens of Rime come from all corners of Thule.

*Lady Midnight* is a beautiful, dark-haired corsair captain who also commands sorcerer abilities. She only commands a single ship, but her crew is fanatically loyal.

*Dreth the Slayer* is the most powerful captain on the Golden Council. He is a huge bearlike man with four ships and hundreds of murderous sea-dogs under his command.

*Siyo Siyo* is a mute ex-gladiator covered in gruesome tattoos who serves as Prince Yasheem's bodyguard, enforcer, and champion. He speaks only in grunts, having lost his tongue years ago.

*Khor the Shipwright* is a skillful shipbuilder and the owner of Rime's only shipyard. Even the most reckless corsairs treat him respectfully, since their ships have nowhere else to repair and refit. Khor's work crews harvest timber many miles down the coast and bring it back to Rime, since no trees grow nearby.

**Trade:** Rime's principal exports are stolen goods, but nearby goldfields and quarries produce gold and gemstones. There is little food in the vicinity, and Rime imports grain, rice, and other staples.

**Concerns:** Rime can't last—either the glacier will swallow it entirely, or the quarrels of the Golden Council will break out into a bloodbath in the streets. The depredations of the Golden Sea corsairs may eventually provoke overwhelming retaliation from Lomar, Quodeth, or both.

**Secrets:** Prince Yasheem is not who he seems to be. He is actually a rakshasa who killed Yasheem years ago while Yasheem was adventuring, and returned home in Yasheem's place. He quietly controls the Golden Council, even though he pretends to have no influence over the corsairs.



## SERSIDYEN

Once the center of a powerful elven empire, the city of Sersidyen now lies in ruins. A few hundred Sersid elves remain, hunters and foragers living among the wreckage of their past glory. While they live much like the unsophisticated savage tribes of Thule's tundra, the elves of Sersidyen are hardly barbarians; they retain the lore of their ancient race and keep a vigilant watch over the ruins of their once-great city. Even so, they must soon abandon their watch, since the snows grow heavier in the mountain passes each winter and melt later each summer—the time of unending winter is not far off, and it seems that the ice will be Sersidyen's tomb.

## STRAIT OF NIMORA

The northeast coast of Thule is separated from the large island of Nimoth by the perilous Strait of Nimora. Only twenty miles wide at its narrowest point, the strait links the Sea of Mists to the Boreal Sea. Both shores of the strait are heavily glaciated along most of their length, and in the winter months the strait can freeze over for weeks at a time. Even if the Strait of Nimora is not frozen solid, the waters may still be impassable—small icebergs known as “growlers” are frequently calved from the neighboring glaciers, and pose a serious danger at all times of the year. Since

Nimoth became an icebound wasteland a century or two ago, merchant traffic in the strait has fallen to virtually nil, and no trade routes make use of this waterway. However, hardy tribes of seal-hunters and fishermen still linger in the area.

## ULLATH

A hardscabble strip of barely habitable land between the flanks of the glacier Kang and the Boreal Sea, Ullath is home to a dozen or so tiny fishing and sealing villages along the icy shores. These people are Nimothans who were forced to abandon their homeland within the last few generations, and they maintain many memories and tales of Nimoth's now-lost cities and landmarks—an adventurer considering an expedition to frozen Nimoth would be wise to begin the venture by visiting the Ullathi and listening closely to anything they choose to reveal.

The Ullathi survive on the sea's bounty, and are the most daring and skillful mariners of Thule. They are also bold and fierce raiders who wait eagerly for the ice to recede in late spring or early summer in order to launch their dragon-headed longships against the rich coastlands of southern Thule.

## ZINANDAR MOUNTAINS

The mountains of eastern Thule are not so lofty as the great Starcrowns that form the southern spine of the continent, but they are still rugged and daunting obstacles to travel. The Zinandars form a natural rampart against the advancing ice, in part because several active volcanoes dot this range. Lush forest mantles the mountain slopes, nourished by the geothermal properties and the rich volcanic soil of the area. However, as one follows the range northwest, the volcanoes fall dormant, and then extinct, and the ice reigns unchallenged.

Mysterious ruins and cavern systems are commonplace in the Zinandar Mountains. Long ago this region was a natural stronghold for some of Thule's primitive prehuman kingdoms, including cyclopes, minotaurs, and troglodytes. Some of these creatures still lurk in the trackless mountain vales, especially in the unexplored eastern portions of the range. More than a few human tribes or settlers wandering into these regions have been driven out by the native monsters—or simply disappeared without a trace. Even the dwarves of Kal-Zinan do not venture more than a day's travel from their city.

## THE THOUSAND TEETH

It can be difficult to tell the difference between a reaver and a pirate—and the Thousand Teeth region has an abundance of both. Pirates chase seagoing prey and reavers raid shoreline communities, but in Thule the line is blurry and many bands do both.

Named for the countless coastal islets and jagged rocks along much of the shore, the Thousand Teeth are home to reavers, monsters, dark witch doctors, and even the occasional dragonslayer. The offshore islands are as dangerous—and as valuable—as the mainland, and it takes an expert sea-captain to know the currents, reefs, and . . . more *tentacled* dangers of the Sea of Mists and the northern passages around the continent of Thule.

The land buzzes with activity as well, from raiders battling their way inland, to communities trying to eke out an existence in the shadow of the malign glacier, Kang the Pale. Though the glacier creeps forward from the southeast, the Thousand Teeth aren't particularly snowy, and it's possible that the active volcanoes Aratax and Bilfummun will keep the ice at bay.

The Atlanteans never reached the Thousand Teeth in force, so their culture and learning never extended into the cities and towns of the northern coast. The Thousand Teeth have powerful magic and elaborate customs, but they hearken back to an older, more primitive time. Among the Thousand Teeth, men sail, war, build, and burn. They've done so for five thousand years, and unless the Great Old Ones consume all of Thule, they'll do so for five thousand more.

## ARATAX AND THE WESTERN COAST

Outflow from the active volcano, Aratax, is responsible for the clawlike spar of land that protects the harbor in the city-state of Nim, and its heat keeps the glacier away—for now. The glacier is never far-off, however; sometimes the ice reaches to less than a mile from the shore, though a distance of ten miles is more typical. Aratax is often described as “the grumpy uncle” of the Thousand Teeth; minor earthquakes are a weekly occurrence, with many felt up to 100 miles away. Aratax doesn't belch heavy clouds of smoke often, but brave climbers report the air near the volcano's rim is poisonous to breathe as well as being scorchingly hot.

The villages along the coast subsist on plentiful fishing; they need never worry about depleting the fish stocks, but attacks from krakens and other sea monsters are a significant occupational hazard. Most take their surplus catch to Nim.

Further inland, logging, hunting, and mining employ most people. Their biggest concern is a recent influx of lycanthropes—mostly werewolves but some other kinds as well. Usually attacking at night, the werewolves have wiped out entire villages and decimated the angry warbands that set out on missions of reprisal.

**Volkulak Peninsula:** This wooded land has some of the largest, straightest coniferous trees in Thule, so there are often large-scale logging operations to fell trees for masts and building timbers. The lycanthropes of the western coast have been picking off woodcutters lately, and it's rumored that they're taking orders from druids who are displeased to see so many stumps on the peninsula.

**Dranfir:** This large town is known (and feared) among slaves throughout Thule, because being sold to work in Dranfir's silver mines is a death sentence. It's merely a question of whether overwork, cruel masters, poisonous ore, or deadly fumes will kill the slave first. The people of Dranfir work their open-pit mine with desperation—they supply the silver that keeps lycanthropes at bay out on the Volkulak Peninsula.

**Ruthvak:** This small inland town seems ordinary enough—other than the four black glass towers at the corners of the town. Cultists of Nyarlathotep watch the residents of Ruthvak from behind the black glass, using their mind-magic to manipulate them for experiments. The cult has constructed an entire dungeon to facilitate their research underneath the city; it connects the four towers to each other and explains why there's no exterior door on any of the towers.

**Bretu Kathir:** This village is the home of the Bretu sea-reavers, known across the region because they're all immensely fat. Their girth makes them no less capable in a fight, and nearby towns whisper darkly that the Bretu are fat because they aren't picky about what they eat, consuming the flesh of their victims.

## NIM, CITY OF REAVERS

Nim is less a city-state and more of a collection of armed camps. It is exactly what you would expect if you invited several dozen bands of reavers to build a city together: a ramshackle collection of creaking wharves, taverns, and gambling houses, where violence is common and visitors aren't likely to cross the street without getting splashed with ale, blood, or both. To call Nim "lawless" is something of an understatement. Many of the reavers who spend shore leave in Nim are openly contemptuous of the law. Some have to be reminded repeatedly that they're staying in the city, not pillaging it.

Nim is a vice-ridden city, but its vices aren't the subtle corruptions of Ikath or the soporific narcotics of Imystrahl. Nim is a place for straightforward, brutal pleasures: desperate prostitutes, bloody gladiatorial spectacles, and potent, fiery ales. It is a city full of drunken, well-armed warriors who are eager to prove that they're tougher than you—more than a few of whom plan to pluck that coin-purse from your belt when they're done with you.

While Nim is brutal and dangerous, it's also a useful port of call for the seasoned adventurer. Mercenaries from across Thule know that Nim is the place to be seen; envoys from the city states, local tyrants, and sometimes the more sinister powers of Thule come to Nim when they need muscle. Nim is also the gateway to the northern islands of Hellumar and Nimoth; anyone seeking to travel there will likely find passage on a ship departing Nim. And for PCs looking for an evening's entertainment, Nim is also a place where one can win a fortune gambling, arena-fighting, or wagering on feats of strength.

## DREAMS DASHED ON A REAVER'S PROW

Nim is the youngest of the city-states, founded just a hundred years ago in 2112 AR by Nimothan refugees fleeing the encroaching glaciers that had engulfed their capital city, Beothoe. At first the refugees found common cause in their shared hardship and were able to lay the city's foundations with the vim and vigor long associated with the Nimothan people. They dreamed of Nim becoming a "new Beothoe," where the great heroes would toast each other from within their festhalls and longhouses as the Nimothan people settled this new land.

Such dreams died within a generation. There was a shortage of available land in the Thousand Teeth worth settling, and much of it was infested with beastmen, monsters, or worse. Nimoth never had a strong civic culture—it never needed one—and the fledging authorities in Nim were soon overpowered by the lawless reaver bands who wanted Nim's best feature: its well-protected harbor.

Now the reaver bands run Nim (insofar as anyone does), an arrangement that will remain until one band dominates all the others (unlikely) or the reavers break out into full-scale war against each other and burn Nim

to the ground (much more likely). Some elderly residents of Nim—those who remember the first few decades after the Nimothan migration—dream of a "king of Nim" who'll unite the Nimothan people and break the stranglehold of the reaver bands. But who could be such a king, and how would such a king prove his worthiness?

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Nim is a crazy quilt of urban planning, with streets running into each other at odd angles, serpentine alleyways, and inexplicable dead-end streets. Almost the entire city is built of wood, and great fires are a constant concern. At any given time, a traveler finds a two or three city blocks still smouldering after the most recent fire.

Built on a terraced hill, Nim is also a vertical city, with staircases allowing pedestrian shortcuts through the city. Wagons must traverse long switchbacks to reach the city's upper districts. The sloping city means that the rain, blood, ale, and who knows what else in the gutters picks up velocity as it flows downhill, becoming enough of a torrent to knock a man over by the time it reaches the harbor.

**Brudav Hall:** This notorious prostitution and gambling den is where many a Nimothan reaver has lost the fortune he pillaged just the week before. Those who can't afford the vice they chose are often offered jobs for the Brudav family to pay their debts—or they're sold into slavery if the slaver's coin will even the books.

**Cage of Antlers:** The largest of Nim's pit-fighting arenas, the Cage of Antlers is what it sounds like: a 40-foot cubical cage constructed entirely of antlers (mostly elk, but with some mammoth tusks and whalebone). Gladiator matches are rarely more complex than the "two men enter, one man leaves" variety, but to ensure even betting, there's at least a cursory effort to make sure gear and fighting ability are equivalent between the gladiators.

**The Stockade:** Adventurers who get knocked unconscious or captured by the bodyguards or reaver gangs in Nim often wake up in the city's prison. The Stockade isn't terribly difficult to escape from; there's an unused underground level that leads outside. But that underground level isn't empty. Slavers have set up a hideout there and sometimes grab prisoners to put on slave ships bound for Marg.

**Hall of the Ice-Drake:** This longhouse near the top of Nim is where the reaver captains meet to discuss matters of mutual interest—usually anything involving Nim itself, but sometimes the captains will combine

The Thousand Teeth is a good place to take your campaign if you want to get the PCs involved in a Viking-style campaign. Here every little settlement or outpost is home to a chieftain who thinks of himself as the next great warlord of the north. Much of the land is untrammelled by human feet in recent years, so it's also a good place for PCs who want to get away from it all and construct their own castle or eldritch tower. The powerful have been coming to the Thousand Teeth to found their strongholds for centuries.

their efforts for a particularly worthy raiding target or try to agree on a way to split up raidable territory. Those negotiations rarely succeed. Even Hellumar's Drangir tribe sends a representative each year. The number of captains who make the decisions is variable, based on a simple rule: if you think you're worthy to parley with reaver captains, set foot inside the Hall of the Ice-Drake. If you survive the inevitable challenge to your worthiness, you have a seat at the table.

## **Nim** (Small City, pop. 16,600)

*City of Reavers, the Rotten Tooth, New Beothoe (said ironically)*

Nim is a lawless city run by the ice reavers of the northern seas, known for its excellent harbor and anything-goes mentality. The streets are full of raiders, mercenaries, criminals, and worse—many of whom prefer that sort of company.

**Authority:** At any given time there are a dozen reaver captains who can meet at the Hall of the Ice-Drake—if there's a good reason to. But fundamentally, authority in Nim is settled on a block-by-block basis. Each reaver gang has its turf, its taverns, and its festhalls. Larger businesses unaffiliated with a reaver gang have mercenaries as private guards (usually a lot of them because reaver gangs love to scrap with each other).

**NPCs:** The city is overwhelmingly Nimothan human, but other races are welcome if they can defend themselves and have coin to spend. They're regarded as curiosities, nothing more. *Yarrilir Brudav* is one of the bosses who run Brudav Hall—and he's also a member of Ikath's Forked Tongue criminal syndicate. When Yarrilir sees someone who'd be useful to the Forked Tongues, he arranges for his target to lose money and wind up in debt to the Brudavs. Then Yarrilir makes the target an offer to wipe out the debt in exchange for job on the Forked Tongue's behalf.

*Urdd Bloodhand* runs the fastest galley in the Sea of Mists, one that can reach Hellumar or Nimoth in less than a week if the weather is favorable. He's also a useful guide to the underbelly of Nim. He doesn't want his paying customers to wind up dead or broke, so he steers them away from the more notorious establishments.

*Vathri Darkspear* is a reaver captain who's run into a manpower problem. He'll hire mercenaries to act as crew on his ship for a raid along the coast to the west. If he can't get them, he'll "arrange" to have some adventurers lose consciousness and wake up aboard his longship, the *Silber Wolf*.

**Trade:** Nim's essential purpose is to separate the pillaged wealth from the reavers that bring it into port, but because the city is run by the reavers, Nim is essentially extracting wealth from itself. The reaver captains pay locals for fish, and they'll buy alcohol from any merchant who ties up at the docks.

**Concerns:** Everyone worries about the reaver violence rising above the "drunken street-fight"

level, but the greatest threat to Nim is actually the risk of fire. Some clerics of Tarhun summon water elementals to put out blazes that threaten the entire city, but if they're caught off-guard or are absent, all of Nim could be a smoldering ruin within hours.

**Secrets:** One of the taverns in lower Nim, The Jack and Cora, is the nerve center of a Nimothan conspiracy: the effort to find a true monarch of Nimoth. This fellowship of like-minded Nimothans hasn't made much progress yet, because so many Nimothan nobles perished in the migration and the rest are scattered across Thule and Hellumar. The owner of a tavern across the street, Breson's, knows that something odd is happening at the Jack and Cora, but no amount of snooping has figured out why the bar seems to be so busy in the early morning.

## THE LOOSE TEETH

The islands off the coast of the Thousand Teeth are innumerable, both because there are quite a lot of them, and because undersea volcanoes seem to create a few new islands every year. The islands aren't particularly large—and definitely too small to support agriculture in this part of the world—but a few communities have found ways to persist and even thrive while surrounded by the wild seas.

**Verdivohr:** The people of this coastal village subsist on shellfish gathered from the beach at low tide, but the shellfish contain a toxin that induces amnesia. Visiting Verdivohr can be a surreal experience, as no one remembers visitors from the day before.

**Darkwind Citadel:** Former home of a necromancer named Khalav the Black, this citadel was destroyed last year by an expanding wave of necrotic energy—energy that animated every victim in the massive fortress and every corpse within 50 miles as undead. The citadel is gone, but the island is still crawling with undead. Some of Khalav's rivals and other dark forces across Thule would love to get their hands on any of Khalav's notebooks, if they survive. If whatever happened to Darkwind Citadel could be replicated, it could become a powerful weapon.

**Stolak:** When the PCs arrive at the small town of Stolak, they find piles of corpses laying in piles in the center square, next to a crude altar devoted to the Great Old One Tsathoggua. This was one of his cults, and they all poisoned themselves to sleep with Tsathoggua forever. The altar and the urns where the poison was kept coruscate with malign energy; whatever happened here isn't necessarily over yet.

**Hralia Castle:** The sorceress Hralia was experimenting with transdimensional magic within her castle when the spell went awry, causing everything in the castle to age and decay at 100 times the normal rate. Hralia herself was able to stave off death (sort of) by becoming a lich, but her castle crumbled before her eyes and all her loved ones aged and died. She remains within the castle grounds, but there are still a few places she's wary of because the time-dilation phenomena persists.



**Murunav:** This town is entirely inhabited by children—immensely powerful, sorcerous children who use magic to create their own food, summon their own supplies, and otherwise keep their town intact. The children are initially friendly to outsiders, but they can be petulant and quick to anger when they don't get their way—and a petulant high-level sorcerer is a dangerous enemy indeed.

**Tor Ghraunk:** The primitive people of this island—practically barbarians, with only a rudimentary understanding of agriculture—are building a 40-foot-tall statue of Great Cthulhu at the behest of the cabal of shamans who've fallen under Cthulhu's sway. When the moon is full, they caper and gibber in front of the statue, which has only a wooden framework where the head and tentacles are going to be.

## DUGULAS ISLANDS

This chain of islands, part of the Loose Teeth, is revered by druids, who often come here to worship the Forest Gods. Heavily wooded, the islands are difficult to reach by ship because their shores have few beaches for landing, just high cliffs. The druids have carefully tended what amounts to its own ecosystem on the islands, bending weather, vegetation, and land to their will. A druid walking across the central island, for example, will encounter a jungle and a grassy plain unlike any found in the Thousand Teeth.

Those who come to the Dugulas Islands seek to commune with one of the eight totems of the island. By day, the druids peacefully meditate at their chosen totem. By night, they celebrate, challenge each other to footraces and feats of spellcasting or strength, and otherwise compete for the glory of the totem they chose. Then the next day the cycle begins anew.

**The Mountain Lion:** This totem, near the islands' highest point, grants a slight speed increase for 1d4 days.

**The Eagle:** This totem bestows a blessing to the senses for 1d4 days.

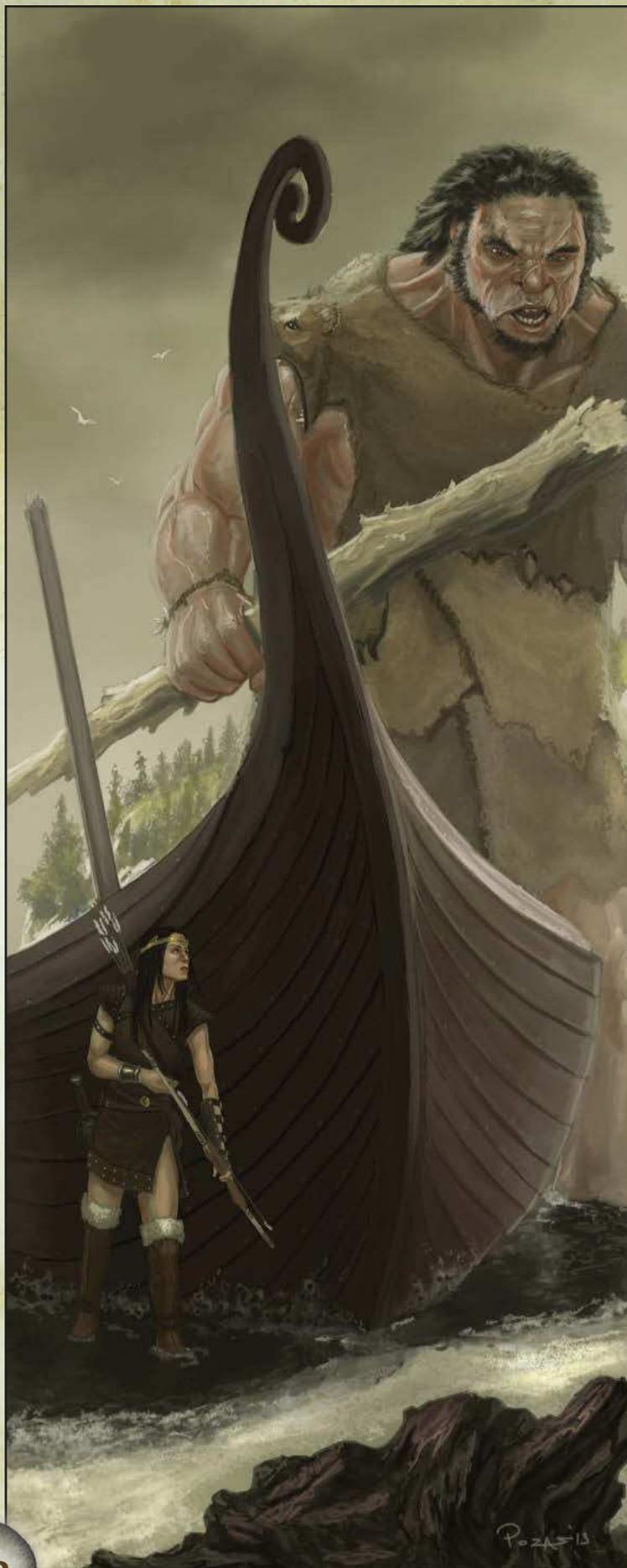
**The White Tiger:** This totem grants a small bonus to melee attacks for 1d4 days.

**The Cheetah:** This totem in the artificially maintained jungle improves reflexes for 1d4 days.

**The Serpent:** This jungle totem imposes calm, bestowing a blessing to mental defenses for 1d4 days.

**The Panther:** This totem in the deep forest bestows a blessing that improves stealth for 1d4 days.

For the gamemaster, the Loose Teeth islands are ideal places to put self-contained adventures with weird phenomena and events that would be problematic back on the mainland. All the residents of the Thousand Teeth are a little wary of people who say they're from the Lost Teeth, because those islands are famous for their strangeness.



**The Bison:** This totem, located in a grassy plain in the middle of the island, improves endurance and fortitude for 1d4 days.

**The Warrior:** This totem at the center of the island has no blessing of its own, but it extends the last blessing received by an additional 1d4 days.

The exact potency of the blessing and its precise effects is a matter for each gamemaster to decide. Most druids seek out each totem in turn while visiting the island, saving the most sought-after blessing for last.

## WAUKLU'NAUA

This underwater city was once a floating palace of the rakshasas, but the elves sabotaged and destroyed it as the rakshasas were piloting it toward Hellumar during their retreat from Thule. It lay empty on the seabed for centuries, but about two decades ago a tribe of loathsome fish-men, the skum, found the submerged palace, dubbed it Wauklunaua, and began mastering the rakshasa magic they found within.

Today the fish-men of Wauklunaua are more powerful than equivalent tribes elsewhere in the shallow seas that surround Thule. Some are powerful clerics, sorcerers, and warlocks, while others wield magic weapons fashioned by the rakshasas millennia ago. The first tentative raids onto the land where the humans live were last year, and the fish-men met with no serious opposition. They've starting scouting nearby coastal communities, looking for one they can destroy utterly, then slip back under the waves where they'll be safe from reprisal.

The fish-men are also altering the wrecked palace of the rakshasa, festooning it with tentacles in an effort to make it more pleasing to their master, Great Cthulhu. By making war upon the surface world, they hope to hasten Cthulhu's return.

## BILFUMMUN AND THE EASTERN COAST

Unlike the volcano Aratax to the west, the volcano Biffummun belches thick black smoke into the sky that can be seen for hundreds of miles; many sailors on the Sea of Mists use the plume to navigate by. Biffummun's lava is always cascading into the sea, and the coast nearby grows by several hundred feet each year.

To the east of Biffummun is another thin strip of habitable, wooded land between the shore and the great glacier, Kang the Pale. More than half of the Thousand Teeth's human population lives here, but many are at least semi-nomadic. The eastern coast has more than its share of reavers who've put down roots, establishing coastal villages of whalers and anglers who follow migrating schools of fish and pods of whales, or the occasional mining or logging community further inland. Most are human, but dwarves from the southeast have been making expeditions to remote parts of the eastern coast, prospecting for ore and starting small, exploratory mines.

The only thing approaching a city-state along the eastern coast is Jomur, which swells to a population of more than 20,000 at the spring equinox, but then tapers off to less than 5,000 by midsummer and less than a thousand who live there year-round. The tribes that gather at Jomur in the spring disperse across the eastern coast, with some going beyond the Thousand Teeth into Dhar Mesh or the Lands of the Long Shadow. Whatever communities you meet as you travel the eastern coast, it's a sure bet that more than half of them won't be there the following year.

**Slopes of Bilfummun:** Few in the Thousand Teeth know their prehistory this well, but sages know that more than 4,000 years ago, before the rakshasas retreated to Hellumar, they were engaged in a bitter struggle against three elven kingdoms: Sersidyen, Mesildyar, and Imystrahl. One of the rakshasa rajahs, trapped on the shore of the Thousand Teeth, retreated to the heights of Bilfummun, then gated in a demon horde to destroy the elven host pursuing the rakshasas. The gate succeeded all too well, with countless demons pouring through it to obliterate the elven army and the entire elven realm of Mesildyar. Those who brave an ascent up the volcano's slopes can still find the battlements the rakshasas constructed using captive earth elementals, and even today the rakshasas wonder whether parts of that ancient gate are still intact and could be reactivated.

**Delecammeroch:** The marble spires of this elven fortress were among the first to be cast down by the demonic horde summoned by the rakshasas. Unlike most elven ruins, the rubble here retained some of its protective, gravity-defying magic; most of it floats in midair. Buttresses, arches, and columns hang fifty to a hundred feet off the ground, supporting nothing and supported by nothing. Some of the fortress's underground vaults are untouched. The locals have always

feared visiting Delecammeroch up close because the floating rubble sways in the wind, and those underneath it swear it's about to come crashing to earth.

**Thanfalak:** This small town about a mile inland was surprised last month by five reaver longboats dropping out of the sky and landing in their town, crushing the inn, the stables, and the local shrine to Tarhun. The crew aboard the longboats was dead, but they were frozen stiff, not killed in the fall. No one knows how the longboats came to fall from the sky, but the townsfolk are loath to disturb the ships other than to give the reavers aboard a simple burial . . . well away from town.

**Helgard Tower:** The Nimothan adventurer Brand Helgard, a legendary dragon-tamer, built this black tower, but in the end a dragon did Helgard in, and even today a dragon—almost unheard of in Thule—has made this tower its lair.

**Protigath:** This village has the misfortune of being nearby a stand of unusual forest mushrooms that emit a spore that transforms those who breathe it into zombies in a matter of days. Usually the prevailing winds keep the spores blowing safely out to sea, but an unusual spate of weather ensures that Protigath is in the middle of a spore-zombie outbreak when the PCs arrive.

**Vort Krag:** This large town is in the throes of a well-meaning but out-of-control Asuran inquisition. The populace, terrified by recent lycanthrope attacks, turned to the priests of Asura, who took to the role of werewolf-hunters with grim enthusiasm. Now the town is in the grip of lycanthrope mania, with family members turning each other in for being lycanthropes—or just harboring suspected lycanthropes. The priests of Asura are performing searches block by block and house by house, determined to root out the curse of lycanthropy, no matter what the cost.

## THE MAMMOTH GRAVEYARD

The tribes of northern Thule tell a strange tale: For centuries uncounted, mammoths nearing death make one final journey, trekking to the legendary mammoth graveyard. Driven by instinct, or perhaps a darker force, the mighty creatures find their way to a hidden vale in the eastern reaches of the Frostwood. There they die, leaving piles of ivory tusks, skulls and ribcages that litter the land and testify to the importance the animals place on ending their existence there.

The vale of mammoth bones has been lost and found many times down through the centuries. Nomadic tribes or bands of hunters have stumbled across the vale by accident, winning vast riches. Others have searched a lifetime to find the place, only to come away with nothing. In the current day, the Mammoth Graveyard is lost—many guess roughly where it lies, but no living man has seen the place and returned to tell the tale.

The secret of the Mammoth Graveyard is stranger than any ivory traders or tribal hunters suspect. Thousands of years ago, a serpentman sorcerer prince of Nessk trapped and destroyed the god of the mammoths in this place. The serpentman built a mortared citadel behind the behemoth's skeleton, a fortress whose sole entrance lies within colossal mammoth skull. Stairs carved up the length of the skull reach a bridge grafted to boulder-sized vertebrae; within the citadel, inhuman artisans carved the ivory into exquisite jewelry and terrible idols.

Human adventurers seek out the Mammoth Graveyard for the vast fortune in tusks to be found here, but serpentmen—and others who desire to win their secrets—seek the Fortress of the Skull hidden within it. But it is the remains of the great progenitor of the mammoths and the memory of an ancient murder that draw the great beasts to the vale at the end of their days.

**Merekur:** This town was quietly subsisting on logging and vegetable farming until last month, when a dam built by dwarves in the foothills burst, sending a wave of water that flattened the town and drowned its inhabitants. Now the town has dried out, but much of the wood is still damp, and all the wreckage lies parallel to the water's course. For their part the dwarves—miners looking for rare ores in the foothills—are aghast that they flooded a human town because they dug too close to the dam, but they're even more worried that the lowland humans will figure out what happened and come after them.

**Dragonhold:** Ruled by Jedzia the Red, this fortress-town (described in Chapter 4) is a useful resting place for adventurers.

**Stone Skull Spiral:** The Stone Skull tribe moves around, but their home village is nestled among a spiral ring of menhirs, each carved to look like a skull, midway between the seashore and the glacier's edge. The Stone Skulls are described in more detail in Chapter 4.

## JOMUR, PLACE OF CHIEFS

Jomur is where many of the barbarian chiefs of Thule come to parley, settle scores, and party every spring equinox. For a few months each spring, Jomur is a vital, thriving city-state, the equal of any in Thule. But then the barbarian tribes get restless, dismantle their encampments and head back to their home territory—or onward to raid civilization elsewhere.

Most of the barbarians of Jomur come from the Thousand Teeth, but tribes from Hellumar (such as the Drangir), Dhar Mesh (the Bolotangas), and even the Highlands of Nar (the Kal Keori) send delegations to the Place of Chiefs. Even Kal Keor the Terrible famously came to Jomur several times as a young chieftain, and the barbarians of the Thousand Teeth claim that Jomur is where he learned to be a *real* conqueror.

During spring, the tribes all camp around a central rock, the Stony Fist, which rises over the flat plain of Jomur. By custom, no one camps—or indeed walks without a good reason—within 100 feet of the central stone. One by one, each chieftain comes down to stand atop the rock and deliver a speech. Some use the opportunity to challenge another tribe over territory or some other wrong, and then the two tribes battle right there before the stone. Other chieftains use the opportunity to beseech other chiefs to unite against a common foe, or even to pass the leadership of their tribe into younger hands.

In a typical day, three or four chieftains will speak. The rest of the day and all of the night is given over to partying—along with periodic scuffles inevitable when thousands of heavily armed barbarians gather in one place. Some semblance of order is kept by priests of Tarhun, who spend their spring healing the wounded, discouraging misbehavior beyond the norm for barbarians, and blessing each tribe's conquests to come in the year ahead.

## THE ORAL HISTORY

According to the most venerable barbarian shamans, tribes have been gathering at Jomur since the dawn of time. The number of barbarians ebbs and flows—greater now, but less when the Atlanteans were trying to “civilize” Thule—but every spring without fail there are campfires surrounding the Stony Fist. If ever there is a summer when no barbarians reach Jomur, then the decadence of civilization will finally have won.

## CITY DESCRIPTION

Jomur's only notable landmark is the Stony Fist. Two branches of the Kerkeska River wind their way past Jomur; the barbarians use one for drinking water and the other to send their refuse downstream. Some huts remain on the plain as more or less permanent fixtures, but the rest is washed away by midsummer, when druids arrive to use their weather magic to get rid of all the trash the barbarians left behind.

**Stony Fist:** Some barbarians believe this fist is that of Tarhun himself, and they carry small carved replicas of it as good-luck charms or holy symbols.

**Shrine to Tarhun:** This stone chapel about 300 feet from the Stony Fist is where the priests of Tarhun perform their rites, blessing new chieftains, honoring the recent dead, and otherwise tending to the spiritual needs of the tribes that visit here.

**Shrine to Tiamat:** This longhouse covered in draconic imagery was built by followers of Tiamat only a few years ago. The priests of Tarhun are not at all happy about Tiamat's presence in Jomur, but they promised their god they'd make Jomur as welcoming a place as possible for those who breathe deeply of the storms of life.

**The Warehouse:** The only other stone building in Jomur, this windowless building was constructed at ruinous expense by a clan of dwarves, who use it to store the ale they sell (at eye-popping profits) to the assembled barbarians. The dwarves carefully manage how much ale they sell each day; stone walls or not, none of them want to tell 20,000 barbarians that they're “out of beer.”

**Jomur** (Small City, pop. varies between 1,000 and 20,000)

*Place of Chiefs, the Great Encampment, The Stony Horde*

Jomur is equal parts meeting place, dueling grounds, and celebratory festival for the barbaric tribes of Thule.

**Authority:** No one rules Jomur, and any barbarian chieftain who tried would be quickly beheaded by a dozen other warchiefs. The priests of Tarhun and the Jomurjan tribe are responsible for keeping the annual gathering from getting out of control, but they don't have any special prestige or authority to go with that responsibility.

**NPCs:** Most of the barbarians attending Jomur are human, with a smattering of dwarves and the occasional wood elf. Beastmen are unwelcome and killed on sight.

*Jala Brotek* is a barbarian from far-off Dhar

Mesh who had his leg crushed in a fight when he came to Jomur five years ago.

Unable to walk home, he remained at Jomur. A friendly sort, he joined the Jomurjan tribe and now speaks to each visiting tribe as it reaches Jomur in the spring. From each tribe's oral traditions, Jala has pieced together more of Thule's tribal history than any sage on Ikath's Quill Street.

*Vulri Kerenoff* is one of the dwarven ale-peddlers. Each year he hires the toughest-looking warband he can find to help guard the next year's supply of ale when he brings it down from the dwarven lands as soon as the passes thaw.

*Skerrtanus* is a priest of Tiamat currently researching magic rituals that use the Stony Fist as a focus point. He reasons that thousands of barbarians, all performing a rite while surrounding the Stony Fist, could work earth-shattering levels of magic. If only there was a way to trick or convince the many tribes that a particular unison chant was a good idea . . .

**Trade:** Most of the tribes bring what they need with them, and they leave what they don't need behind. The tribes are assiduous barterers with each other, but they don't trade much with the outside world (other than the dwarven ale, of course).

**Concerns:** All of eastern Thule knows where the barbarians will be each spring equinox. Most communities use the respite to shore up their walls in anticipation of future barbarian raids, but some of Thule's more "civilized" powers, such as the Black Circle of Thran, wonder whether a sufficiently powerful magical attack could end the threat of barbarians in Thule for good. Along similar lines, the slavers of Marg wonder whether a large enough army could surround Jomur, then put all those barbarians in shackles.

**Secrets:** The Stony Fist actually has nothing to do with Tarhun—it's part of a buried avatar of the Great Old One Ithaqua. Someday the barbarians will chant too loudly or fight too bloodily, and the Wind Walker will rise from the earth at Jomur on an unknowable errand.

## THE JOMURJANS

This tribe takes its name from Jomur itself. When the other tribes march off to make war or return to their homelands, the Jomurjans are already home. If dark schemers try to somehow corrupt or threaten Jomur when the other barbarians aren't around, the Jomurjan tribe keeps the Place of Chiefs safe and strings up the interlopers.

At least once or twice a year, some would-be tyrant tries exactly that: to threaten the barbarians by threatening Jomur. The Jomurjans have noticed that the intruders are disproportionately arcane spellcasters—often wizards and warlocks—and as a result, they have a deep distrust and loathing for all things arcane.

### The Jomurjans (Small Tribe, pop. 500)

*The Fists, The Pride of Jomur, The Wizard-Spitters*

The Jomurjan tribe hunts across the eastern reaches of the Thousand Teeth, but their favorite quarry is arcanists.

**Authority:** Alarak wears the rather grisly symbol of the Jomurjan chief: a necklace festooned with the tongues of wizards the Jomurjans hunted down.

**NPCs:** The Jomurjans are all human, and they accept members from outside the tribe only rarely. All but a few Jomurjans were born into the tribe.

*Alarak*, the chief, has been encouraging the tribe to hunt further from Jomur than in previous years. He says he's just following the game, but the other members of the tribe are wondering whether he's afflicted by wanderlust.

*Sifrir* is one of the tribe's best hunters—especially when the prey is a wizard or other arcanist. She dreams of someday going to one of the big city-states such as Ikath or Thran, then hunting arcane spellcasters like deer in the forest.

**Trade:** The Jomurjans are self-sufficient, but the children of the tribe do a brisk business every summer when they scour the entirety of Jomur for coins, trinkets, and other valuables the tribes left behind.

**Concerns:** Unlike most tribes, the Jomurjans don't stray far from their home village, so young members sometimes get an urge to see the world. The chief usually grants requests to travel with another tribe for a year, coming back to Jomur the following spring. But what if Alarak wants to see the world? Would he abdicate the chieftainship to do so?

**Secrets:** Sifrir doesn't know it, but her youngest sibling has felt the pull of arcane magic and is planning to leave the Jomurjan with another tribe, never to return. If Sifrir ever finds out, she'll stop at nothing to hunt down her sibling.

## BEARSLAYERS

The Bearslayers are a rarity: a barbaric dwarven tribe with no ties to Kal-Zinan or the rest of dwarven society. They hunt and raid from a bear-infested peninsula in the Thousand Teeth (hence the tribal name), and they're known for being implacable foes, looming almost human-sized in their thick hide armor and bear's-head helmets.

Unlike other tribes, barbarism was a conscious choice for the first Bearslayers. It's not that they don't know civilized ways; the Bearslayers have actively

turned their backs on civilization. They regard the cities of man with contempt and would like nothing more than to reduce them all to rubble. Individual people are fine and can be useful allies, but taken collectively, civilization is more poison than salve.

The Bearslayers came to this attitude through a tragic history. For all the famed bluster and bluntness of dwarves, their political machinations can be as subtle and conniving as any race. So it was that the clan now known as the Bearslayers was tricked out of the mountain citadel they'd built over centuries, done in by a string of broken promises and political backstabbing. The clan walked north away from dwarven lands, vowing to live a life in the wild where they could be "true dwarves, not the conniving shadow-chasers of Kal-Zinan." Thus they came to the Thousand Teeth, and for five centuries they've proved themselves the equal of any human barbarian.

## **Bearslayers** (Large Tribe, pop. 1,500)

*The Short Ones, The Bearded Terrors, The Squats (never in their presence)*

The Bearslayers are a dwarven tribe that's equally at home raiding by sea or by land.

**Authority:** Geordi Grutvach leads the tribe. He remains silent as much as he can, and the other Bearslayers have learned to read much into the slightest change in his facial expression.

**NPCs:** The Bearslayers are all dwarves.

*Torvald Matrak* is the captain of the Bearslayer's largest longboat, and he flies into a rage whenever someone with earshot has the temerity to suggest that dwarves aren't at home on the sea.

*Maerta Matrak*, Torvald's grandmother, is the tribe's best blacksmith and weapon-maker. A cleric of Tarhun, she uses magic to enhance the stone warhammers and iron axes the Bearslayers favor.

**Trade:** You can keep a dwarf from being civilized, but you can't keep a dwarf from being industrious. The Bearslayers build and repair longboats for other tribes of reavers, bartering for armor and other finished goods and generally getting the better side of the bargain.

**Concerns:** The tribe would love to reclaim their citadel someday, and for centuries the conventional wisdom has been that marching there and taking it by force is the only way that'll work. But Geordi is wondering whether some outreach to the civilized dwarves might be worthwhile—if only to learn their strengths and weaknesses.

**Secrets:** Maerta Matrak is careful to supply her tribe only with weapons of iron and stone, but she actually knows the secret of steel. She has a well-hidden cache of steel weapons she's forged over the years, and she'll dole out those weapons if the Bearslayers are ever truly threatened.



## OTHER LANDS

While there are corners of Thule yet unexplored, at least the outlines of that continent are certain. So too are much of Hellumar and Nimoth well understood—in their southern reaches, anyway. There are lands beyond Thule, of course, even if no Thulean has ever seen them and they are squarely in the realm of folklore.

**Atlantis:** The homeland of Thule's Atlantean people, Atlantis sank beneath the waves centuries ago. A fertile continent larger than Thule, it existed about a month to the southwest by sea-galley. Its ruins lie on the sea floor, though some of its wonders undoubtedly survived the cataclysm that destroyed Atlantis and are there for the taking—for explorers who can manage the hazards of underwater adventure. And who is to say that at least some of Atlantis's denizens, sophisticated in the ways of magic, did not find a way to protect part of their kingdom against the onrushing water, or to retreat to other worlds entirely?

While the search for Atlantis itself may prove to be a fool's errand, there is no doubt that Atlantean colonies or outposts still exist in many different lands. Katagia and Orech were not the only cities founded by Atlantis in the empire's heyday. How these distant sisters to Thule's Atlantean city-states have fared since the empire's destruction is anybody's guess.

**Lemuria:** Atlantis's archrival, this island far to the south is supposedly inhabited by white-robed humans of great strength but limited intellect, industrious excavators who choose to live underground and consort with beasts and monsters of all types. Some of the folklore is undoubtedly influenced by Atlantean prejudice and propaganda, so the truth of Lemuria is unknown. Atlantis and Lemuria were at war when Atlantis sank; no one on Thule knows whether the Lemurians shared the Atlanteans' fate.

**Hyperborea:** From time to time Thule is visited by extremely tall, pale humans (or at least they appear human) of prodigious magical power who claim to come from the utter north—beyond the Cursed Gray of Hellumar. These Hyperboreans rarely tarry in Thule long and are always circumspect about the nature of their errands. Clearly cultured and possessed of their own language, they must have a civilization of wonders somewhere far to the north, even if no Thulean has ever seen it.

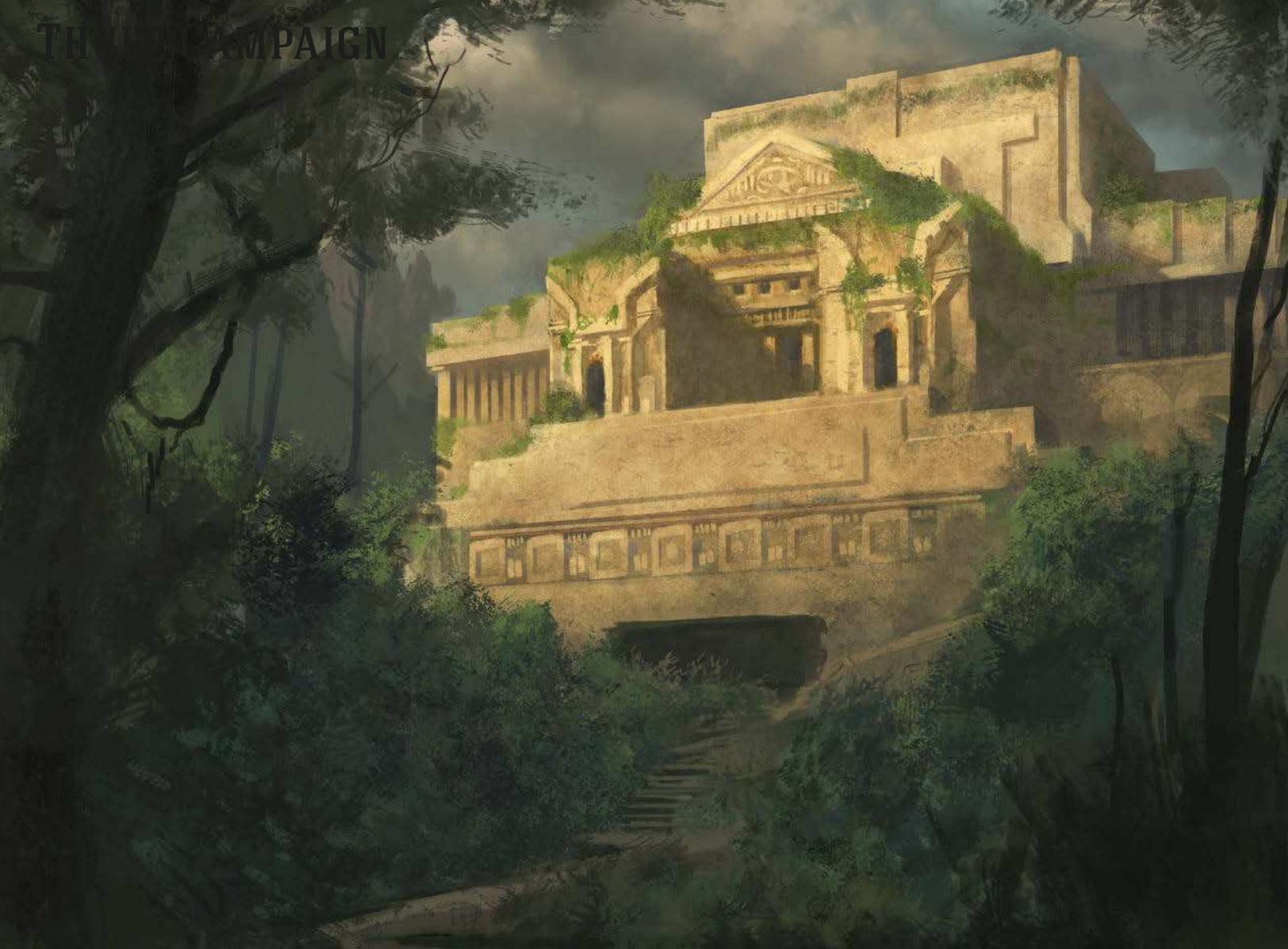
**Erne:** Two weeks' sail south of Thule lie the uncharted lands of Erne. Mist-shrouded islands and coasts covered in pristine forests extend for many days' sail in all directions. This is the home of the Bytha peoples, some of whom are seafarers themselves, occasionally visiting Thule.

## SHAKA EWALU, THE VALE OF MYTH

Concealed by a cloud of mist in the polar wastes beyond the icy shores of Nimoth or the legendary isles of Hyperborea lies a savage paradise at the top of the world: Shaka Ewalu. Here, in the realm of eternal ice, the neverending eruptions of the mighty volcano Shaka have created an unlikely oasis, surrounded on all sides by towering walls of glacial ice. A lush and steamy jungle, criss-crossed by rivers of icemelt and lava, spreads across the crater floor, and strange beasts linger here that died out eons ago in the outer world. The Hyperboreans say that this land's inhabitants—tribes of savages that belong to no known race—call their homeland 'Ewalu 'ole 'ewalu, and slay any outsiders who find their way there.

**Isle of Bones:** This large, mountainous island is not covered in bones, as wild tales in the ports of Thule sometimes claim. It is in some ways a smaller version of Thule: A handful of small towns huddle around harbors at the west end of the island, nomadic herdsman live in the interior, and the high vales of the eastern mountains are a forbidding and uninhabited wilderness. Here lies the place from which the island takes its name, a great valley where thousands upon thousands of beasts—some recognizable as animals common in the northern world, but many not—have left their bones. Smaller deposits can be found scattered throughout the remote eastern vales. Few humans venture to this desolate wilderness, and even the boldest collectors of fossil ivory do not linger long. There is a strange and fearsome evil lurking among the high peaks.

**Umn Tsav:** West of Hellumar lies a land covered in mighty forests where the primitive Umni tribes roam. Most of the Umni are shy and reclusive hunters, with no tools or technology other than bone, stone, wood, and fire. However, some of the coastal tribes know how to build surprisingly sturdy hide boats, and occasionally raid the western parts of Thule. No cities or ancient ruins are known to exist in Umn Tsav; civilization has never touched this land, and few explorers or traders have ventured deep into its wilderness. Those who have report that Umn Tsav is in truth a continent of its own, perhaps even larger than Thule itself.



# 4: THE THULEAN CAMPAIGN

*The Age of Atlantis is done. More than three hundred years ago the great empire fell into ruin, and with it the foremost civilization of mankind on this Earth. These are darker times, and much that was once known is now lost. The world is mired in barbarism and superstition; the great cities are mere shadows of what Atlantis was, and one by one they are falling into tyranny or ruin. The day is coming when human civilization vanishes completely from Thule, leaving behind a continent steeped in savagery and ignorance, home only to fierce barbarian tribes and feral beasts. This is the age now taking shape, an age in which dire and endless winter erases all that Thule is or was—the Age of Ice.*

**T**hule is a savage land indeed. The wilderness is a primeval landscape in which mere survival is a daily battle against fierce tribes and deadly beasts. The cities are dens of thievery and intrigue where tyrants rule, and sinister priests and wizards dabble with dark powers. Neither wilderness nor city offers much refuge from danger and strife, but it is in exactly these circumstances that the boldest and most ambitious adventurers face challenges equal to their mettle. These, of course, are the player characters of your game.

At first glance, the world of Thule is much like the fantasy settings you may be used to presenting to your players. After all, the world is filled with monsters and villains, and the player characters include brawny warriors, sly rogues, and clever wizards. In fact, you can run a perfectly conventional fantasy roleplaying game in this setting, and the results will be just fine. However, this choice overlooks subtle but important differences in the setting. First, Thule is ancient, not medieval. Second, it is a world strongly influenced by fantastic horror. And finally, Thule it is not epic fantasy—its roots lie in the traditions of pulp sword-and-sorcery tales.

## AN ANCIENT WORLD

Because Thule is an ancient setting, many of the tropes common in more conventional fantasy settings are not necessarily present. This is a world of barbarians and gladiators, not knights or lords. Temples are ziggurats, not cathedrals; people dress in loincloths and leather fighting harness.

Some significant technologies have not yet been developed in Thule (or, to be more precise, were invented by Atlantis but have now been forgotten). Iron-working is largely unknown in human societies; most human warriors make do with bronze or copper instead. Thuleans have not yet invented the stirrup, so mounted soldiers tend to be scouts or skirmishers, and chariots form the heavy striking arm of a city's army. Glassmaking is quite rare; windows are usually covered with lattices of light wood or sheets of oiled parchment. Printing and bookbinding are not known, so most documents (and arcane texts) are hand-written scrolls. Ships are oar-powered galleys, dromonds, or longships, as opposed to cogs or caravels.

Social structures likewise are ancient, not medieval. Slavery is widespread. Cities are generally ruled by tyrants and warlords, not royal dynasties. Noble families exist, but this is a measure of wealth and power, not any inherent qualities associated with aristocratic blood. A Thulean commoner rarely calls a nobleman "lord" or kneels before him, but he speaks respectfully if he is wise. No one expects much protection from city guards or the ability to redress wrongs through appeal to law, so even in the cities most people go armed and are willing to settle disputes in brawls or duels.

## FANTASTIC HORROR

In a more conventional fantasy setting, heroes expect to meet few monsters that are completely beyond them. Novice adventurers certainly don't expect to be able to defeat full-grown dragons, but the demographics of the world usually guarantee that *someone* out there can handle a dragon problem, and if those novice heroes live long enough, they may be the dragon-slayers someday. Great heroes in Thule do indeed gain the knowledge and skill needed to defeat many foes—but not all.

Some of the worst monsters in Thule are creatures that are unthinkable alien, and inimical to earthly life. They literally present the heroes with the opportunity to encounter a fate worse than death, and cannot be defeated by any normal application of swordplay or battle-magic. Likewise, some knowledge is never safe for scholars or sages to dabble in; curses, dooms, and botched summonings are inevitable if one dares too much. These are the ingredients of a horror story in the context of a fantasy setting.

## SWORD AND SORCERY

Of course, every fantasy setting has plenty of swords and plenty of sorcery, but this turn of phrase also describes a particular sub-genre of fantasy adventure. Sword-and-sorcery fiction generally involves heroes dealing with personal battles and personal stakes, as opposed to threats to the world order. Stories tend to be episodic—instead of progressing through a single grand narrative, a sword-and-sorcery hero has a number of unconnected adventures. A recurring villain is fine, but the overall story is not the story of the hero's confrontation with the villain; instead, the villain is simply a familiar element that appears from time to time to trouble the hero.

In this setting of episodic, low-stakes adventures, heroes don't change much over the course of time; there is little character growth (although player characters naturally become tougher and more experienced). A character such as Conan, Tarzan, or the Gray Mouser is pretty much the same in the tenth story as he was in the first—but that doesn't mean his adventures are boring. The whole point of sword-and-sorcery adventure is to present a fast-paced story with a memorable setting, despicable villains, and lurid, nonstop action. This is what the PRIMEVAL THULE campaign is all about.

## RUNNING A GAME IN THULE

You can run an adventure in Thule much like an adventure in any other fantasy setting, except with more barbarians and saber-tooth cats. However, to maximize the experience of a savage, intense, sword-and-sorcery game world, we recommend adjusting your Gamemaster style to take advantage of the opportunities the PRIMEVAL THULE setting offers. This section offers guidance and optional rules for:

- Creating sword-and-sorcery adventures.
- Madness and madness saves.
- Running a low-magic campaign.
- Savage arms and armor and inferior materials.
- Awarding experience for finding treasure.
- Unique Thulean treasures.

## CREATING PRIMEVAL ADVENTURES

Many adventures in other settings place the player characters in the role of acting to defend the normal order of things. Orcs attack a village; the PCs track down the orcs and assault their stronghold so that they won't attack villages again. Some evil threat *acts*, and the adventure is about how the heroes *react*. In the PRIMEVAL THULE setting, most adventures should shift the burden of action to the player characters. Instead of fixing things that bad guys do, the PCs seek adventure proactively, choosing goals that interest them and setting out to accomplish them.

There are a number of ways to create proactive adventures, but here are three basic models for this style of adventure design: The Survival Adventure, the Treasure Race, and the Caper.

**Survival Adventure:** The heroes find themselves someplace where they are in terrible danger. Perhaps a shipwreck deposits them on the shore of a monster-infested island when they were traveling to somewhere else, or perhaps they fled into a perilous valley while trying to evade enemies pursuing them after a previous adventure. The goal that interests them is obvious: Survive whatever threat is present, and escape so they can continue on their way.

The challenge in creating a survival adventure is that you need to place the heroes in a position where their survival is now in question. Some players may naturally resent learning that their character made a stupid or unlucky decision before the adventure even started, and feel like they should have been offered the opportunity to avoid the challenge by making a better decision before it starts. As a result, the Survival Adventure is best as a once-in-a-while adventure, not the normal fare of the campaign.

**Treasure Race:** The treasure race presents the heroes with an opportunity to claim a rich prize. The classic

setup is that the heroes come across information no one else knows—say, the dying words of a mortally wounded traveler, or a tattered treasure map in a dusty tomb—and realize that they now know where something of great value is waiting to be found. The challenge is getting there and recovering the prize, be it a mound of gold, a fantastic jewel, or a book holding secrets of arcane power.

The chief motivation is the heroes' own ambition and avarice. In a Thulean campaign, treasure is its own reward, although characters may naturally have more interest in some types of wealth than others. While that may sound a little selfish, it has the advantage of placing the heroes in the position of being the initial actors in the story: They choose to go after the treasure, and the forces protecting it have to react to their efforts. Best of all, it's a perfect opportunity for the heroes' rivals and enemies to get involved.

**Caper:** Finally, the caper is similar to the treasure race in that the heroes see an opportunity and act on it. Instead of speed and fighting power, the challenge is to solve a complex problem to seize something of value. For example, the objective of the caper might be something simple, like stealing a priceless ruby from the demon-guarded vault of a merchant. Pulling off the caper requires distracting guards in one area, bypassing traps in another, pulling off an impossible climb, and then employing the right kind of magic to dismiss the demon and seize the prize.

Capers of different sorts might have nothing to do with treasure. Ambitious player characters may initiate intrigues to improve their station or arrange the downfall of an enemy. Orchestrating a palace coup or a tricky assassination could certainly develop as a caper adventure—especially if the notion arises from the players' desire to acquire something of value, be it wealth, knowledge, or status.

## RIVALS

Just because the player characters are choosing their own goals doesn't mean they aren't up against opposition. In sword-and-sorcery adventures, heroes frequently face competitors or enemies who are after the same thing they are. Rivals may be single villains who surround themselves with disposable muscle, or they may actually be adventuring parties that mirror the talents and abilities of your player character group.

The appearance of a rival can add a villain to a scenario that might otherwise lack one. For example, a Survival Adventure (see above) might pit the heroes against the impersonal elements and dangers of the Thulean wilderness, but if a rival group is shipwrecked or lost at the same time, the adventure becomes a lot more interesting, especially if the rivals are competing for the same resources needed to survive or racing to be the first to escape. Likewise, the Treasure Race isn't really a race unless someone else is trying to beat the heroes to the prize.

Rivals may be recurring villains who show up every few adventures to complicate the heroes' lives, or they may be one-shot adversaries limited to the adventure in which they appear. A mix of both approaches is ideal, so that the players don't know whether a particular rival might be someone who turns up again. Either way, make sure the heroes have the opportunity to meet and interact with their rivals during the adventure, especially if circumstances make it difficult to defeat the rivals during the first encounter or two. You want the players to know who they're up against, instead of reaching the final treasure vault and finding their prize missing without a word of explanation.

## WILDERNESS CHALLENGES

Jungles, mountains, caverns, glaciers—the wilderness of Thule is a dangerous place. Any adventure in which the heroes set out into the wilds should feature at least some amount of wilderness challenges and hazards for them to overcome. This is a setting in which tests of physical prowess and wilderness knowledge should come up in the majority of adventures. Some examples include:

- *Getting Lost:* The wilderness is trackless, and it's easy to become lost. Explorers may require successful Wisdom/Survival checks to avoid becoming lost.
- *Exposure:* The tundra, mountains, and glaciers of Thule can be bitterly cold, while the interior jungles are often sweltering. Travelers stuck in such areas face penalties such as exhaustion if they fail Constitution saves.
- *Natural Obstacles:* Wild rivers, gorges, cliffs, or dank swamps often impede travel. Crossing such obstacles without suffering a dangerous fall or being swept away and battered may require successful Strength/Athletics or Dexterity/Acrobatics checks.
- *Wild Beasts:* The heroes may not fear saber-tooth cats or dire wolves, but fighting hungry predators several times a day is exhausting and dangerous. However, unnecessary encounters may be avoided with successful Dexterity/Stealth or Wisdom/Animal Handling or Survival checks.

If a wilderness challenge is the only danger the heroes face at one time, the penalties for failing that challenge should linger into their next encounter. Failing a short challenge—for example, swimming across an icy river, or being forced to detour into extremely rugged terrain—costs a character 1 or 2 exhaustion levels. Failing a major challenge, such as surviving a night on a glacier with no shelter or blundering through a malarial swamp all day, costs a character 2 to 3 exhaustion levels. These penalties require a day (or several days) to recover from, making the rest of the adventure a little bit harder.

## THE ANGRY DM: PACE YOURSELF!

Maintaining a good pace ain't about keeping the game moving along at a breakneck speed. It is about keeping things at exactly the right speed. Break your game down into "scenes" and "encounters." Both are just chunks of the game where the players are actually making choices (if all you're doing is narrating, it doesn't count). Encounters include a goal and some opposition and obstacles. Now, break encounters down into slow encounters where the players have some time (but not all the time in the world) to think, and fast encounters where decisions have to be made immediately. So: Scenes, slow encounters, and fast encounters.

- **Rule One:** Never follow a scene or an encounter with one that moves at the same speed. The speed should vary up and down. Ride the wave, baby!
- **Rule Two:** Force your players to maintain the pace of the scene. That means, in fast encounters you push them for quick decisions. Be a jerk if you have to. This is Thule!
- **Rule Three:** Include scenes. Scenes are needed to give the players a break and a breather. Let the party chat at camp, explore at their leisure, or go shopping.
- **Rule Four:** React to the player's energy level. If they are bored, give them a fast action scene like a chase or a fight. If they are coming down from a fast encounter, give them a scene.
- **Rule Five:** Follow climatic encounters (of any speed) with a scene and then a slow encounter. Players need to rest and warm up to action again after a big release.

And always remember, if the players aren't making choices, the thing isn't a scene! It's just you flapping your gums and making noise at your players.

## MADNESS AND HORROR

Thule harbors many dangers, both physical and mental. Fighting savages in the jungles and glaciers isn't particularly horrific, but encountering the minions of a Great Old One can have a profound impact on one's sanity. A Thulean campaign should incorporate the rules for madness as follows.

**Madness Saves:** When a character is exposed to a creature or situation that threatens madness, he or she must make a Wisdom save (DC varies). Events that call for madness saves include:

- Encountering an aberration, undead, or extraterrestrial creature for the first time (DC 10).
- Seeing an ally defeated by an aberration, undead, or extraterrestrial creature (DC 10).
- Being charmed by an aberration, undead, or extraterrestrial creature (DC 10).
- Witnessing alien or unwholesome magic (DC 8 + spell level).
- Exposure to an alien environment (DC 10).
- Hearing or seeing a Great Old One at a distance (DC 13).
- Exposure to a profoundly abnormal alien environment (DC 15).
- Encountering a Great Old One (DC 18).



**Failing a Save:** A character who fails a madness save is affected by a minor madness effect for 1d10 minutes. If the effect runs its course without being alleviated by magic, he or she must make a second save. On a failure, the character gains a randomly determined form of extended madness, lasting  $1d10 \times 10$  hours.

**Broken by Madness:** If an extended bout of madness runs its course, the character gains a randomly determined madness flaw. In addition, he or she suffers tactical disadvantage on future saves against madness. These effects last until cured by powerful magic.

## A LOW-MAGIC SETTING

Magic is rare in Thule. Most ordinary people never see a magic item, or even see a spell cast. Of course, heroes in Thule bump into things that ordinary people never run into, or study mystic arts that no one else dares study. Magic may be rare in the world, but it is not necessarily rare in the adventuring party.

The effects of magic scarcity include:

**Magic items can't be bought.** No matter how much gold the heroes accumulate, there simply isn't a marketplace—no one has magic items for sale. The only exceptions are *potions of healing*, which can be brewed by a handful of apothecaries and alchemists. Those are available at the normal price, provided the heroes are in a location where potion-crafters can be found.

**Magic items can't be sold.** No one knows what an enchanted item might be worth, and so even wealthy NPCs are unwilling to purchase items. However, patrons and NPCs with arcane knowledge might recognize the value of powerful magic. Unwanted magic items may be very valuable in trade for favors or influence.

**NPC spellcasters are unavailable.** In general, adventurers can't count on finding a NPC to cast a needed spell or perform a ritual. Major temples in large cities offer the best opportunity to locate NPC spellcasters, but most priestly orders jealously guard their magic and don't use it for the sake of others unless they see a clear benefit to themselves for doing so.

**Treasure Tables.** If you generate random treasure hoards by rolling on treasure tables, make the following adjustments when checking for magic items.

- Instead of "roll once," roll 1d2–1 times.
- Instead of "roll 1d4 times," roll 1d4–2 times.
- Instead of "roll 1d6 times," roll 1d6–3 times.
- Instead of "roll 1d8 times," roll 1d8–4 times.

This reduces the rate of magic item acquisition to half the normal rate. If you choose treasure hoards instead of generating them randomly, include about one-quarter to one-half the normal allotment of magic items.

**Alternate Rewards.** Even though Thule is a low-magic setting, we don't want to eliminate the fun of gaining better items or special rewards for players.

Consider rewarding the PCs in different ways. For example:

- Supernatural gifts can stand in for magic items. Special charms are equal to uncommon items, and holy blessings are equal to very rare items.
- Items already in the PCs' possession may become better as the characters progress in their careers. For example, a fighter's nondescript battleaxe might gain a +1 bonus after slaying a beastman chieftain, or gain a frost-related power when used to defeat a polar eidolon.

Supernatural gifts can be earned by finding lost sites, restoring sacred relics to their rightful place, or conferred in rituals by grateful shamans or priests. Item upgrades can be earned when you would otherwise give out a new magic item intended to improve the character's combat ability. You could even allow each player to choose item upgrades or describe new blessings or boons that fit the story of the character (within reason, of course).

## STONE AGE AND BRONZE AGE MATERIALS

Weapons of iron and steel are rare in Thule, and many warriors must make do with inferior materials. The availability of different weapon materials depends on the technological advancement of the tribe, settlement, or city in which the heroes find themselves.

**Savage Arms and Armor:** Savage tribes do not have metalworking and must use bone, wood, or stone for weapons. Most nonhuman savages (such as beastmen or troglodytes) likewise use these natural materials. Natural materials have the following limitations:

- The only types of armor available in savage societies are padded, leather, or hide armor, as well as wooden shields.
- Swords and similar bladed weapons other than a dagger are not available. Weapons made entirely of wood, such as the club or staff, function normally. All other weapons must be made from inferior materials (for example, stone axes, wooden spears, or arrows with bone points).
- If you attack a target wearing medium or heavy armor with a weapon made from inferior materials, you take a -2 penalty on your attack roll.

**Normal Arms and Armor:** Barbarian tribes and most civilized areas have simple metalworking and can make weapons from copper or bronze. Serpentmen, rakshasas, elves, and other civilized nonhumans have this same level of skill.

- All armor and weapons are available (except as noted on page 82).
- Armor and weapons made from normal materials have no penalties or bonuses in combat.

**Superior Arms and Armor:** Dwarves possess superior metallurgy and know techniques of working iron (and even making simple steels). Atlanteans once possessed this same level of skill, and in fact knew how to produce a variety of excellent alloys, but in the current day Atlantean steel is found only in artifacts and heirlooms.

- Weapons, medium armor, and heavy armor made from iron or steel are considered to be a magic items with a +1 bonus.

## EXPERIENCE FOR TREASURE

The goal of most freebooters and adventurers is not to locate the exact right mix of adversaries that will provide good battle-experience without actually killing the would-be hero. The goal is to accomplish the quest or defeat the challenge at hand; fighting is usually incidental to the heroes' story motivation at the time. For example, a group of heroes in a Survival Adventure should earn more experience for avoiding fights against wild animals than for carving their way to safety through cave bears and giant sloths.

Most game systems acknowledge this by offering story awards—bonus experience points for accomplishing goals rather than just killing monsters. The more aggressive you are with story awards as a driver of character advancement, the more your player characters engage adventures like the goal-motivated freebooters and sellswords they are. In addition, we strongly encourage Gamemasters to award significant story awards for finding treasure in the PRIMEVAL THULE campaign—or, to put it another way, award experience points for gold.

There are two reasons we suggest "XP for gold" in a Thulean campaign. First, sword-and-sorcery adventure should be largely driven by the heroes' ambitions. Player characters encouraged to be a little greedy begin to see the game setting in a new way: Where can I find gold, and what's the easiest way to get it? That's how you encourage the players to think like freebooters. Secondly, Thule is a low-magic setting. Since treasure can't be easily converted into better gear for the player characters, it doesn't necessarily hold the inherent value it does in worlds where magical marketplaces are the rule. Awarding experience for finding treasure reinforces to the players that their characters see a big heap of gold as something very much worth their effort.

- Incidental treasure or hoards significantly below the party's level don't provide any bonus XP.
- Normal treasure hoards (one treasure roll on a table matching the party's average level) count as milestones. Award bonus XP to the PCs equal to the XP they would receive for defeating an easy encounter of their level.
- Exceptional treasure hoards (multiple rolls on a table matching the party's average level, or one roll on a table significantly above the party's average level) count as major milestones. Award bonus XP equal to the XP the PCs would receive for defeating a hard encounter of their level.

## THULEAN TREASURES

Thule is a land of great riches. Many areas are rich in naturally occurring veins of precious metals and gemstone deposits. As a result, common artisans and merchants go about their business bedecked in everyday jewelry, such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces, clasps, pins, and rings of copper or silver. Many barbarians are in the habit of wearing modest jewelry of similar worth. The high-ranking priests, nobles, and panjandrums of the great cities are positively draped in precious metals and glittering gemstones. Only the poorest beggars and savages can't afford to adorn themselves with at least some cheap copper jewelry.

While jewelry and gemstones are worn by most, coinage is actually not all that common, especially once a traveler strikes out into the wilderness. Gigantic piles of gold coins may be a staple of treasure hoards in many fantasy worlds, but in Thule, coinage is only used as a medium of exchange in the cities. Many of the older or more monstrous ruins and sites scattered about the primeval continent actually predate the invention of currency (at least by humans), and just don't have heaps of coinage lying about.

**Art Objects:** The most common precious objects found in Thule are statuettes—usually small temple idols, sometimes depicting forgotten gods. These are usually made of carved amber, indigurr, or jade. They may be palm-sized personal luck charms, or as tall as the length of a large man's forearm. (Real temple idols are much larger and more valuable, but possession of such a treasure may outrage the priests who serve the god in question and can lead to serious accusations.)

**Thulean Gemstones:** Gems found in Thule include many of the well-known precious stones most people are familiar with, plus a few more unusual types found nowhere else in the world. When the player characters find gems as part of treasure hoards or in the possession of a NPC who no longer needs them, randomly determine the type by rolling on the table below:

D20	Result	D20	Result
1-3	Amber	12-13	Jacinth
4-5	Diamond	14-17	Jade
6	Emerald	18	Ruby
7-9	Garnet	19	Sapphire
10-11	Indigurr	20	Zwarba

*Amber* is found as lumps of easily carved fossilized resin of brilliant translucent yellow or orange. It is dull in the wild, but can be polished to a high sheen. Amber often has inclusions of trapped pebbles, grit, bubbles, leaves, insects, or small creatures. Barbarians revere such fossilized creatures as animal totems, and casters of magic value the more exotic inclusions as spell foci or as magic item components. Amber is usually cabochon-cut (smooth-surfaced) and finished with a flat back for use as an inlay.

*Diamond* is, of course, a hard, clear stone with faint yellow or pink hues. It sparkles brilliantly when cut and polished. Clear stones without inclusions or flaws are valued over pink stones, and pink stones over yellow. In Thule, diamonds are generally valued below rubies, emeralds, and sapphires. Diamonds are usually found in a size about as long as a woman's fingernail, but can be three times as big, and are cut in facets to enhance their sparkle.

*Emerald* is a pale to deep green translucent gemstone, second in value only to rubies. Emeralds are quite scarce in Thule, and most that are found here were brought from other lands in trade. Emeralds are cut either cabochon or faceted.

*Garnet* is the cheapest form of gemstone, coarse and quite durable. It usually possesses a blood-red color, and is found in naturally faceted crystals.

*Indigurr* is a relatively common black stone. Obsidian is almost unknown in Thule, but indigurr, which is a gleaming black color and as durable as a tough living jungle vine, is a prized alternative because it is so easily carved and so forgiving of clumsy carvers. Skilled workers can fashion small coffers, door handles, buttons for clothing, and settings for more valuable gems from indigurr. Some merchants claim that indigurr is the hardened blood of dragons, but in fact indigurr is a form of petrified wood, the fossilized heart of certain sorts of ancient trees. It is found rarely (but sometimes in large masses) in old dried-out bogs and the depths of living swamps.

*Jacinth* is a transparent red, reddish-blue, or purple gemstone, often found in natural crystals. It is sometimes called the "ruby of the commoner" in Thule. Jacinths can be heat-treated in fires by those who know how to derive deeper purple hues, or baked with particular salts to create translucent yellow gems. However, there is a risk of cracking and ruining the gems.

*Jade* is perhaps the most common precious stone. It is a stone of a light to deep green color, sometimes

streaked with white or black opaque gemstone. It is easily carved and can be polished to a high sheen. Jade is sometimes found in rocks as large as a man's head, but more often in fragments about the size of a human hand or a finger. In ancient times, whole thrones or doors were carved of jade, but pieces so large are very rarely found these days.

*Ruby* is the crimson "king of gemstones" and the most highly valued in Thule. Rubies are usually found as small pebbles about the size of a man's smallest fingernail, but sometimes stones two or three times as large turn up, and very rarely, legendary stones as large as a man's fist.

*Sapphire* is clear, rich blue gemstone, trailing only emeralds and rubies in value, and cut either cabochon or faceted. It is the stone of queens, princesses, and all who aspire to the beauty and grace of female royalty.

*Zwarba* is another unique Thulean gem. This lustrous gemstone takes a glossy polish and is deep pink at the surface, but deepens to a rich red at its heart. It resists shattering and damage from extreme heat or cold, but it is easily carved. Zwarbas are therefore often made into signets used to seal documents with wax, or decorative cameos depicting the faces of ancestors. In the wild, zwarbas are usually found in streambed clay or bands of old rock as round, dull, stones about as big as a man's thumbnail.

## NARRATIVES IN PLAY

When players create characters for the PRIMEVAL THULE setting, they make choices about the kind of campaign you will run. This is true in almost any RPG setting, but the character creation rules presented in Chapter 2—specifically, the selection of a character narrative and the designation of patrons or enemies—make this aspect of campaign-building explicit rather than implicit, and hands your players a great deal of control over the story that will be told about the heroes they are creating.

You can certainly run an entertaining game in PRIMEVAL THULE that treats character narratives as a set of minor bonuses and benefits; they work perfectly well as background elements or themes. However, you would be missing an opportunity to invest your players in the campaign by tailoring the game to the choices they make during character creation.

## USING NARRATIVES IN ADVENTURES

As a rough rule of thumb, a character should bump into a development or complication driven by the choice of narrative about once every two to three adventures (if the adventures are short), or once every one to two character levels (if the heroes are engaged in a single long adventure). In a perfect world, narrative

would come up in every adventure, but most adventuring parties include four or five player characters—if each one saw a narrative-driven development in every adventure, it might be too much clutter and distraction from the actual adventure at hand.

Suggestions for each narrative follow below.

**Atlantean Noble:** The noble is an important person, and you should make sure that most NPCs the character meets treat him as such. Gaining access to other important people shouldn't be a challenge for the noble—if an adventuring noble presents himself at the front door of the queen's palace in Quodeth, high-ranking advisors or palace officials will see him immediately, and likely arrange a meeting with the queen within a day or two if the hero insists.

Because nobles are important and wealthy, they have enemies. If your player creates an Atlantean noble, you should create a rival family whose scions can serve as villains or troublemakers during the course of the character's adventures.

**Bearer of the Black Book:** The Black Book represents *power*, and that means many people—most of them unfriendly to the player character—are very interested in it. Wizards (and other arcane spellcasters) in Thule have good reason to be distrustful of their peers, because all too many of their fellows are constantly scheming to steal the secrets and treasures they work so hard to gather. When a player chooses this narrative for her character, you should create a rival arcane spellcaster or two who want to take the Book away from her. These rivals may ally themselves with the villains of the adventure the character is engaged in, offering their help to the character's enemies in exchange for the right to take the Black Book once she is defeated.

**Beastfriend:** Unlike the Atlantean noble or the Bearer of the Black Book, the beastfriend does not have an obvious rival or something that somebody would want. When you create an adventure that highlights the beastfriend character, design an encounter or two that rewards a beastfriend's ability to understand animals or provide challenges a beastfriend's animal companion is suited to handle. If nothing else, most beastfriend characters are more effective in outdoor adventures than dungeon crawls, so give the character opportunities to scout, trailblaze, and spot ambushes before other characters would.

**Dhari Hunter:** A hunter should have opportunities to hunt from time to time. When you want to feature the Dhari hunter's narrative, create encounters in which the character can gain surprise through excellent woodcraft, or perhaps enjoy the recognition of potential allies (or foes) who have heard of her skill. The narrative description in Chapter 2 suggests that beastmen are the natural enemies of Dhari hunters, but hunters from different tribes may have different tribal enemies. Encounters featuring these hated enemies should be especially intense, with quarter neither asked nor given.

**Free Blade:** The free blade is perhaps the least specific of the narratives presented in Chapter 2. After all, just about every adventure in the Thule setting offers the opportunity for a freebooter to indulge his wanderlust, find trouble, and get a chance to pocket a rich treasure. The best way to personalize an adventure for a free blade is to create a lifelong nemesis, perhaps a former partner who betrayed the free blade, or an evil priest who destroyed the character's village long ago. Give the free blade a personal motive for revenge against someone or something, and adjust the occasional adventure to add tantalizing clues about the character's hated foe or the opportunity to confront the villain.

**Golden Sea Corsair:** Unless all the players in the group decide to be pirates, the player who creates a character with the corsair background begins her character's career by leaving her pirate ways behind her. Look for ways to remind the player that her pirate past matters even when she's engaged in other adventures. For example, if an adventure offers the chance for travel by sea to reach a distant dungeon, the corsair character can provide transportation by arranging a deal with her former crewmates. Outlaws the party meets respect her as a fellow criminal, and treat her as such when it may be advantageous. Likewise, the authorities distrust her and may be ready to arrest her on sight.

**Guardian of the Nine:** This narrative is easy to cater to; all you need to do is make sure you run the occasional adventure in which the minions of the Great Old Ones (or similar extraterrestrial races) are the chief threat. As a hero sworn to protect the world from the insidious influences of alien powers, the Guardian of the Nine is constantly vigilant for any such intrusions into the natural world. Another alternative is to present the hero with a threat to the Nine—for example, an intolerant high priest determined to root out imagined heresies held by the secret society and destroy its adherents throughout Thule.

**Ice Reaver:** The ice reaver character is a barbarian who wants to storm through the campaign wreaking bloody havoc. In Thule, that is perfectly acceptable behavior. Because the ice reaver is usually far from home, exploring cities or cultures that are more advanced than her own, look for opportunities to remind the player that civilization is confusing and that she is an intimidating figure. Guards stop her at the city gates; tavern brawlers hesitate to throw punches at her; merchants cut great deals for her to hurry her out of their shops. Because she doesn't understand the nuances of civilization, it's easy for her to make an enemy early in her career—say, a nobleman angered when she doesn't realize how important he is.

**Initiate of Mysteries:** Player characters who belong to the priesthood of one of Thule's temples are part of a structured hierarchy with superiors who can give them orders. Create a NPC mentor or leader who can serve as your mouthpiece in the temple hierarchy. You

should be careful not to give the player character too many direct orders, but reminding the player about his temple's secret interests in any particular adventure is a great way to make him feel like he is part of something exclusive and important.

**Jungle Trader:** The jungle trader should have an opportunity to, well, trade. Create opportunities for a clever player to notice opportunities of supply and demand in her travels, and initiate efforts to make a big score. For example, when a trader passes through a village during an adventure, she might notice that exporting mammoth ivory is a valuable business there. Later in her travels, she encounters a villain whose throne features impressive mammoth tusks; if the player remembers to take those back to the village, she earns a more valuable reward than just selling them anywhere.

**Katagian Pit Fighter:** A player who chooses this narrative is creating a gladiator, so you should make sure the character gets opportunities to fight in an arena. Perhaps the party comes to a jungle village whose aid can only be won by having one of the PCs defeat the tribe's champion in single combat, or perhaps the character can cow the crew of a corsair galley by defeating their most savage warrior. Arena battles in which the whole party participates aren't bad, but the pit fighter really wants to defeat a foe one-on-one with a crowd watching, so provide that opportunity every now and then.

**Myrmidon:** Of all the Thulean narratives, myrmidons are most accustomed to receiving missions or orders from the NPCs they fight for. In many ways the myrmidon is the opposite of the freebooter, measuring success by loyalty and competent execution of her orders instead of opportunities for personal gain. Identify a group or organization that is the enemy of the master she serves—for example, an enemy city, a barbarian tribe, or a rival noble house—and make sure that group shows up as adversaries or competition from time to time. A myrmidon who regards Lomari as her enemies will certainly take a special interest in adventures where Lomari villains are working against her.

**Occult Scientist:** The greatest wonders of advanced magic and powerful devices to be found in the world today are artifacts of Atlantis. Few of these things are well understood today, but the occult scientist is the character to figure them out. To engage a PC with this narrative, include occasional Atlantean artifacts in the treasure hoards the party discovers, especially items that require some study or experimentation before they can be used at their full power. Offering the occult scientist a clue or map leading to a lost Atlantean artifact is an excellent way to provide an adventure this character will be anxious to embark upon.

**Panjandrum:** The panjandrum's true powers and authority come into play when she is in her home city. To highlight the panjandrum narrative, make sure that the occasional adventure in your campaign takes place in the panjandrum's home city, and includes challenges

## RANDOM NAMES FOR THULEAN NPCs

Most city-dwellers in Thule have surnames, as do proud and wealthy families everywhere else. Among the barbaric or savage peoples, few people use surnames. Instead, they are more likely to name themselves after trades or deeds of note, such as "Fher the Carver" or "Fher of the Long Leap."

Here follow tables of names for use in naming NPCs. Pronunciations appear in parentheses after some of the more unusual names. Deliberate selections from the tables usually yield the best results, but for occasions of great haste roll dice to derive names.

Common Atlantean Names			
D6	Male Names	D6	Female Names
1	Bran	1	Anathnae (ah-NATH-nay)
2	Corvin	2	Chethir
3	Dereth	3	Darthaë
4	Imdath	4	Janir
5	Marus	5	Nista
6	Pharn	6	Raenara (RAY-nah-rah)
7	Sarth	7	Sarae
8	Tordil	8	Tildris
9	Urvael (ur-VALE)	9	Vethra
10	Zarn	10	Yarlae
Common Dhari Names			
D6	Male Names	D6	Female Names
1	Arn	1	Amarla
2	Dar	2	Belshirr
3	Horm	3	Feene (FEEN)
4	Jongor	4	Liara
5	Sorn	5	Tharra
6	Yar	6	Zurne
Common Kalay Names			
D8	Male Names	D8	Female Names
1	Aphoom (ah-FOOM)	1	Barinna
2	Bhul	2	Dreen
3	Daoth (DOWTH)	3	Evondra
4	Fol	4	Jaless
5	Narvin	5	Lu
6	Qoth (KOTH)	6	Saya
7	Tarbo	7	Xoe (SKO-eh)
8	Zemar	8	Yendi
Common Lomari Names			
D6	Male Names	D6	Female Names
1	Bagreel	1	Belarna
2	Deond (DAY-ond)	2	Eyane (EH-yann)
3	Ghoro	3	Janesh
4	Matambe (mah-TOM-beh)	4	Luwendra
5	Timbo	5	Savish
6	Yasheem	6	Yolande
Common Nimothan Names			
D6	Male Names	D6	Female Names
1	Bronn	1	Albeth
2	Erth	2	Ember
3	Helvur	3	Hildne
4	Osk	4	Kimber
5	Thagnar	5	Tingith
6	Vorstag	6	Wendrith



or obstacles that can be overcome by clever use of the panjandrum's authority. For example, the panjandrum might be able to gain an important clue about an evil cult by ordering the bodies of sacrificial victims exhumed or by demanding access to the city's tax rolls.

Like nobles, panjandrums are important people. Most NPCs in the panjandrum's home city hold a healthy respect for her authority and comply with her requests. Of course, a low-level panjandrum is a relatively minor officer or official, so NPCs with a lot of power and influence may not be so impressed.

**Quodethi Thief:** A thief is a handy character to have around in any kind of dungeon exploration, but the player playing a Quodethi thief doesn't want to just pick rusty old locks in monster-infested tombs—he wants to *steal* something. If the party includes a Quodethi thief, look for opportunities to present the players with an adventure that can be approached as a caper. In addition, adventures that feature rival guilds are another good way to highlight the story of the hero with this narrative.

**Sacred Slayer:** Assassins should have the opportunity to assassinate someone every now and then. Creating an adventure for the sacred slayer to single-handedly kill a target is not really feasible for a whole party of player characters, but you can certainly create challenges within an adventure best handled by

one stealthy character taking out a key villain or monster. For example, storming a merchant's stronghold without raising the alarm might require one character to get into position to take out a guard before he can strike a gong. You can also have the sacred slayer's superiors occasionally target key villains in an adventure the rest of the party already plans to undertake.

**Soothsayer:** Most of the mechanical benefits associated with this narrative are intended to be narrow and focused enough that the GM does not have to try to make specific predictions for the character. However, what if the soothsayer actually foresees a major event? There is no reason you can't give the player of the soothsayer a big prediction that may not come true until after many adventures. Seeing the signs that a catastrophe is drawing near and discovering ways to mitigate the effects will make the player feel like his character is truly a prophet. If the dream or vision is a riddle the character slowly puzzles out over time, even better. Take a look at some of the quatrains of Nostradamus for examples of how mysterious images or phrases might disguise the truth until the character learns enough to understand what he is seeing.

**Star-Lore Adept:** The attraction of the star-lore adept narrative is the opportunity to play a character who risks everything in the pursuit of knowledge and power. The easy way to highlight the adept's unique approach

to magic is to present the occasional adventure in which extraterrene or aberrant monsters play a big part. Even better, offer the character temptations to go too far from time to time. For example, the party might find a tablet written in the language of the mi-go that the adept can tell at a glance she should not read . . . but what secrets might it hold? The liberal use of the Madness rules described earlier in this chapter should be the norm in games featuring a star-lore adept.

**Tribal Outcast:** It's said that you can never go home again, and for the tribal outcast, that's true. The relationship with the tribe that he was cast out of is the most difficult and emotional the tribal outcast faces; naturally, a GM should bring it up from time to time to provide the character with the opportunity to confront it again. Adventures in which the party requires the aid of the tribe that turned their backs on the outcast are an obvious choice—but what about an adventure in which the outcast's former tribe is cast as the party's adversaries? Or an adventure in which some villain or monster threatens the outcast's estranged tribe? Is it even possible to make amends for the offense that led to the character's exile?

## FOLLOWERS

Many of the narratives presented in Chapter 2 provide the player character with the ability to recruit or call upon followers. Follower actions in the world are normally resolved through GM fiat. If the PC's elite company can defeat or drive off the beastmen marauders that attack the village the day after the PC leaves, then it does. When the PC returns, she finds that her company stopped the attack (and likely earns the gratitude of the villagers). The player character has no special ability to control follower actions—they simply try to follow whatever orders or instructions she provides.

Followers are inclined to be highly loyal to the player character, but they are not fanatics, and may argue against (or ignore) orders certain to result in death. If it's not clear whether followers would go along with an extremely dangerous or unpleasant task, present the player with an interaction encounter in which he attempts to convince the followers to do what he says. A Charisma/Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion check may be required if the player cannot muster a convincing argument.

You should assume that followers who are not currently in the presence of the player character are loyal, competent, and safe. If a player leaves a dozen guards behind to protect his character's palace in Quodeth, those guards (and the palace) should be there when the character returns.

**Replacing Followers:** Elite followers killed in action are replaced at the rate of 25 percent of the total force per month. For example, if a PC has a company with a normal total of 18 guards, losses can be replaced at the rate of 4 per month. Raiders are usually not replaced, since they gather for a specific short-term effort and

disperse again—the next time the PC summons raiders, a different mix of individuals responds. Hordes or armies that are in the field for a long time replenish their numbers at 5 percent of the total force per month, or 10 percent if the horde is in a location where losses can easily be made up.

**Follower Alignment:** Followers generally mirror the player character's alignment and attitude. If the PC is noble and courageous, he attracts followers who act likewise. If he is brutal and violent, he attracts brutes and malefactors. Followers who are badly used may quit; followers who leave after abusive treatment are replaced at the same rate as retinue members killed in action. In extreme cases, the entire force might abandon the hero. If this happens, the character must wait until he reaches the next experience level or one year passes before summoning followers again.

**Followers in Adventures:** In general, raiders and hordes consist of large numbers of low-level combatants. They can't help heroes deal with small numbers of challenging monsters. An elite company is more useful in a typical dungeon adventure, but it's better for the players to keep the number of NPC bodyguards to a minimum. In a typical dungeon exploration, encourage the player to find reasons to leave most of his entourage at the dungeon door. The more characters participating in a battle, the slower the game runs. A company is happy to protect the heroes' camp, watch over their mounts, and make sure no villains or monsters ambush the party when they return to the surface.

If the adventuring party is short-handed—say, three player characters or less—it's reasonable to let the players make up some of the shortfall by bringing a heavier contingent of their respective companies along. However, followers are significantly lower in level than the characters they serve. They may be completely overwhelmed by monsters that challenge heroes of the PCs' level, although drawing attacks that otherwise would be directed at a player character is always useful (if tough on the followers).

## INCOME

Finally, some narratives offer characters a regular stipend or income. Raw character wealth is not a direct measure of character power in Thule, as it is in other settings. The characters can't buy magic items (or commission them to be made) because magic is rare in this world.

Players may eventually wonder what they should do with a resource they accumulate but rarely spend; what's the point of having "50,000 gp" written down on the character sheet if it can't be turned into gear that is useful in battle? The short answer is that money—like followers—gives the player agency over a wider part of the world than whatever happens to be within reach of his sword. A wealthy character can buy influence, do favors for others, or invest in efforts he deems worthwhile.

## CAMPAIGN ARCS

Sword-and-sorcery adventures tend to be highly episodic, but there are certainly grander tales to tell in the world of Thule if you are so inclined. Three sample campaign arcs are presented here to provide narrative skeletons on which you can build more extensive campaigns. Each of these campaign arcs could be presented in as few as five or six adventures over just a few levels or play, or drawn out into recurring storylines by interspersing arc-focused adventures with other adventures unrelated to the developing story.

### THE IDOL OF DAOLOTH

Many strange secrets are hidden in the scrolls of Onther Tower, the royal library of Quodeth. When an old sage named Jyordon suddenly dies, his scribbled notes reveal that he was in the process of researching a powerful artifact called the Idol of Daoloth, purportedly capable of bending space and time. Long ago it was prized by prehuman worshipers of the vile god Tsathoggua, and may in fact be the key to summoning Tsathoggua to Earth—or a tool that could banish a being of similar power to the far corners of the universe.

Jyordon's studies suggest that the idol is buried in a deep chamber hidden beneath the volcanic Zinander Mountains. He discovered two tantalizing clues leading to the idol. First, Jyordon believed that the specific location of the idol's vault is recorded in the forgotten palace of the mad sorcerer Ix, while the key to the vault's door is hidden in a sunken temple of Tsathoggua in Bloodwater Swamp. Several powerful individuals in Quodeth learn of the sage's inquiries, and the race is on to unravel Jyordon's mysterious clues and retrieve the Idol of Daoloth.

In this campaign arc, the interested NPCs seek to hire the heroes to locate the chamber and recover the idol. The PCs drive the action by choosing which patron they wish to follow and choosing whether to hunt for the map or the key to the Vault of Daoloth. The other NPCs employ their own servants in a race to retrieve the map and key, or at least hinder the PCs along the way. The PCs must eventually recover both artifacts to find the temple, recover the idol, and decide its ultimate fate.

Instead of following a single thread, you are encouraged to let the players choose the course they wish to take throughout this campaign arc. It's up to the heroes to make friends or enemies, decide which courses of action to take, and choose what to do with the idol once they have it.

### THE PATRONS

Three potential employers (or enemies) learn of Jyordon's dangerous research shortly after the sage's death brings his studies to light. Each seeks the idol for different reasons, and reaches out to the PCs to hire them to find the idol. Use the heroes' choice of narratives or

patrons to determine which NPC approaches which hero—for example, a freebooter or a thief may be hired by Hiroom Jarth to do a job, while a noble or a soothsayer might be contacted by Phinnaeus Thex, who wishes their advice on a matter that puzzles him. When the PCs choose one of these patrons to follow, the other two hire rival groups to find the idol first.

**Phinnaeus Thex:** A collector of strange antiquities, Phinnaeus Thex is a middle son of a noble house. With no real political power but no real need for money, Phinnaeus has defined himself by his obsessions with extraterrene beings and his dark collection of relics and lore. Phinnaeus has a private museum in the chambers below his estate, and sometimes recreates ancient rituals of the Great Old Ones there. Some whisper that he has hired kidnappers to steal low-born orphans and beggars to fuel horrible rituals.

Through a messenger, Phinnaeus invites the PCs to his estate for a tour of his museum and a discussion of the lost relic. He was a secret sponsor of the sage Jyordon's researches, and received regular reports from the sage. Phinnaeus has spent his life buying people off, and assumes he can do so with the PCs as well, offering a rich purse for their efforts. He claims to want the Idol to keep it out of the wrong hands, but secretly wants to use it to summon a Great Old One.

If the PCs refuse Phinnaeus Thex, he hires a band of mercenaries and freebooters not all that different from the PC party to get the idol.

**Nephys:** Nephys is a necromancer who follows the dark teachings of Nyarlathotep (see Villains in Chapter 6). She quietly kept up on Jyordon's studies for years, since she is in the habit of spying on potential rivals. Despite her familiarity with Nyarlathotep, Nephys has no interest in summoning or banishing Great Old Ones—she believes the Idol of Daoloth holds the key to eternal life.

Nephys contacts the PCs through a twisted and horrible nightmare. She whispers of the secrets of the Great Old Ones buried in ancient vaults and tombs throughout the land, and tells them of a great danger now released. Through the dream she invites them to her home to discuss the artifact. Nephys is willing to part with a handful of magical artifacts from her vaults in exchange for the delivery of the idol.

If the PCs turn down Nephys, she creates or summons a band of powerful, free-willed undead to do her bidding and bring her the idol.

**The Second Knife:** Hiroom Jarth, the face of the Seven Knives, is also interested in the Idol of Daoloth (see the Seven Knives, later in this chapter). One of his thieves burgled Jyordon's notes and killed the old sage when he was caught in the act. Jarth had his magical advisor, the Auspex, decipher the notes. He now sees the idol as a tool for extortion and blackmail; Jarth knows the idol contains some dark and old power, but is willing to sell it, plant it, or buy a great favor from cultists of the Great Old Ones rather than use it himself.

Agents of the Seven Knives leave a parchment stuck to a table by a dagger nearby one of the sleeping PCs. The note instructs the PCs to meet one of Jarth's agents, who guides the PCs into the Knifehold where they meet with Hiroom Jarth. Jarth offers the PCs a large sum, a safehouse, and the favor of the Seven Knives if they acquire the idol and return it to him. If the PCs refuse, Jarth sends a trio of dangerous assassins to fetch him his prize.

## THE MAP AND THE KEY

Each of the three potential patrons gives the PCs clues about the two artifacts required to discover and open the Vault of Daoloth. The heroes set off to recover either the map from the Library of Ix, or the key from the Temple of Tsathoggua. One of the rival groups reaches the location at the same time and tries to beat the heroes to the item they're after.

After recovering the first item, the heroes can set their sights on the second locale they need to visit—but they discover that the second band competing with them has actually beaten them to the prize. To get the second part of the puzzle key, the PCs must confront the NPC who now holds it: Phinnaeus Thex in his palace, Nephys in her tower, or Hiroom Jarth in the Knifehold of the Seven Knives. (For a fun twist, the PCs might need to enlist the aid of the defeated rival to take on the villain in his or her stronghold.)

**The Library of Ix:** Hidden below a crumbling tower in the ruins of Hurhun, the sorcerer Ix built a library and filled it with forbidden artifacts and ancient dark lore. His obsession with the terrible texts of extraterrestrial beings drove Ix quite mad. Extremely paranoid, Ix built devastating magical traps and animated guardians to protect his library. Dimensional portals to the outer worlds drew in outsiders, who still lurk throughout the library. The twisted spirit of Ix haunts the library and protects its contents. The map showing the location of the Vault of Daoloth lies in the lower levels of the library, in a room full of dusty parchments.

**Temple of Tsathoggua:** Half-submerged in the festering swamps of Bloodwater lies the temple of this forgotten Great Old One. Now the lair of a tribe of beastmen (or serpentmen if you prefer a higher-level challenge), the temple still contains the key to the Vault of Daoloth, along with other artifacts. The key itself is an octagonal plate embossed with strange twisted glyphs, and lies in a chamber that serves as the lair of a Thulean dragon worshipped by the other inhabitants.

**The Knifehold:** This twisted maze of warehouses and sub-basements has dozens of entrances all over the city of Quodeth. It serves as the Seven Knives' hideout, and is filled with traps and guarded by a number of Seven Knives enforcers and cutthroats. Hiroom Jarth hides any artifacts his agents collect in the treasure vaults of this headquarters.



**Phinnaeus Thex's mansion:** The mansion of Phinnaeus Thex is split into two main sections. The upper three floors of the mansion contain elaborate audience halls, studies, bedrooms, kitchens, and other chambers. A hidden stairwell in Thex's private study leads to a secret warren of chambers and passages in the basements. Decorated in twisted and vile artwork, these chambers are protected by powerful explosive alchemy and animated undead.

**Nephys's Tower:** The Tower of Nephys is a place of mystery to most of Quodeth. Loyal and bloodthirsty guards protect the tower inside and out, while apprentice necromancers do Nephys's bidding. Nephys's audience hall takes up the first floor of the tower, while her private studies, libraries, and living quarters take up the upper floors. Rumors persist of horrible abominations kept in the chambers hidden below the tower.

## THE VAULT OF DAOLOTH

Once the PCs have captured both the map and the key, they can proceed to the Vault of Daoloth. It is an ancient temple complex of fantastic age, carved out of volcanic rock tens of thousands of years before humans even set foot in Thule. A massive (and heavily trapped) door of cold iron blocks the entrance to the vault, and can only be opened with the octagonal key.

Inside the vault are dozens of chambers, containing twisted statues and weird altars that finally explain the origin of the idol. Daoloth is not a place-name or high priest; it refers to a horrible elder being that is imprisoned within the vault, a servitor (or perhaps offspring) of Tsathoggua that was trapped in this place by ancient serpentman sorcerers. The presence of the artifact that bears its name provides planar portals and rifts through which many strange monsters have been drawn to entertain Daoloth, and drive off any intruders.

When the PCs have recovered the Idol (possibly defeating Daoloth in the process), they sense great and dark power held within it. Whether they choose to return it to the original hiring NPC, sell it to one of the other groups, destroy it, or keep it to themselves is up to them; ironically, the safest course is probably to give it to Nephys, the most overtly threatening of the three interested parties.

## GOD OF THE STONE SKULLS

The mist-blown lands of the Thousand Teeth are home to savage tribes and barbarian strongholds. This campaign arc tells the story of two such bands. The savages are the Stone Skulls, vicious raiders who survive by hunting, raiding, and pillaging. The tribe lurks in a barren wasteland, making their home in a great warren amid rocky hills. These savages are fiercely devoted to a dark power they call Thar-Aztagh, and the tribe's shaman holds great sway over the chief of the Stone Skulls.

The enemies of the Stone Skulls are the warlike Nimothans of Dragonhold, a lonely settlement far from anything resembling civilization. The ruler of Dragonhold is a fair-minded but fiery-tempered warlord named Jedzia the Red. Jedzia's lands are as peaceful as any in the Thousand Teeth, mainly due to her well-trained warriors. However, the Stone Skulls are growing in number and recklessness, and they present an ever-growing danger to Dragonhold. The savages have numbers and dark magic on their side; it is all Jedzia and her warriors can do to hold the Stone Skulls at bay.

## THRALLS OF THE STONE SKULLS

The Stone Skulls do not kill everyone they come across. They delight in keeping slaves and in forcing their slaves to do battle for their amusement. Slaves are kept in a closed section of caves beneath the tribe's warrens, dragged forth only when there is work to be done or to fight for their captors' entertainment. The PCs begin the campaign as recently captured captives in the Stone Skull slave pits.

The slave pits are an underground village. The heroes are free to explore the caves surrounding them, but there are no obvious ways out except through the warrens of the Stone Skulls. Functionally, the slave pits are like any rural village that a group of heroes might get their start in. There are vermin to deal with, caves to explore, thugs and bandits to fight, and so forth. But it is a brutal village, where the strong prey on the weak. With supplies limited, cliques and alliances have formed; gangs of bullies hoard whatever they can and fight over resources. The heroes will have to prove their strength to get by and learn to forage for themselves or gradually starve to death. Periodically, the PCs are dragged out of the slave pits to fight in the arena. They are often forced to fight and kill other slaves. Occasionally, they might be forced to fight dangerous monsters.

In the pits, the PCs meet a young, capable warrior named Jerrin. He reveals himself to be the son of Jedzia the Red. He has been a prisoner for a year, and his mother presumes he is dead. Jerrin is looking for allies and befriends the party. Like the PCs, he hungers for freedom, but he can offer something worth escaping to: Dragonhold. He helps the PCs to concoct an escape plan. If the party needs help finding their chance, an opportunity might present itself when a monster breaks free in the arena, or perhaps Jedzia's forces raid the Stone Skulls while the PCs are out of the warrens, providing a distraction. It is important that Jerrin either escape with the PCs or die trying.

Once the PCs escape, it should be simple enough for the PCs to find their way to Dragonhold and meet Jedzia. The warlord is grateful either for the return of her son or news of his fate. Always on the lookout for good fighters, Jedzia is quick to offer the PCs shelter, food, and other rewards. If the PCs are willing to serve her as private mercenaries, she promises to keep them quite comfortable.

## HEROES OF THE DRAGON HALL

Jedzia proves as good as her word. The heroes are given rooms in her hall, and she has plenty of use for their services. During this phase of the campaign arc, Jedzia acts as a patron to the party, and the PCs find themselves taking on the normal sorts of adventures mercenaries might take on when serving the lord of a small town. They deal with bandits and sea-raiders, protect Jedzia's supply caravans, plunder various locations for treasure, hunt dangerous beasts, and handle other problems in the area. Their efforts should be well rewarded, and they should be kept quite happy.

Unfortunately, Jedzia's concerns about the Stone Skulls drive her to an ever-sterner rule over Dragonhold. As time goes on, the fair but temperamental warlord grows into a tyrant. She demands more tribute from the villagers and hoards supplies for the coming war. She conscripts able-bodied men and women and pushes her soldiers harder than ever. She incites skirmishes with the savages, raiding their outer holds. The PCs should see a change in Jedzia over time, which is also reflected in the way the Dragonholders treat the PCs. Respect gives way to fear and resentment. Meanwhile, Jedzia begins to send the PCs on more missions against the Stone Skulls.

When the PCs return from one such mission, they find that Jedzia has a new advisor: A black-robed wizard named Yrd Raal. To counter the growing power of the Stone Skull shamans and the dark influence of Thar-Aztagh, the warlord has hired a wizard from Thran.

## THE SWORD OF THE STARS

The player characters may be suspicious of a mysterious new wizard who seems to have the ear of the Warlord of Dragonhold, but Yrd Raal's divinations soon provide an important new piece of information. The Thranish wizard discovers the location of a sword that, according to legend, once pierced Thar-Aztagh. The blade is in a distant, crumbling ruin; Jedzia tasks the PCs with retrieving it, hoping that it will serve as a powerful defense against the magic of the Stone Skull shamans.

The journey to the old ruin is long and fraught with peril. The PCs are shadowed by Stone Skulls, pursuing the same prize at the behest of their shaman. When the heroes reach the ruins and deal with the barbarians there, they discover the rusted blade still sharp, but otherwise unremarkable. But they make a more important discovery: Reliefs and carvings show that Thar-Aztagh—a demon lord from some hellish plane—was actually banished long ago by a hero who wielded the Sword of Stars. The Stone Skulls worship a shadow, but the Sword of Stars, stained by the demon lord's blood, now may hold the key to summoning Thar-Aztagh fully into the world. The PCs also discover the location of Thar-Aztagh's resting place, in the heart of the Stone Skull warrens.

The motives of Yrd Raal now become clear: The wizard wants to return the demon lord to life and command its power. The PCs could simply leave and seek distant horizons. But when Jedzia and Yrd Raal realize they are not coming back, the warlord sends her best hunters and soldiers to drag them back, along with the weapon she believes they have. Likewise, the Stone Skulls dog the heroes' steps, believing they have a weapon bathed in the blood of their god. The heroes face a difficult choice: Neither side should have the Sword of Stars, and they can't destroy or hide it for long.

The best answer is to use the Sword to complete the destruction of Thar-Aztagh. Unfortunately, time is not on their side. Enraged by the heroes' efforts to recover the Sword of Stars, the demon-lord's shaman has stirred the Stone Skulls into a final furious assault to sweep away Dragonhold before the sword can be brought to Jedzia. Dragonhold is on the brink of falling, but this creates an opportunity for the heroes. Many of the Stone Skull warriors who normally would bar the way to the demon-lord's temple are gone, and a small group might just be able to slip inside where a large force cannot. The PCs must confront the Stone Skull shaman and his elite guard, reach the temple of Thar-Aztagh, and use the Sword to complete the rite needed to banish the demon-god forever. Only then will they be free to choose their own path.

## SHADOW OF THE GREAT SERPENT

Set is an old god, older than any other among the Nine Powers commonly worshiped in the cities of Thule. Before humans ever set foot in Thule, serpentmen worshiped the Great Serpent in black temples hidden in the depths of Thule's jungles. For the most part, the serpentmen have remained hidden, keeping their alliance with the human priests of Set secret . . . but now Dyar Presk, the Prophet of Night, is ready to unleash a plan centuries in the making. The goal is nothing less than the subversion of the human kingdoms of Thule and the elevation of Set's faith to dominance over the entire continent.

## MASK OF NIGHT

The campaign opens when the Mithran priest Brother Arom quietly hires or recruits the heroes to investigate the death of an important vizier named Yendar Kol, a close advisor to the monarch of the city and an ally to the servants of Mithra. Yendar Kol was a vigorous man in his early forties and showed no signs of frail health before dying of a sudden illness. Brother Arom naturally suspects poisoning, especially since Yendar Kol was replaced by an ambitious young panjandrum named Xarvix. As far as anyone can tell, Xarvix's hands are clean—he



has been in the company of unimpeachable witnesses for weeks, and his path does not seem to have ever crossed Yendar Kol's. But Yendar Kol's chief guard, a Dhari swordsman named Harth, has gone missing. Brother Arom wants Harth found and questioned to determine whether he helped Xarvix to dispose of the vizier he served.

A careful investigation of Yendar Kol's household and some inquiry into Harth's comings and goings in recent months reveals something surprising: It seems he had recently taken up with a beautiful young merchant's daughter named Qarna Techar. When the heroes interview Qarna, she appears quite distraught and claims to be just as mystified and concerned as Brother Arom. She says that she was to meet Harth just a few nights ago in a garden on the outskirts of town for a midnight tryst, but he never showed up.

When the heroes investigate the garden, they find signs (such as an eyewitness or two) that suggest Harth was indeed at the garden, and left in the company of others. While there, the PCs are the target of an ambush by black-clad assassins. After defeating their assailants, the heroes discover the assassins are tattooed with the serpent emblem of Set. The PCs probably suspect Qarna of setting them up, but the young woman had nothing to do with it. Their best lead now is the black tattoo; when they search the

city for people who have seen a similar mark, they discover a hidden temple of Set in the slum quarter.

Infiltrating the hidden temple, the PCs discover that Harth did not willingly betray Yendar Kol. The hapless guard captain is currently a prisoner and is soon to be sacrificed. He was in fact compelled to assist in Yendar Kol's poisoning because the cultists of Set threatened to kill Qarna if he did not help them. The young vizier Xarvix is in the middle of the plot, and is secretly a high-ranking priest of Set's temple. He is singling out important nobles and key officials to suborn or replace in order to build up Set's influence among the city's rulers. If the heroes move fast, they can save Harth and catch Xarvix before he escapes.

## FANGS OF SET

Although the heroes have exposed the nefarious plots of a major nest of Set worshipers, their work is only beginning. The corruption is far more widespread than it seems to be at first; Xarvix is not the only city official involved in the plot. Shortly after their investigation of Xarvix's hidden cult, their contact Brother Arom is murdered by assassins. Pursuing the attackers, the PCs slay a number of them—at which point panjandrum appear with a large contingent of soldiers. The assassins the heroes have just cut down

include the sons and daughters of several important noble families, and the panjandrum was tipped off that the heroes were murdering highborn people. Cultists or not, that is frowned upon. The PCs must either fight their way free (becoming fugitives) or allow themselves to be arrested (and be thrown in jail).

If the PCs are imprisoned, they have the opportunity to mount a clever escape. If they avoid arrest at first, they have an exciting adventure in getting away from the forces searching for them. The next step is to find out who set them up for the murders of the nobles, which may involve infiltrating a civic palace or abducting a panjandrum from her country villa. From this effort the heroes find that a high panjandrum named Vard Shoum—one of the highest-ranking officials in the city, only a step removed from the throne—arranged the whole affair.

In the final adventure of the middle act of this campaign arc, the heroes confront Vard Shoum. His stronghold is protected by a menagerie of trained monsters and weird magical traps. When the PCs face the high panjandrum, they discover that he is actually a serpentman priest of Set masquerading as human, and that he is the true head of Set's cult in the campaign's home city. Worse yet, evidence in Vard Shoum's stronghold clearly shows that he was receiving his orders from Dyar Presk, a mysterious high priest who rules over the cult of Set from his base in Ikath.

## HEIR OF NESSK

Having unmasked the presence of serpentmen imposters in the highest circles of power, the heroes now turn their attention to uprooting the secret conspiracy of the serpentmen and defeating Dyar Presk. The high priest of Set has spies everywhere and an uncanny sense of self-preservation; when the heroes infiltrate his temple in Ikath, Dyar Presk flees to seek sanctuary in serpentman strongholds scattered throughout the jungles and swamps of Thule's wild interior. Tracking the elusive serpentman priest from lair to lair is challenging and involves the heroes in a tense race through the wildest and most dangerous parts of Thule. Eventually, Dyar Presk makes his stand in the ruins of Madraal Nessk, the ancient capital of the serpentman empire. There the heroes must confront Set's champion and prophet on earth, facing dark magic and ancient curses amid the mighty ruins. Defeating Presk ends the threat for now . . . but who else among the high and mighty of Thule is secretly a serpentman?

## CULTS AND SECRET SOCIETIES

Few organizations in Thule are truly continent-spanning in scope. The sinews of civilization are weak and thin in this primeval world; most people have a hard time finding reason to concern themselves with events outside the walls of their own city. Even the most ambitious warlords or meddlesome spymasters have a hard time keeping themselves informed of important happenings in other cities. As a result, most conspiracies and secret societies tend to be quite localized. Nevertheless, a few organizations have succeeded in establishing their influence across multiple city-states.

## THE BLACK CIRCLE

In most human cities, the practice of arcane magic is regarded as unwholesome at best. Fortunately, wizards (and other practitioners of the arcane arts) are loners who distrust others of their kind, believing that other mages desire to steal their magical secrets and treasures. Because no wizard trusts another, no great guilds or societies of mages arose in Thule for most of the island-continent's long history. Only in the last two centuries has such an organization come into existence: The Black Circle of Thran. The Black Circle is the only society of wizards to be found in all of Thule, and it grows in power with each passing year.

The Black Circle was founded by a Thranish wizard named Bayod Naz, who had become a powerful lord of that city through decades of magical study and the ambitious plundering of tombs, ruins, and forgotten towers throughout Thule. Unlike many other Thulean wizards, Bayod Naz had made a habit of training numerous apprentices. He was a hard master who frankly viewed his apprentices as disposable, and many did not survive their years in his service. Over a long lifetime, Bayod Naz accumulated thirty-three lesser wizards sworn to serve him.

As a powerful wizard, Bayod Naz soon came to stand beside the throne of the King of Thran, becoming a highly influential advisor. Unfortunately, the king's son (and presumptive heir) did not want to be a puppet for a vile old spellcaster, and he allied himself with the priests of Mithra to drive out Bayod Naz and his followers. The purge failed, and by the end of it all, the king and his son were dead, and the temple of Mithra was eaten down to bare stone by acidic fog. Bayod Naz took power and announced that Thran would henceforward be ruled as a magocracy by the Masters of the Black Circle.

Bayod Naz lingered to an exceedingly great age, finally dying at the age of 135, a full seventy years after taking over his city. Some say that he was in fact deposed and murdered by his own apprentices, each a mighty mage of great years. Whatever the truth, the Black Circle survived, and a new High Master was chosen.

## MASTERS OF THE CIRCLE

In theory, the Black Circle is a brotherhood of equals. Any who attain sufficient skill in the wizardly arts and demonstrate their abilities before the assembled Circle are welcomed, and accorded the title of Master of the Black Circle. Only the High Master holds any distinction of rank, and even then he holds power only with the consensus of the Masters beneath him—High Masters can be replaced. As a result, politicking and squabbles over influence between factions of Masters can be quite fierce at times.

While the important leaders of the Black Circle are of course wizards, the organization is actually far more extensive than the relatively small number of powerful spellcasters who wear the black mantle. First of all, most Masters have their own apprentices who serve as their errand-boys and agents. Beneath the Masters and their apprentices is an elite group of warriors known as the Black Guard, which includes skilled bodyguards and troop commanders as well as trained spies and assassins.

**High Master Nefron Vir:** The current High Master of the Black Circle is a skilled conjuror named Nefron Vir. The Masters of the Circle respect age and rarely elevate a young or even middle-aged wizard to the post of High Master; Nefron Vir is over 80 years of age, although magical treatments give him the energy and dark hair of a far younger man. Unbeknownst to his minions, Nefron Vir has come to believe that great changes are needed in Thran and the Circle itself; he is secretly plotting to kill thousands of undesirables in the city and to cement himself as absolute tyrant over the Circle. To that end the High Master is employing his most trusted agents to gather the lore and the materials needed for his most terrible conjuration of all.

**Master Yiliina Syrth:** One of the few female Masters, Yiliina is an ambitious young transmuter obsessed with the breeding and magical transformation of ever more repulsive monstrosities. Her tower is guarded by hybrid warriors that combine human, animal, and monstrous elements in unspeakable combinations. Yiliina dreams of leaving Thran behind to make herself queen of another city, and schemes constantly to bring nobles and panjandrums in distant cities under her control.

**Guard-Captain Tsammar:** The leader of the Black Guard, Tsammar is a towering Nimothan sell-sword who lost his left hand in battle long ago. The Masters replaced it with a gauntlet of magical iron, which Tsammar uses as both shield and bludgeon in battle. Tsammar is a highly active commander and often personally undertakes missions of importance to the High Master. He does not entirely trust Nefron Vir, but he trusts the rest of the Circle even less.

## ACTIVITIES

The early aspirations of the Black Circle were relatively modest: Seize control of the city of Thran and make a place for themselves where no wizard would be persecuted for studying the magical arts. This goal was accomplished long ago, but the first priority of the Black Circle is to cling to power and rule Thran with an iron fist. The fates of Thran and the Black Circle are now inseparable, so the Black Circle spends a good deal of time and effort looking after their city's interests. Black Circle agents spy on Thran's enemies and foment trouble for them, act to clear the way for Thranish trade by ruining competitors or establishing monopolies, and bring settlements and outposts under Thranish control. On behalf of the Masters, Black Circle agents seek to recover and hoard magical knowledge and treasures, even if they don't always understand why the Masters want what they want.

## THE BLACK CIRCLE IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The Masters of the Black Circle are villains through and through. They are tyrants who hold an entire city in thrall, and they actively meddle in the affairs of most cities nearby, seeking to weaken them with internal strife and bring to power leaders they can easily dominate. But these acts pale in comparison to the dark magic they routinely dabble in—necromancy, demon-summoning, extraterrene studies, and other reckless practices that are bound to lead to disaster. Black Circle agents (and the occasional Master) show up frequently in the heroes' adventures, seeking to steal magical treasures before the heroes can reach them and carrying out various plots to bribe, extort, or magically control important people in other cities.

## CRIMSON SLAVERS OF MARG

The city of Marg is notorious as the center of slave trafficking in Thule. Scores of slaving companies operate from behind its cruel walls, sending their marauders and warships out to fall on unsuspecting villages and carry off untold thousands of people into slavery. But of all the slave-lords and galley-captains based in Marg, none are as feared or as hated as the Crimson Slavers.

The Crimson Slavers are basically a sprawling merchant company that specializes in only one commodity: Slaves. The captains of raiding galleys and the chiefs of marauding bands of kidnappers serve as the slave-takers of the company, searching out their prey wherever they find it. Commanders of Crimson Slaver outposts and leaders of Crimson Slaver caravans see to the distribution network that transports the unfortunate abductees back to Marg, where Crimson



Slaver slave-trainers break the new captives to their duties and Crimson Slaver auctioneers sell them to buyers. Dozens of strongholds and outposts scattered throughout south and central Thule fly the red banner of the company, serving as bases from which the Crimson Slavers ply their evil trade.

Many individual ship captains or raid leaders hold influential positions within the organization, and in fact possess great discretion about how to manage their operations—the Crimson Slavers are in many ways a guild of captains and chiefs involved in the slave trade, as opposed to a monolithic company. The organization is led by a group of eleven wealthy captains and stronghold commanders known as the Crimson Council. The Council is a body of equals, and reaches its decisions through consensus.

The business of the Crimson Council is the protection of the slave trade and the efficient operation of the Crimson Slavers' trade. They have little interest in meddling with the affairs of other cities or secret plots to take over the world. However, the Crimson Council is very sensitive to any disruption in the slave trade—for example, a band of would-be heroes storming an outpost or liberating valuable merchandise from a slaver caravan. When confronted with such foes, the Council appoints one of the more warlike leaders within the organization to deal with the problem, hiring mercenaries or assassins as needed.

## THE CULT OF SET

The worship of Set, god of serpents and night, straddles the line between religion and cult in most parts of Thule. Set is considered a member of the pantheon worshiped by humans, and temples dedicated to the evil god stand proudly in cities such as Quodeth or Ikath. But at the same time, the followers of Set are engaged in a vast, widespread effort to bring all the peoples of Thule groveling before the altars of the Great Serpent. Like an iceberg, only a small part of the whole is visible . . . and the portion that is hidden is what one should be concerned about.

The Cult of Set is fantastically ancient. Set was originally a god of the serpentmen who ruled over Thule before the coming of humans. Early humans enslaved by the serpentmen were taught to grovel before the altars of Set. Even after the power of the serpent empires was broken in Thule, some humans continued to call Set their master.

Today, Set's worship remains strongest in the city of Ikath. There he is seen not just as a god of night or strife, but as something of a civic protector who favors Ikath above all other cities. Temples devoted to Set can also be found in Marg, Quodeth, Thran, and Akal-Amo.



## HIGH PRIESTS OF SET

The leaders of Set's cult are, naturally, high-ranking priests of Set. They are organized in a strict hierarchy based on the holiness of the specific titles they hold, and there is little mobility in the ranks of the leadership. All submit to the commands of the Prophet of Night, who speaks with the voice of Set in the mortal world.

**Navask Dhem, First Fang:** The secretive assassins known as the Fangs of Set are feared throughout Thule. The wizened old monk Navask Dhem is the First Fang of this brotherhood of assassins, the absolute lord and master of scores of fanatical killers. A mere whisper from the First Fang is sufficient to slay a high priest or great lord a thousand miles distant. Navask Dhem and his novice assassins make their lair in the Khishaaskal Monastery, a remote retreat deep in the jungles south of the Kalayan Sea.

**Keshira Kamar, High Priestess:** Leader of a growing cult hidden in Lomar, Keshira Kamar is a beautiful Lomari noble who is quietly working to establish Set's worship in the City of Triumphs. In the centuries since its founding, Lomar has not been fertile ground for the Cult of Set to grow in; the city's martial philosophy does not leave much room for despair or degradation in search of divine blessings. However, Keshira is an extremely able woman, and she has struck upon a stratagem that is yielding results: Stoking the ambitions and old resentments of the city's great families.

**Dyar Presk, Prophet of Night:** The highest-ranking priest of Set in all of Thule is the Prophet of Night, an abstemious, shaven-headed priest named Dyar Presk. He presides over the Grand Temple of the Eternal Serpent in Ikath, the holiest of all Set's temples. From this position, Dyar Presk subtly coordinates the efforts of Set's priests, assassins, warriors, and general adherents, welding the disparate congregations and chapters of Set cultists throughout the world into a single coherent body with a guiding vision. While Dyar Presk appears human enough, he is actually a serpentman of royal lineage. In his person the human and serpentman worshippers of Set are united.

## ACTIVITIES

The goal of Set's cult is to make the Great Serpent the foremost god in Thule. Set's worship is most popular among the wretched masses, people whose poverty and desperation are so great that they are easily lured with promises of better lives. Therefore, the priests of Set work tirelessly to undermine the social order, creating circumstances in which more and more people are without hope and shattering what little moral compass exists in Thulean society. As people become desperate or debased, the tenets of Set's worship look more and more appealing. To spread misery and hopelessness, Set's priests seek to corrupt city officials, take control of criminal guilds and organize their depredations, curry the favor (and whet the ambitions) of the rich, collect powerful magic, and above all ruin the temples of rival gods.

## THE CULT OF SET IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Priests of Set are villains of the worst sort. They seek nothing less than the subjugation of the entire human race to a dark and hateful power that will keep them in misery and ignorance forever. The true challenge of the Great Serpent is that it can be very difficult to strike openly against the followers of Set. A temple of Set in a large city has protectors—noble families, wealthy merchants, and corrupt officials, to name a few—who use their power and influence to severely punish anyone acting directly against the cult. The secret refuges and strongholds of the cult don't possess the same level of protection from powerful people, but they are of course *secret*, and hard to find. Worse yet, monsters such as serpentmen and summoned fiends guard Set's unholy places.

## FLAMES OF MNESEOS

Atlantis is gone, but there are those who fight to keep alive the memory of the great empire . . . and perhaps someday bring it back to life. The Flames of Mneseos is a secret society of Atlantean nobles and scholars who work to preserve the legacy of Atlantis and continue to fight for its values and aspirations, even though Atlantis itself is no more.

While this may sound like a benevolent enough goal—noble, even—the truth of the matter is not so harmless. The Flames are dedicated Atlantean supremacists who are contemptuous of the “lesser” races and states that have inherited the world after Atlantis. The membership is strictly limited to humans of pure-blooded Atlantean heritage; individuals with even one non-Atlantean grandparent are not welcome among the Keepers. The Flames are clever enough to employ non-Atlantean agents and minions, some of whom wield considerable authority over other low-ranking agents. However, these non-Atlantean lieutenants are never brought within the inner circle of the organization, or told of their true aims.

The Flames of Mneseos were founded in Katagia about a hundred years after the fall of Atlantis. The organization remains strongest in that city, and in fact many Katagian nobles are secretly members of the group. They are also present in Marg, Orech, Quodeth, and other places where Atlantean blood is well established. The group takes its name from Mneseos, who was reputed to be the wisest king of Atlantis and a powerful wizard. By long tradition, the most highborn member of the organization is the leader, as determined by genealogical ties to the royal family of Atlantis. This means that the senior member of the Ampheiros family in Katagia is the “Elder Flame”; at this time, that individual is Raethnon Ampheiros, an arrogant but devious man of middle years. Raethnon has no talent for magic, but he is very well studied on Atlantean science and technology, and owns a treasure vault full of potent Atlantean devices.

The Flames of Mneseos take a keen interest in any appearance of Atlantean magic or technology. They rarely act in person, but instead hire mercenaries and thieves to fetch items of interest—or remove individuals who prove better at finding Atlantean treasures than they are. The great goal toward which the Flames are working is nothing less than the return of Atlantis to the surface world, a feat of magic or science that would seem to be impossible. However, the Flames believe that a mysterious, long-lost Atlantean energy source might be able to bring about this miraculous event—quite possibly by sinking Thule to raise Atlantis.

## SERVANTS OF R'LYEH

Cults dedicated to the Great Old Ones are rare in Thule. Only the most desperate, foolish, or insane worshipers deliberately seek out the attention of such inimical powers. However, such people do exist, and the Great Old Ones sometimes respond . . . in their own time, and in their own way. Cults dedicated to Nyarlathotep and Hastur hold significant sway in the cities of Imystrahl and Orech, while some of the most savage and primitive barbarian tribes of the north revere Ithaqua, the Walker

## THE ANGRY DM: DEPRAVED OR MAD?

In Thule, most people are pretty rotten. Even the so-called “heroes” are callous. So how can you tell who the villains are? In a world where everyone is a shade of gray, the villains need to be as black as the void between the stars. Remember two words: depravity and madness.

Depraved villains want what they want and they are willing to steal, maim, hurt, or kill to get it. They aren't sympathetic. They don't think they are doing good. Ulfa, the God-King, did not make a deal with Shuznugurug because he wants to save his kingdom from a greater threat. Ulfa wants power and he is willing to crush his opposition with eldritch horrors to get it.

Mad villains are so crazy that their actions either make no sense or are completely without perspective. Their brains were broken, possibly by trafficking in secrets no man or woman was meant to know. Hedzia the Sorceress blasted her husband into salsa because he asked her if she wanted honey in her tea; obviously, her real husband would know that already. Hedzia knows that *can only* mean he was replaced by the shapeshifting monstrosities that dwell between worlds.

Cults and organizations can be depraved or mad as well. Depraved cults seek selfish ends through terrible means, and their members expect to get something from their service. Mad cults are incomprehensible and the members have either been duped, have gone mad themselves, or are depraved enough to follow along in return for some hoped-for reward.

Ultimately, villains in Thule are irredeemable monsters. Either they have no remorse at all, or they can't comprehend what they have done clearly enough to feel remorse. The only option is to destroy them.

on the Wind. But of all the cultists who worship Great Old Ones, none are more widespread in Thule, or more dangerous, than the Servants of R'lyeh.

As one might guess from their name, the Servants are followers of Great Cthulhu. Many of the uninitiated masses drawn to the cult are not entirely aware of Cthulhu's true nature and know him as "the Dreaming God," or "the One Who Waits." They believe that his return will begin a golden age in which many old wrongs are redressed and the true believers will be raised up to live in splendor and ease. The sect known as the Broken Gate in the slums of Quodeth is an excellent example of just this sort of cult; the priests of the Broken Gate preach among the beggars, slaves, and impoverished laborers of the Sark, promising a day of glory. Similar cults exist in most of the port cities of Thule, including Katagia, Marg, and Akal-Amo.

Those who become embroiled in Cthulhu cults gain little from the experience at first. But as they participate in more rituals and are initiated into deeper mysteries, they begin to hear the whispers of the Great Old One in their minds. Visions of apocalyptic destruction slowly drive these unfortunate souls mad. They abandon their families and their work . . . and, in time, their humanity, as they are drawn to join with the Deep Ones, monstrous humanoid dwellers in the seas, who sometimes interbreed with human populations.

While the various cells and chapters of Cthulhu's cult share similar goals and beliefs, the land-bound temples are not the actual organization. The unifying force of the Servants of R'lyeh is the priesthood of Deep Ones. Each human temple dedicated to Cthulhu stands near the sea, or has some other means of access that allows the Deep Ones to come and go, communicating their desires to the human priests and aiding them in growing Cthulhu's cult.

## THE SEVEN KNIVES

The Seven Knives thieves' guild is the most powerful criminal network in the city of Quodeth. Led by seven elusive leaders, the Knives engage in all forms of criminal activity, including piracy, burglary, extortion, drugs, poisons, protection, and assassination. While they are naturally at their strongest in Quodeth, the reach of the Seven Knives extends to distant cities and far ports.

The origins of the Seven Knives can be found in the earliest feuds and wars that transformed Quodeth into the city it is today. Built from an alliance of smaller guilds, the Seven Knives guild formed over two centuries ago during the reign of the Paland dynasty. During this time, dozens of small thieves' guilds spread chaos and bloodshed across the streets of the city. It wasn't until seven leaders of smaller guilds joined together that criminal activity became motivated by profits rather than death. Together, these seven combined guilds destroyed the largest thieves' guild of the time and seized power.

## THE KNIVES

For two centuries, seven leaders have led the Seven Knives, each named after their position in the guild. Usually, the identities of all but one or two of these leaders remains a secret. Some pose as merchants, some belong to the nobility, and others arise within the military leadership. They work through trusted couriers and mediators who maintain their anonymity while still providing the direction and influence required to keep the organization moving.

Each leader, beginning with the First Knife, stands above the later-numbered leaders. The flow of money and influence into the whole guild determines the level of these positions. The more money and influence one has, the higher their station within the network. It is uncommon for changes in station to occur among the Seven Knives, but dwindling profits or internal assassinations sometimes force changes. Each of the Seven Knives lives as he or she sees fit. The Third Knife, thought to be a mistress of slavery and prostitution, lives a lavish lifestyle, surrounded by the beautiful and powerful. The First Knife, on the other hand, is thought to live invisibly among the populace, spending most of his days as an ordinary shopkeeper or artisan. Only the Second Knife, Hiroom Jarth, makes his identity publicly known, acting as the guild's primary figurehead.

Infighting among the Seven isn't unheard of, but the guild generally prefers profits to power struggles. Each of the Knives recognizes that any internal power struggles may threaten the entire organization. When open war has occurred among the Seven (an event that hasn't taken place for decades), the results are widespread and bloody. Few people in Quodeth remain untouched by such an event.

**The First Knife, Abdal the Viper:** The oldest living member of the Seven Knives, Abdal the Viper is a half-elf who can remember the days when the Knives were nothing but a loose alliance of cutthroats and second-story thieves. Those few outsiders who meet Abdal find a kind old man running a small shop on an unremarkable street, selling tiny wood carvings. Abdal works through a handful of trusted couriers and agents who meet with him and pass on his word to the rest of the guild. He is, of course, unimaginably rich, but none can say where he keeps his wealth. Instead, the First Knife seems content to run his small shop and pull the strings of commoner and noble alike in Quodeth.

**The Second Knife, Hiroom Jarth:** While the First Knife lives modestly, the Second Knife loves luxury and extravagance in all things. The immensely fat Hiroom Jarth spends his days in an underground palace, surrounded by capable guards who are among the best mercenaries in Quodeth. Though soft of body, his mind is as keen as any in the city of Quodeth. Hiroom Jarth has held his position for decades, overseeing protection rackets that have filled the vaults of the Knives with vast fortunes. It is said for every ten coins that trade hands in Quodeth, Hiroom takes two.

As the representative voice of the guild, Hiroom speaks with authority over the five leaders of the Knives below him. He appears to enjoy the complete trust of the First Knife. Should outsiders be granted an unlikely audience with the Knives, it is Hiroom they will see.

**The Sixth Knife, Krisel Blackmoon:** Known among her crew as the Pirate Queen, Krisel Blackmoon acts as the liaison between the Seven Knives and the pirate lords who feed upon the shipments heading in and out of Quodeth. Though very few know of her true position as the Sixth Knife, many are aware of the many connections she seems to have within the city. Problems with the local authorities seem to vanish in front of her, and competing pirates suddenly find themselves at the wrong end of a poisoned knife.

## ACTIVITIES

Each of the Knives operates independently from the others, maintaining their own networks of informants, negotiators, thieves, assassins, and enforcers. Each member, however, pays both a percentage and a fixed weekly fee to the next highest member of the guild. The amount of these profits directly influences their station among the Seven, and an inability to pay the weekly fee can quickly end their tenure in the organization.

The plans and network of the Seven Knives extend from the Peacock Throne itself down into the gutters and rat-infested canals of the lowest quarters in Quodeth. Their operations include the bribery and extortion of the nobility and city officials, the piracy and smuggling of goods, murder and assassinations at all stations throughout the city, protection and vandalism, poisons and illegal alchemy, and dealings in slave trade and prostitution. While the faces behind the Seven Knives leadership remain hidden, their vast network expands throughout the city.

## USING THE KNIVES IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The PCs may encounter the Knives in many different ways in your campaign. The Knives can act as allies, competitors, enemies, or all three. Street enforcers, gang members, and assassins loyal to the Seven Knives provide a horde of villains for your PCs to cut through in the city streets of Quodeth, while the leaders of the Knives provide smart and well-prepared adversaries. Thwarting the Knives in their business or getting in the way of their plans can be a lethal mistake; adventurers who find themselves in a feud with the Seven Knives soon learn that the price of peace is not cheap in either gold or blood.

In addition to facing the Knives as foes, heroes may find themselves as allies or hirelings of the Seven Knives. The thieves often hire wandering sellswords and freebooters for a number of different potential jobs—some legitimate, some questionable, and some highly illegal.

## KNOWN DUNGEONS OF THULE

No one has ever made a full accounting of every crypt, ruin, tower, or vault scattered across Thule. Many are lost to the knowledge of humankind, buried beneath the foundations of great cities or lying forgotten in distant jungle vales. This is a small sample of the better-known sites adventurers in Thule might someday seek out.

**Agda Jand:** On the northern shores of the Kalayan Sea stands a long-abandoned temple-city known as Agda Jand. Thousands of years ago, this was the center of a great rakshasa empire, but Agda Jand was razed by the armies of the old elven kingdoms and its masters put to the sword. The place is still haunted by summoned fiends held in place by ancient rakshasa spells, and few dare to venture within its walls despite the rumors of vast treasure hidden inside.

**Alhaingalar:** Of old, Alhaingalar was a city of fell and decadent sorcery where flowers were highly prized and grew in rich abundance on every wall and roof. Its citizens used spells to curb the winds, snows, and the cold, and were so wealthy that none wanted for food or comforts. This proud city flourished for centuries—but fell at last, as all proud cities do, when some of its citizens dabbled in magic that summoned marauding beasts that fed on man and magic. None could vanquish these predators in that city of effete spell-dabblers, and the creatures overran the city, devouring all who could not flee in time. The untended flowers soon choked and covered the city as monsters prowled its abandoned ways, and it became forgotten to all save the tellers of wild tales. The slender-spired buildings of Alhaingalar are crumbling ruins, but still hold magic and riches galore . . . as well as monsters that rend and devour all visitors.

**Anibhuraal:** This sunken city lies in shoal waters a day's sail from the Ghan Peninsula in the Kalayan Sea. Many of the spires and ziggurats break the surface of the water. The architecture of the city is distinctly nonhuman, and some scholars who have visited the place suggest that it was a settlement or outpost of an extraterrene race such as elder things or mi-go, destroyed in a war with some other alien race.

**The Blood Pit:** A few hours' journey from Quodeth, in the rocky escarpments overlooking the Atlantean Ocean, a secret staircase built into the side of a cliff above the crashing waves leads to a small cavern complex frequently used by smugglers to stow cargo or lay low. But a darker secret lies deeper in the rock. A massive stone door, usually barred from the inside, blocks the passage to an ancient temple complex, complete with adherents' chambers, storerooms, and a massive chamber dominated by an ornate altar at the edge of a large pit, filled with a giant pool of red ichor—the blood of countless sacrifices collected by cultists in an effort to appease or raise an elder horror.

## CULT LAIR



**Caetirym:** An abandoned town on the island of Ry Mar in the middle of the Kalayan Sea, Caetirym is overrun by hordes of ghouls or zombies that rise from their crypts on moonless nights. According to tales, Caetirym was once a prosperous town of Atlantean merchants and mages who fell victim to some dire curse hundreds of years ago. The curse transformed these unfortunate folk into the monsters that shamble through the ruins today.

**Catacombs of Anir'etak:** The rubble above belies the greatness of what was once the temple complex of Anir'etak. A massive gold-topped pyramid, long since lost to plunder and destruction, once looked out over the Atlantean Ocean, a beacon and promise for Atlantean immigrants—and a center of worship for the cult of Nyarlathotep. Now all that remains are piles of stone in the vague outline of the buildings that once rose atop the seaward cliffs, and the catacombs below, where the former residents occasionally stir. The dead were supposedly buried with their wealth, but no one who has set out to claim it has returned. Anir'etak has become a holy site of sorts for Nyarlathotep's cultists.

**Eusliv Tower:** Three days' march southward from the western wall of the glacier Kang stands a mysterious watchtower of ancient elven construction. Said to be a forgotten outpost of the lost realm of Sersidyen, the

Tower of Eusliv is home to a trio of beautiful, alluring, and seemingly ageless women: Piinia and her daughters Kroya and Suya. The three are powerful enchantresses who greet most visitors with lavish hospitality, inveigling guests with their beauty, kindness, and subtle nets of enchantment. Adventurers trapped by their spells and manipulation are enslaved and condemned to defend the tower or sent across Thule on dangerous errands at the trio's pleasure. Those who fight off the wiles of Piinia, Kroya, and Suya discover a different side to the mistresses of Eusliv Tower: They are powerful succubi who react to rejection with white-hot fury.

**The Fleeting Tower:** Scouts familiar with the perimeter of the dark jungle of Dhar Mesh know the legends of the Fleeting Tower. It appears as a watchtower, on a ridge just a little bit farther into the jungle, with a single high window. At the window is a maiden, or a young girl, or a warrior queen, or a decrepit crone—always different, but always female. Those who try to approach the tower do not find it when they emerge from the jungle at its location, as if the tower vanished. But some have reported that upon reaching the tower's location, they did see the tower, but on a different ridge, just a little bit farther into the jungle.

**Ghostkeep:** Amid verdant farmlands not far from the ruins of Hurhun stands a lonely, crumbling stone

tower. The place was once home to a local lord who held sway over surrounding lands by brawn and sword until a traveling peddler brought with him the malady known as the Creeping Plague—so named because it reduces its victims to crawling and finally to creeping slowly on all fours. The disease claimed the lives of the lord and all his household and army. Their ghosts now drift malevolently through the tower and its dungeon levels, clad in crumbling armor and wielding rusting weapons; their hatred for the living goads them to slay all who intrude into the keep. They all became ghosts, legends whisper, because of a great pulsing gem the lord unearthed in his adventuring days, so strong in its life-force that it keeps the dead from resting and heals the living, even the most sorely-wounded. Many priests, mercenaries, and rulers covet this Gem of Life, and have hired and sent scores of adventurers into Ghostkeep. None have ever returned.

**Gyar Gunn Vodd:** The ice fields of the glacier Kang hide the terrible and forbidding ruins of Gyar Gunn Vodd, a city built by giants long ago. The ruins are awesome in their proportions, with stair steps fully three feet high and doorways twenty feet tall, but they are so badly weathered that little other evidence of the creatures who lived here once—frost giants, cyclopes, or perhaps even the horrible gugs—remains. Great wells in the ruins lead down to vast vaults beneath Gyar Gunn Vodd.

**Helgard Tower:** Stories are still told of the Nimothan adventurer Brand Helgard, a legendary dragon-slayer. Not only did Brand slay dragons, he and the band he led captured, tamed, and rode dragons, winging the skies over many lands. With their aid, Helgard killed a cruel lord and seized that ruler's abode—a huge, stern, square tower of black stone—to be his own fortress. From there he and his warriors fared far over many lands, hunting other dragons and seizing the hoards of those he destroyed. Legends say he finally met a dragon that vanquished him, for sixty years ago Brand Helgard vanished from the earth and has never been seen since. What is known for certain is that Helgard's band of adventurers are all dead, their gnawed bones littering Helgard Tower, and that a dragon and its young now lurk in the fortress that once belonged to the dragon-slayer.

**Hurhun:** A little more than a century ago, the large human city of Hurhun was sacked and burned by the armies of Lomar after a long and bitter war. Its people were dragged off into slavery or driven into exile in the Lands of the Long Shadow. Much of the city has been thoroughly looted several times over, but stories still persist of vaults the Lomari overlooked, as well as famous jewels or noteworthy artifacts that were lost in the last days of the city. Hurhun remains abandoned to this day, although bands of brutal outlaws lurk among the ruins. The bolder ones use Hurhun as a base and raid widely throughout the eastern Kalayan, or ally themselves

with corsairs or slavers from other cities. However, the outlaws are not the only danger in Hurhun—terrible monsters such as chimeras, harpies, and manticores lurk in some of the ruins, either drawn by the destruction or perhaps freed from some forgotten menagerie.

**The Impossible Obelisk:** High on the slopes of the Starcrown Mountains, where the snows never melt and the rocks take on a strange purple hue, a towering obelisk stretches from deep below the ground to impressive heights. Its exterior is disturbingly smooth to touch and is carved from an unknown material; seams, tool marks, and even edges are hard to define. The obelisk itself would be remarkable, but it also seems to exert a pernicious effect on the land nearby. The structure appears to radiate a souring aura, rapidly spoiling organic matter if it's already dead. Venturing too close to the obelisk can swiftly foul an entire pack of provisions. In living creatures, this unwholesome aura triggers disturbing dreams and violent urges, causing mental distress rather than physical harm (although the latter often becomes a result of the former).

Most peculiar of all are the tales of great mysteries hidden within the obelisk. Some travelers claim that they have approached the titanic structure and found an archway at the base of its east-facing side. The contents of the obelisk differ depending on the teller of the story: Weapons of great might, scrolls of horrific portent, or even the key to immortality are said to be hidden within.

The dungeons beneath the obelisk are home to a strange nonhuman sorcerer known as Tessali the Mind-Mage. Tessali's origins are unknown, as are its connections to the building of the ancient structure, but the sorcerer has certainly inhabited the location for longer than any record can contradict. Tessali is said to welcome some visitors and enthrall others, occasionally seeking exchanges of eldritch power and knowledge. Undoubtedly malevolent, yet occasionally reasonable, Tessali is almost as mysterious as the edifice in which it dwells.

**Khoori Vaults:** Located in the jungle-covered foothills of the Starcrown Mountains, this great cave system consists of a series of colossal chambers, some hundreds of feet wide and high enough to enclose a mighty tower. Ancient stone steps follow the course of the subterranean river that carved out these vast caves eons ago, and terrible carvings on some of the more prominent walls depict strange, wormlike beings with tentacles nimble enough to hold tools and weapons. Although no other sign of these monstrous creatures has ever been found, the Vaults of Khoori are so large that a weird (and dangerous) subterranean ecology has developed here, with pale, blind beasts and giant vermin hunting each other in the dark. The deepest of the vaults holds a titanic pit with a ramp-like ledge spiraling down into unfathomable depths, but no explorer has descended into that pit and returned to



tell the tale. Some speculate that one of the Great Old Ones slumbers below.

**Madraal Nessk:** This sprawling ruin lies in the jungles of the Othnan peninsula. Madraal Nessk was the capital of the serpentman empire of Nessk, which was defeated thousands of years ago by the elves and humans who invaded Thule in the twilight of the serpentmen. In the vaults beneath the city, the serpentmen carried out abominable experiments in breeding and mutation, creating horrible monsters to repel their enemies. Some of these horrors survived the last battles, and their descendants still linger in the black pits beneath jungle-covered ziggurats. Worse yet, hordes of vile troglodytes—once the servants of the serpentmen—are known to infest the ruins.

**Mount Niith:** A black, fortress-like maze of rock and ice near the heart of the glacier Kang, Mount Niith is illuminated by eerie auroras in the winter months. Sprawling ruins and ramparts made from gigantic stone blocks stand high on the mountain's slopes, haunted by unearthly monsters.

**Narvondrast:** In northeast Thule lies the abandoned realm of Lendosk, now frozen in the icy depths of Kang, the Pale Death. Some of Lendosk's towns and castles can still be seen within the translucent ice, which appears to have preserved them rather than crushed them into rubble. Narvondrast is the largest

and best-known of these strange ruins, a whole town imprisoned in ice. Many of its people can be seen in the streets and houses, seemingly flash-frozen even as they attempted to flee the glacier's supernatural malice. Narvondrast was the capital of Lendosk, a prosperous town once famed for its gold fields and gemstone markets, and many people speculate that its rich treasures still wait for the adventurers bold enough to tunnel through forty feet of ice to the town below.

**Obsidian Ziggurat:** After the fall of Nessk, a serpentman high priest turned its back on Set and led its followers in search of a new patron. The apostate's search led it to an ancient and terrible temple: the Obsidian Ziggurat, a crumbling edifice hidden in a deep cleft of Mount Garat. A long-forgotten race of toadlike troglodytes raised the crude temple to house an idol of Tsathoggua; the fallen priest and its serpentmen pledged themselves to the Sleeping God. In the centuries since, the serpentmen have degenerated into vile, squamous savages, stealing forth every new moon to find new offerings for their dark idol. But now the idol stirs in its sleep, and the hour of its awakening draws near.

**Sarabhad:** Beneath the waters of a long, narrow lake in the highlands east of Marg lies Sarabhad, once a lively, lawless trading town where two caravan

routes met. It was drowned one night when a nearby cliff collapsed, freeing water to cascade down in a rushing flood that buried or swept away horses, fences, tents, stalls, and encamped travelers. In the morning, when the muddy waters of a new lake lay roiling where a trading town had been, the cellars of Sarabhad, the walls of the sturdiest buildings above them, and the foundations of buildings that had collapsed all lay in the shallow depths.

Sarabhad had been a trading center for silk, gems, and precious metals. Its foremost merchants were fabulously wealthy; any who visited could see that they often produced large amounts of gold in a trice to buy valuable cargoes, and that they lived well, drinking prodigious amounts of wine and dressing in the finest garments. Most of those luxuries are still submerged amid the swirling silt of Sarabhad . . . but now they are guarded by strange aquatic monsters summoned and bred by a cowed figure known only as the Drowned Lord.

From time to time, the Drowned Lord sends wet, slithering tentacled creatures up out of the depths to raid surrounding farms by night and slaughter anyone who dares to camp on the shores of the lake.

**The Silent Courts of Droum:** A sprawling necropolis located beneath the city of Droum, the Silent Courts consist of vast ossuaries where thousands of people were entombed. The Courts are now overrun by great numbers of ghouls that seem to act with more intelligence and purpose than ghouls are supposed to display. A creature known as Zuur, the Ghoul King, is said to be responsible, but no one knows who or what Zuur may really be.

**The Spire of Zahra'anok:** In the barren tundra beneath the long shadow of the glaciers' inexorable advance, a jagged dagger of volcanic rock rises out of the hard-packed ground at the ice's edge. This mountain-sized blade cuts into the encroaching glacier, forcing the ice to flow to either side of the narrow peak. The rocky spire is criss-crossed with interconnected lava tubes, some accessible at its base, and some from atop the icy glacier. Additional tunnels extend into the ice of the glacier itself, carved by the insane servants of the Mistress of Kang, a polar eidolon whose heart has been split upon the edge of Zahra'anok. Her minions scour the surrounding lands for captives that may be sacrificed to stave off the destruction of the Mistress's heart.

**Tower of Viondor:** The hidden stronghold of a long-dead Atlantean wizard, the Tower of Viondor stands among icy mountains in the coasts of frozen Nimoth. The tower is said to hold many Atlantean relics, but it is guarded by armored automatons animated by the magic of the tower's long-dead builder.

**Vashana's Crypt:** Under the vast sea of grass that is the Jandar Plain lies the crypt of Vashana, the first queen of Kal Keor the Terrible. Vashana was a priestess of Asura from Katagia. She met Kal when she ventured into the wilds on a quest to recover a relic

stolen from her temple—the gem called *Dawnbringer*, a diamond with magical healing powers. Vashana convinced the young chief and his men to help her. The two set off in pursuit of the thieves, agents of a prince of Thran, and recovered the gem. In the process they fell in love, and they earned the hatred of the prince of Thran.

Kal Keor married Vashana, and they had a son, Kal Menna. When the boy was only thirteen, the prince of Thran struck back. He hired foul sorcerers to afflict Vashana with a curse of undeath; Kal was forced to destroy Vashana to save himself and his son. So great was his grief that, for the rest of his life, to speak her name in Kal's presence meant death. In his rage, Kal united the tribes, conquered Thran, and made war against all the civilized people of Thule. And he had a secret crypt built to house Vashana, since the curse meant that she rose again and again, driven to attack him.

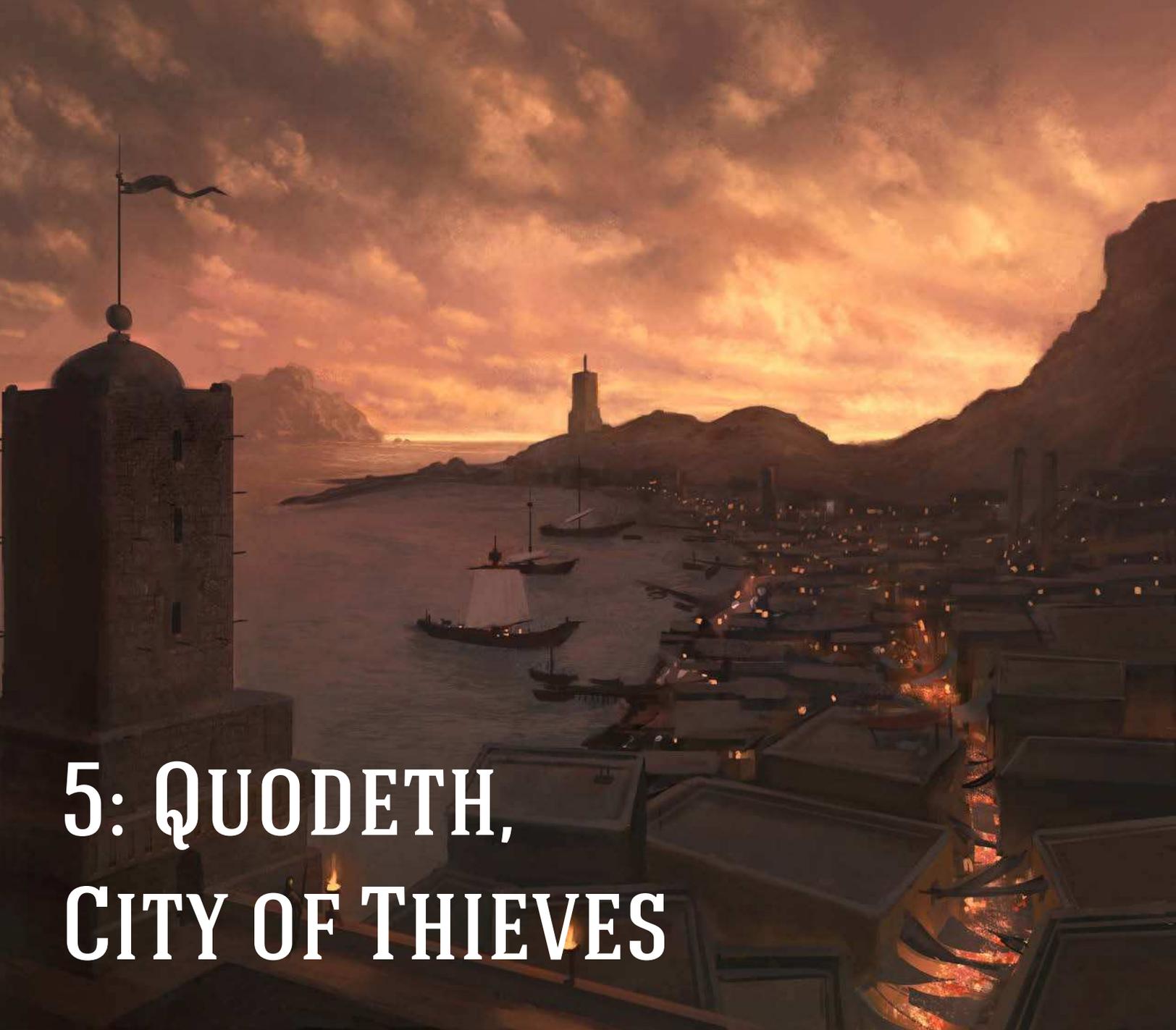
To this day, Vashana sleeps restlessly, held in check only by the fading forbiddances and ancient prayers the clerics of Asura devised to bring peace to the conqueror's dead queen. Acolytes of the temple in Katagia are granted free passage to the Cairn of Kal Keor each year to renew the prayers, where they are shown the secret way to Vashana's tomb by the ghost of Kal Keor. But callous adventurers have tried to find and loot the crypt over the years, unmoved by tales of old curses and tragic loves.

**Yezeghar:** A volcanic island in the eastern portion of the Kalayan Sea, Yezeghar is easily recognized by the sheer sea-cliffs ringing its jungle interior and the plume of smoke rising from its restless volcano. Landings here are very difficult, and there are only a couple of tiny coves where a boat can put in. Yezeghar is home to a bloodthirsty cult that worships a creature known as Lorthnu'un of the Golden Chalice—a Great Old One that slumbers somewhere in the volcanic depths below.

## JEWELRY OF THE DEAD

Many of the dungeons of Thule are places of burial where important people lie entombed. These individuals are often interred with jewelry of great value so that the gods will know their station and deeds when they pass into the afterlife. It may not be entirely honorable to steal funereal jewelry, but it can be rewarding.

Royalty, nobility, and high priests are often adorned with pectorals—jointed throat and breast pendants made from polished shells, lacquered wood, or metal plates, linked with fine chains. Barbarian and monster chieftains are often found wearing torcs. These thick neck-rings of gold or silver are usually chased in spiral designs, or shaped to resemble snakes or dragons entwined about the wearer's neck. Bracers, sometimes with matching bands for the upper arms, are common for anyone who was a warrior in life.



# 5: QUODETH, CITY OF THIEVES

*Largest and richest of the cities of Thule, Quodeth is known by many names: City of Merchants, City of a Hundred Bridges, City of Beggars, City of a Thousand Sails, the Peacock City, City of Golden Morning, or simply the Gateway to Thule. All of these names are deserved in their own way, even if some require a little poetic license and others are given in irony. Quodeth is a place of lavish opulence and crushing poverty, jeweled towers and sprawling slums. No other city in Thule bustles with such commerce and industry; gold is the very life's blood of Quodeth. But wherever gold flows freely, so too do crime and corruption, and this truth is the origin of the most famous sobriquet for Quodeth: The City of Thieves.*

**Q**uodeth's great wealth begins with its advantageous location. The city stands on the shores of Sarvin Bay, where the mighty River Quosa meets the sea. This alone would make Quodeth an important port on the Atlantean Ocean, since wide harbors are somewhat rare along Thule's mountainous coasts. Wide and deep, the Quosa in turn flows eighty miles to the Bay of Daggers in the eastern end of the Kalayan Sea, the great inland sea that commands the continent's interior. From Quodeth, galleys can sail to Lomar, Droum, or even distant Ikath on the edge of Dhar Mesh—and ships from those cities can reach the open waters of the ocean by following the Quosa down to Quodeth.

## LIFE IN QUODETH

The people of Quodeth are known throughout Thule as Quodethi. They are the largest and most numerous nation or tribe among the Kalay peoples. They are not tall, and have dark hair, dark eyes, and a deep bronze or honey-colored complexion. They are generally regarded as worldly, hardworking, and given to flowery speech and exaggerated politeness, frequently using turns of phrase such as, "Your humble servant begs . . ." or "This one has heard . . ." instead of "I want" or "I heard." When irritated, Quodethi can veil vicious barbs in the guise of polite phrases. Among the noble class, this cloaked repartee is elevated to an art form.

As one might expect, Kalays make up the vast majority of the city's population. However, the city's status as a bustling market for trade from many distant realms means that quite a large number of foreigners wind up living in Quodeth. Many Nimothans settled in Quodeth over the last few decades as they slowly abandoned their homeland to the encroaching ice. A small number of Dhari also live here now, the descendants of men and women brought to Quodeth as slaves or mercenaries over the generations. There are even a few dwarves of Kal-Zinan or elves of Imystrahl to be found in Quodeth's streets, carrying on with the business of the city—trade and commerce in all its myriad forms.

## HISTORY

The history of Quodeth begins much earlier than most of its people suspect. The first city to stand on this spot was a nameless jumble of leering monoliths and blasphemous temples, home to a race of frog-like creatures—Deep Ones, perhaps, or some sort of amphibian troglodytes. A terrible convulsion of the earth threw down this forgotten city ages ago, drowning most of the ruins beneath the waters of Sarvin Bay. Thousands of years after the nameless city was drowned, but still thousands of years before humans came to Thule, the serpentmen of Nessk raised a citadel here to guard the mouth of the Quosa. This sprawling stronghold was named Bhnaal Pruth, and it stood

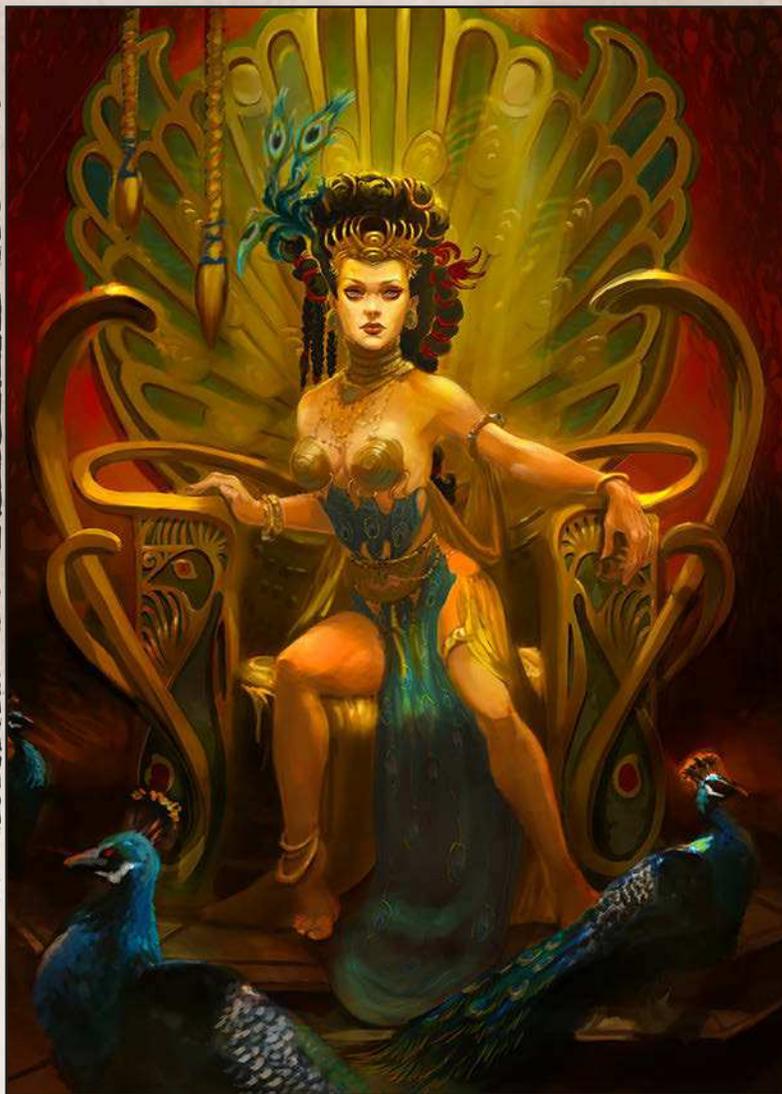
for many long centuries until the elves of Imystrahl (a young and vigorous people in that day) laid siege to the place and razed it in the year –1124 AR, more than a thousand years before the founding of Atlantis. Ruins of Bhnaal Pruth and the nameless city that preceded it can still be found in the sewers and foundations of modern Quodeth or beneath the marshy islands of the shoreline nearby.

The human part of Quodeth's tale began a few centuries later, when the earliest Kalay tribes landed on the shores of Sarvin Bay. A more or less permanent barbarian encampment slowly grew around the mouth of the Quosa as more and more Kalays decided to remain in the rich lands of southeast Thule instead of pressing on into the wild interior. By the year –240 AR, the camp had become a permanent town with wooden walls, and the local chieftain, a fierce warrior named Jal Dror, took the title of king and named his city Quodeth—literally, "Shoulders of the Quosa."

Over the generations, the town founded by Jal Dror grew into a city, and the barbaric Kalays settled and became the civilized Quodethi. During the centuries that Atlantis was growing strong, so was Quodeth, and it became the largest realm in eastern Thule. Quodethi legions broke the elven realm of Sersidyen, ending the time of elven dominion over the human kingdoms of Thule. Fierce campaigns were also waged against the cyclops tribes of the Zinandar Mountains and the degenerate troglodyte-kingdom of Vhaug, driving these old peoples out of the Quosa Vale and the lands nearby.

This era of Quodethi conquest came to an end during an era of civil wars between rival dynasties, the Palands and the Sedarnels. The Palands eventually emerged the victors, but only by allying themselves with overseas patrons—the mighty empire of Atlantis. For forty years or so, the Palands ruled as kings with Atlantean support, but in 1449 AR, King Abhenon Paland sought to throw off the yoke of Atlantis and drove Atlantean diplomats and merchants out of Quodeth. A little less than a year later, Atlantean soldiers returned. Quodeth fell to the legions of Atlantis in a lightning assault, King Abhenon was forced to abdicate, and the Atlanteans installed an imperial viceroy to rule from the Peacock Throne.

Quodeth remained under Atlantean rule for the next five centuries. With Atlantis overseeing the city's defenses and foreign relations, the Quodethi nobility turned their energy to commerce and trade. Quodeth grew rich, and appointment to the office of Imperial Viceroy in Quodeth became one of the most prestigious postings in the Empire. But, in 1906 AR, the era of Atlantean rule came to an end when Atlantis was destroyed. The remnant of Atlantean power survived in Quodeth for a generation or two, until Lord Yero Paland (a descendant of the last Quodethi ruling house) mustered the strength to depose the Viceroy Iundamos and name himself King of Quodeth in 1946 AR.



Several more Paland kings followed King Yero, but the Paland dynasty came to a final end in 2022 AR when the Jandar barbarians launched a massive onslaught on Quodeth. Queen Nadersha was killed in battle at the gates of the city, and although the barbarians were finally thrown back, Nadersha left no heir. House Marsesk took the throne after ten years of rule by an ineffective council of leading nobles. The Marsesks lasted for five kings and queens, but were deposed by the Onther family in 2087 AR. The Onthers proved to be corrupt and debauched, wasting vast amounts of money on ever more hedonistic entertainments and revels.

The excesses of King Zafid Onther were so great that a charismatic high priest of Mithra, the High Curate Jhom Arn, personally led an uprising to remove Zafid from the throne in 2130 AR. Another dynastic struggle threatened to break out between powerful families such as the Marsesks, the Sedarnels, and the Vorzins. However, the High Curate managed to avert years of chaos and feuding with a compromise: giving the throne to a minor noble family, House Hazeda. The rival houses contending for the succession were mollified by the fact that

neither of their enemies could claim the prize, and each hoped that a weak monarch would be easy to influence.

The year is now the 2,213th after the founding of Atlantis, and the 307th since the island-continent's destruction. The current occupant of the Peacock Throne is **Queen Deyane Verix Hazeda**, a young woman of only nineteen who has ruled for four years. Most of Quodeth's educated classes understand that she is merely a figurehead . . . but even so, rumors swirl constantly about the lords and princes who entertain designs on the throne.

## THE PEACOCK THRONE

The traditional symbol of rulership over Quodeth is the Peacock Throne. In ancient times, the city's monarch wielded absolute power over the city, and therefore the edicts and judgments rendered from the throne were beyond question. Over the centuries, the kings and queens of Quodeth took less interest in administering their domain and turned over the more tedious duties to a court full of advisors and officials. These panjandrums typically performed their offices "in the name of the Peacock Throne," and were understood to be acting on the monarch's command, even when the monarch was personally unaware of their specific activities.

The tradition is still remembered today when Quodethi refer to the government and its various ministries, bureaus, and offices as the Peacock Throne—for example, "I heard today that the Peacock Throne is increasing taxes on wine by two silvers per cask," or, "The Peacock Throne is concerned by rumors of human sacrifice and cult activity in the Sark." The ruling monarch rarely takes a direct hand in such matters, but high officials with the authority of the throne are acting in his or her place.

Queen Deyane is rarely seen by her subjects, and is surrounded by powerful officials and influential nobles who carefully guide her rule. The real power controlling the Peacock Throne is the **Royal Council**, a group of six important officials and nobles who are too powerful to be dismissed or ignored. Collectively, the Council controls the city's courts, armies, officials, and access to the Queen. The Council members include:

- Grand Vizier **Ibland Posk**, leader of the government;
- High Initiate Mother **Zarissa**, high priestess of the temple of Ishtar;
- Prince **Dredan Taroth**, wealthiest noble of Quodeth.
- Baron **Urmal Urugan**, noble and commander of the army;
- **Azarde Two-Blades**, mercenary, freebooter, and captain of the royal guards;
- Guildmaster **Niram Terinth**, Master of the Mint and fantastically wealthy merchant.

The members of the Council are generally not on good terms with each other, and engage in all sorts of private feuds and intrigues to extend their own power and influence while weakening that of their rivals. They commonly compete to install their own favorites in important posts, exempt their allies and supporters from laws and taxes, steer royal patronage and government purchases to their friends, and present suitors of their choice to Queen Deyane as potential consorts.

The secret that few people outside the palace understand is that, in some cases at least, the members of the Royal Council are *themselves* figureheads, servants of even more powerful and shadowy forces that aspire to govern the city's affairs. For example, Prince Dredan Taroth is closely allied with the Seven Knives thieves' guild. Guildmaster Niram Terinth is secretly a devotee of the Temple of Shadowed Serpents. Various factions and interests pull the strings of the other Council members, as well.

## COMMERCE AND ECONOMY

Even without control of the waterway between the Kalayan Sea and the Atlantean Ocean, Quodeth would be a rich and prosperous city. Its economy stands on four great pillars: grain, silk, metalworking, and shipbuilding. Quodeth produces more flour, textiles, metal goods, and ships than any other city in Thule.

**Grain** may not seem all that unusual, but in Thule, large expanses of arable land are rare. The Quosa Vale is a gentle landscape of undulating hills that serves as the breadbasket of a continent. Quodeth's grainfields stretch for miles beyond the city walls, and the granaries of the Canal Quarter hold vast reserves for trade or to guard against a year of lean harvest. Round-hulled merchant galleys carry Quodeth's grain to Marg, Droum, Imystrahl, and even Lomar (in times of peace).

The mild, sunny clime of the nearby Zinandar foothills is perfect for cultivating silkworms in mulberry orchards, and Quodeth is the only Thulean producer of **silk**. Thousands of artisans make a living as silk weavers and dyers, producing robes, togas, and gowns in a bewildering variety of colors and patterns. A single bolt of Quodethi silk can command 500 gold coins in a remote city such as Thran or Akal-Amo. This rich trade is guarded by the powerful Dyers' Guild, which ruthlessly crushes competition and fixes prices as it likes to control its monopoly.

The **metalwork** of Quodeth can't compare to that of the armorers and weaponsmiths of nearby Kal-Zinan, or even warlike Lomar; Quodethi bronze is quite ordinary and deserves no special distinction. But Quodeth is home to a very large number of coppersmiths, tinsmiths, silversmiths, and goldsmiths

who turn out everyday items such as goblets, plates, tableware, and jewelry. These are valuable trade goods, especially to the barbaric peoples of Thule's interior. Many jungle traders lead caravans laden with Quodethi cups and bowls and bangles into the forests of Dhar Mesh or the cold plains under Kang's long shadow in search of rich profits.

Finally, Quodeth's **shipyards** are the largest and busiest of Thule, turning out dozens of galleys and dromonds every year. The shipyards' hunger for wood means that Quodethi foresters must travel deep into the Starcrown foothills or the far slopes of the Zinandar Mountains in search of good timber. While Quodeth's arms and armor are unremarkable, its warships are a different story—and its assembled fleets are the strongest in the northern seas.

## LAW AND ORDER

Quodeth's soldiers patrol the city's neighborhoods to prevent riots, arson, and unchecked banditry in the streets. These patrols are somewhat infrequent and stick to the better neighborhoods, since the authorities don't really care what goes on in the poorer quarters. When patrolling soldiers happen to encounter serious crimes in progress, they intervene, but few criminals indeed are stupid enough to commit their crimes in the plain sight of the Peacock Throne.

Criminals apprehended in the act are dragged swiftly before a magistrate and sentenced. Unfortunately, everyone in Quodeth knows that justice is for sale. Guards won't be sent out to arrest a malefactor or investigate a crime unless someone pays the magistrate to order the guards to act. In practice, rich merchants and wealthy nobles can buy the protection of the Peacock Throne's courts, while the rest of Quodeth's people must do without.

A far more effective police system is administered by the city's gangs and guilds, who have a vested interest in protecting their territory from the depredations of rival gangs. They keep a careful eye on crime within their territory, and do not hesitate to administer swift (and usually lethal) justice on non-guildmembers who try to prey on "their" ground. Robbery and murder within the guild's territory is subject to the guildmaster's approval. Despite this, appealing to the local guildmaster for justice is rarely wise—thieves don't have any sense of responsibility toward the people who live in their territory. The only complaint likely to be acted upon is robbery by some *other* thieves' guild. It's not unusual for thieves to sneak into other guilds' territory to victimize people their own guildmaster won't care about, so defending against these opportunists is something a guildmaster takes seriously.

## FACTIONS AND PERSONALITIES

As one might expect in a city of Quodeth's size, dozens of guilds, noble houses, and secret societies compete for influence. In some cases, it is about pure politics, and the various factions are competing for the right to install their own adherents in positions of power and authority. In other cases, the competition is about commerce, territory, religion, or other issues. Outright factional warfare is rare in Quodeth, simply because the one certain way to bring the city's disparate influence-peddlers together is to create a problem big enough to demand joint action.

There are hundreds of smaller and less important organizations, many of which could reasonably be included in this list. Over time, some factions weaken or split up, some individuals die or suffer personal reverses, and others step up to take their place. The only constant is change, as they say.

### THE BARGEMASTERS

#### Corrupt Trade Guild

The Bargemasters are one of Quodeth's largest trade guilds, consisting of hundreds of barge owners and the crews they command. They control the riverfront and the canals of central Quodeth, and no trade goods move anywhere in the middle of the city without their approval—which, of course, means that the Bargemasters's palms must be well greased by any merchant seeking to ship cargo into or out of the city.

In addition to serving as a guild of relatively law-abiding laborers, the Bargemasters are also a functional thieves' guild. They actively patrol their territory and chase off incursions from rival guilds, collect protection money from the businesses and warehouses located within their domain, and occasionally form mobs of hood-wearing thugs to simply smash in the doors of tempting targets and pillage whatever valuables or goods are stored there.

### DEYANE HAZEDA

#### Figurehead Queen of Quodeth

A young woman of only nineteen, Queen Deyane is well regarded by her subjects, who think she is beautiful, honest, and innocent. Most people understand that the Grand Vizier and the Royal Council are the real powers behind the Peacock Throne. The Council keeps Queen Deyane far from the everyday business of running Quodeth or engaging in diplomacy, bringing her out for ceremonial purposes when the monarch is expected to appear.

Deyane was content to put herself in the hands of her advisors when she first ascended the throne, but she is in fact much cleverer than they realize. Rather than insisting on assuming her responsibilities directly, she allows the Royal Council to believe she trusts them

absolutely and is content to heed their wise advice. Behind the scenes, Deyane is quietly building a network of loyal agents and sympathetic officials who can act for her when she passes word to them to do so.

### DREDAN TAROTH

#### Prince of House Taroth, Member of the Royal Council

Young, energetic, and ambitious, Prince Dredan inherited his father's seat on the Royal Council two years ago when Gnaric Taroth died under an assassin's blade. He is a handsome man of thirty-five, with a sardonic manner and a biting sense of humor. House Taroth has risen rapidly in the last generation or so to become the wealthiest noble house in Quodeth. The Tarothan merchant fleet has virtually monopolized the spice and ivory trade of the Inner Sea while forging a valuable alliance with the Seven Knives, who have ruthlessly cut down several would-be competitors to the Taroths.

Prince Dredan claims to be interested only in wise stewardship of Quodeth's commerce and speaks for the city's mercantile interests in council. However, Dredan has his eyes set on a higher prize: the Peacock Throne. It has not escaped his notice that Queen Deyane is a beautiful young woman of marriageable age, and he is plotting to make a dynastic union inevitable. He also harbors another dark secret: Dredan is a talented warlock, and in fact killed his own father to speed his rise to power.

### DYERS' GUILD

#### Cartel of Rich Merchants

The cultivation, weaving, and dying of silk might seem like the most ordinary of trades, but in Quodeth, a vast amount of wealth and influence is tied up in the silk trade. The Dyer's Guild ruthlessly crushes any individuals seeking to grow or produce silk without joining the guild and honoring the guild's exacting quotas and exorbitant dues. Merchants trying to enter the silk trade in other cities are subject to vicious tactics such as price undercutting, embargos, sabotage, and outright assassination—the Dyers of Quodeth will stop at nothing to maintain their monopoly.

### GOLDEN HALL OF MITHRA

#### Priests of Mithra

The Golden Hall is Quodeth's grand temple to Mithra, god of the sun and sky. It is one of the largest temples of all Thule's cities, a sprawling cathedral that is home to scores of Mithran priests and hundreds of temple guards dressed in blue and gold. The priests of Mithra are widely thought to spend too much time looking out for their own property and influence, but many Quodethi agree with the Mithrans that it is well past time to curb the city's worst excesses and uphold standards of basic decency in society.

**High Curate Oruk-Maneth** is the high priest of Mithra in Quodeth. He is a sly, conniving old schemer who doesn't hesitate to use the temple's influence in a hundred different ways, working tirelessly to appoint viziers and panjandrums loyal to Mithra, challenge the worst vices of the city's low quarters, and generally drag Quodeth toward a more pious, just, and conservative set of values. Oruk-Maneth is especially annoyed that he does not sit on the Royal Council, and he makes a show of sorrowfully lamenting the fact that Queen Deyane is denied the benefit of his wisdom.

## IBLAND POSK

### Grand Vizier, True Ruler of Quodeth

A lean, sour-tempered man of seventy-three years, Ibland Posk has effectively ruled Quodeth for almost twenty-five years as the Grand Vizier. He assumes a kindly, grandfather-like persona when interacting with Queen Deyane—a façade that quickly vanishes when he is no longer in the young queen's presence and is free to deal with his subordinates as he likes. Posk is sharp-tongued, argumentative, impatient, and demanding, dressing down lesser officials several times a day as he carefully juggles dozens of competing interests in the city's affairs.

The civic officials are terrified of him, and the city's nobles resent his stubbornness and high-handedness in dealing with their interests. Half a dozen powerful individuals are currently plotting his downfall and replacement, but for the moment, Ibland Posk survives as Grand Vizier.

## KING OF BEGGARS

### Guildmaster, Street Boss, Rumormonger

There is no such thing as a Beggar's Guild, or so the city's officials say. They are, of course, mistaken. Hundreds upon hundreds of beggars are organized into a wretched, disorderly mob under the leadership of a guildmaster known only as the King of the Beggars. In the slums and warrens of the Sark and the poorer quarters of the Canal Quarter the beggars ply their ancient trade—and, naturally, take advantage of every opportunity to pick pockets and cut purses, too.

The Beggar's Guild is therefore a thieves' guild of sorts, and the other gangs of Quodeth are happy to leave the slums to them. Unlike gangs such as the Red Furies or the Seven Knives, the Beggars' Guild offers little protection to those in their territory. The King of Beggars can field a mob of hundreds against another thieves' guild, but beggars are poor footsoldiers and only fight when they have overwhelming numbers on their side. Instead, they prefer to fight with rumor and innuendo. Beggars serve as the best spy network in the city, since they have eyes and ears on every street corner, and report everything they see or hear to the King of Beggars by the end of the day.

## MUGGERS' GUILD

### Violent Thieves' Guild

Most of the thieves' guilds in Quodeth focus on burglary, extortion, smuggling, and other crimes of property designed to take the money from merchants, nobles, and storeowners. The Muggers' Guild is not that sophisticated; they are a large gang of violent street toughs who simply rob passersby in the streets. Gangs of muggers sometimes gather to assault high-ranking nobles or wealthy merchants protected by bodyguards, but usually they operate in twos or threes, brazenly attacking in broad daylight on busy streets and fleeing the scene with their ill-gotten plunder.

In a city where thievery is looked on as just one more trade, muggers are regarded as villainous scum. Unfortunately, they are villainous scum who enjoy strength in numbers, and openly defy the authorities at every turn. Worse yet, the high-ranking members of the Muggers' Guild are often devotees of Herum, the brutal ape-god, and seek his blessing by administering vicious beatings in the course of their work.

## PRIESTS OF THE BROKEN GATE

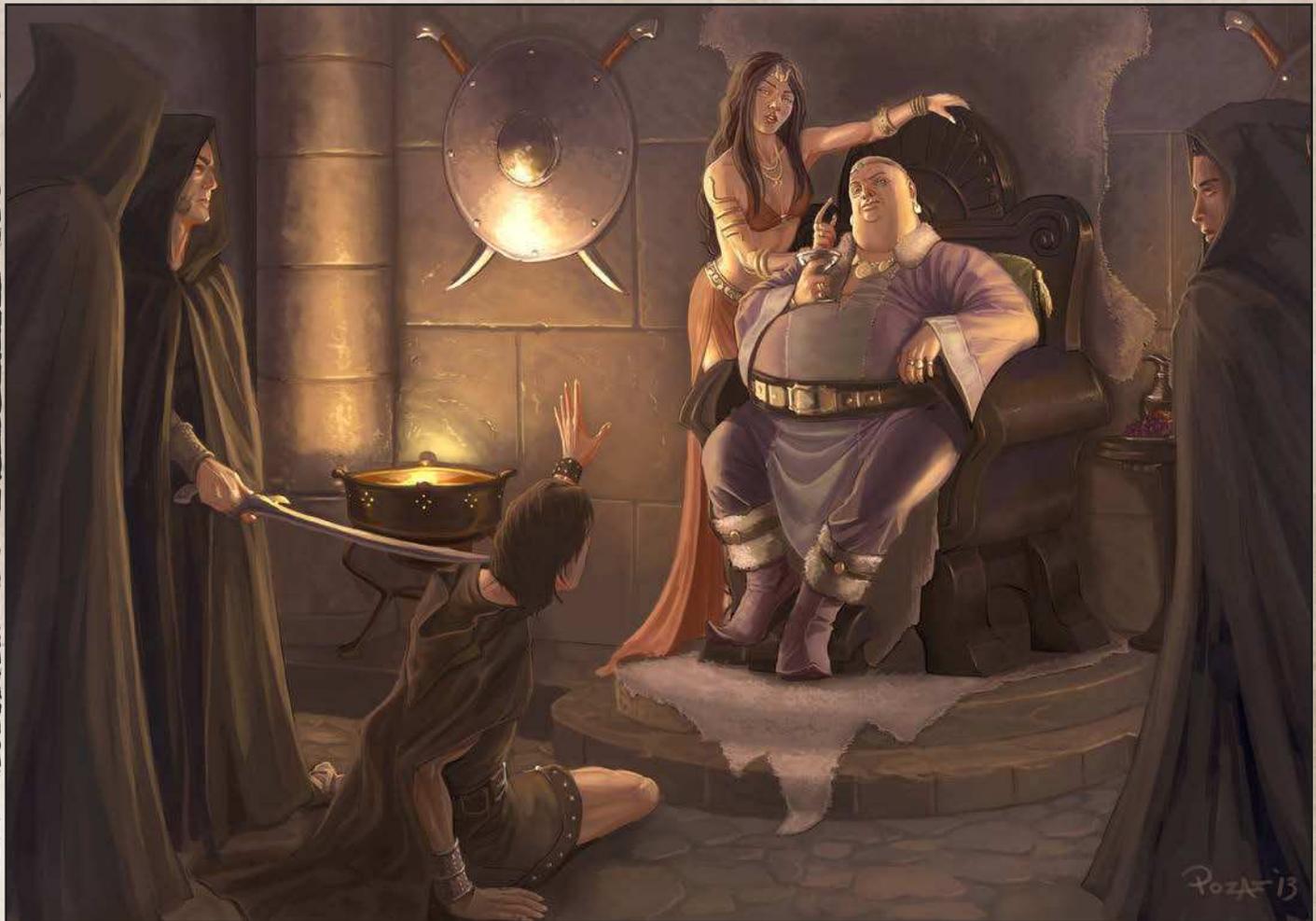
### Cultists of Cthulhu

At any given time, several small cults are flourishing in Quodeth, dedicated to various unsavory gods or demons. The Priests of the Broken Gate are the latest such group. They teach that a great god of justice and redemption—the "One Who Waits"—is coming to sweep away the old order and bring new hope to all who suffer. But first, the god's human followers must break down the gate that keeps this great day from coming.

Most Quodethi assume that the talk of "gates" is some kind of metaphor about the followers of this belief overcoming their own limitations and misdeeds. After all, the Broken Gate brothers urge their followers to abandon their families, undermine the oppression of the existing social order, and surrender themselves to the worship of the One Who Waits. Those who participate in the rituals seem to open themselves up to the dreams and whispers of the cult's patron: Great Cthulhu. Madness slowly consumes those who listen too long to the teachings of the Broken Gate, and the gate of which the dark priests speak is nothing less than the titanic seal that keeps Cthulhu imprisoned and dormant.

## RED FURIES

The Red Furies are unique among Quodeth's thieves for one simple reason: They are all female. No men are permitted to join the guild, and on the rare occasions when males have tried to infiltrate the guild through disguises or have tried to exert authority over the



guild, the Red Furies have punished the offenders . . . severely. Suffice it to say that no man in recent memory has tried to break the Red Furies to his will.

Other than this unusual requirement for membership, the Red Furies are a typical Quodethi thieves' guild—secretive, violent, and fiercely protective of their territory. They are second only to the Seven Knives in strength and reach, and have spies in many ports around the Inner Sea. In Quodeth, they control the Temple Quarter, and they have a strong presence in Old Quodeth and the Bazaar Quarter as well. There is a good deal of bad blood between the Red Furies and the Seven Knives, and the current Queen Fury—a brilliant assassin named **Evondra**—is quietly looking for allies to take down the Seven Knives once and for all.

## THE SEDARNELS

### Decadent Noble House

The Sedarnels are one of the oldest noble houses in the city, tracing their history to the centuries before the Atlantean conquest, when they vied with House Paland and other rivals for the Peacock Throne. They maintain a small fleet of merchant galleys that specialize in long voyages to distant and mysterious lands. Sedarnel ships call in places such as Katagia,

Orech, and Akal-Amo, dealing in luxuries such as gemstones, delicacies, medicinal herbs, fine wines and brandies, and other cargoes of small size and high value. The Sedarnels have always regarded Tiamat as their protector and patron, and in return their far-voyaging ships seem to avoid many storms or perils that destroy their rivals time and time again.

The head of the house is **Princess Jania Sedarnel**. She is married to a prince-consort by the name of Luth, who is ten years her junior. Jania is a soft-spoken woman of forty-five who delights in gossip, intrigues, and petty displays of status and wealth. She and the other Sedarnels pay little attention to family interests, leaving them in the hands of their retainers and agents. Most of Jania's relations are busily engaged in throwing away vast fortunes—the debauchery of the Sedarnels is infamous in Quodeth and the cities nearby.

Strange to tell, Princess Jania is now desperately searching for some lost family heirloom said to have been seized by the emperors of Atlantis long ago. She is sponsoring expeditions to all the corners of the globe to find the "Diamond of Thought," although why the Sedarnels have only now started looking for something lost a thousand years ago, only Princess Jania could say.

## THE SEVEN KNIVES

### Powerful Thieves' Guild

While each of Quodeth's thieves' guilds is powerful in its own territory or sphere of influence, the Seven Knives are the first among equals. They control most of Quodeth's commercial districts, raking in vast amounts of gold from their relentless campaigns of extortion and organized crime. Worse yet, they are the preeminent assassins of Quodeth, and regard all other killings for pay as a direct attack on their prerogatives. The only check on their power is the possibility that several guilds might ally against them if the Seven Knives become too aggressive.

The Seven Knives are so named because their leadership consists of a council of seven master thieves and assassins—the Knives. The identity of each Knife is a closely guarded secret, but they include some very surprising individuals, such as a high-ranking priestess of Ishtar, a prominent nobleman, and a city magistrate. The Second Knife is the only member of the group to show his face to the rank-and-file, and serves as the spokesman for the group. This is the immensely fat **Hiroom Jarth**, whose agile mind and personal elusiveness are in no way impeded by his great girth. Hiroom is known to retain the services of a mysterious sorceress known as **the Auspex**.

The Seven Knives are described in more detail in Chapter Six.

## TEMPLE OF SHADOWED SERPENTS

### Priests of Set

Compared to the sprawling Golden Hall of Mithra, the Temple of Shadowed Serpents is a small, poor temple indeed. Set has never been a popular deity in Quodeth, and the priests of Set therefore keep something of a low profile. Instead of competing directly with the priests of Mithra or Ishtar for influence in city affairs, the Setists of Quodeth follow a more secretive path. They quietly recruit influential nobles and merchants with honeyed words and promises of multiplying their wealth and power, while making a show of publicly tending the needs of the poor and downtrodden.

A number of Quodeth's wealthier individuals—including no less a personage than Niram Terinth, a member of the Royal Council and master of the city's mint—are secretly devotees of Set. Through them, **High Priest Yezin Rhond** masterminds conspiracies, murders, and all sorts of sinister schemes designed to erode the power of Quodeth's other temples and civic institutions. Only when all is in darkness will Quodeth turn to Set, and Yezin Rhond works to hasten that day.

## THE VORZINS

### Proud Atlantean Noble House

Over the long centuries during which Atlantis governed Quodeth, a large community of Atlantean nobles and merchants naturally grew within the city. Even after Quodeth's Kalay nobles reclaimed the Peacock Throne, many people of Atlantean descent remained among the city's richest and most powerful nobles. House Vorzin is an excellent example of an expatriate Atlantean house. Arrogant and elitist in the manner of a family clinging to high lineage and dreams of past glories, the Vorzins are at the forefront of Quodethi society. They represent the "old money" of Quodeth, and control vast estates of grainfields and vineyards in the countryside.

The head of House Vorzin is **Duke Baerad Vorzin**, a bluff, vigorous man of sixty who served as a general and makes a show of embracing the martial virtues. He fights constantly to see to it that younger Vorzins and Vorzin cousins are appointed to important posts, married into suitable families, and awarded the richest offices and titles. Duke Baerad has no interest in claiming the Peacock Throne, seeing it as an empty honor, but he is very serious about making sure that House Vorzin controls all important affairs in the city. If Vorzin has a weakness, it is the family's centuries-old rivalry with the Sedarnels and the Marseks, who likewise seek to bring the most important positions in the city under their control. Duels between young members of these families are not uncommon.

## ZEMAR PHAW

### Dread Wizard

Quodeth is home to more wizards than any city other than Thran or perhaps Imystrahl, but that means there are perhaps half a dozen spellcasters known to reside in the city. Of this handful of rare and mysterious figures, none are so powerful, famous, or widely feared as Zemar Phaw, Prince of Conjurers. His home is the dark edifice known as the Palace of a Thousand Doors, and he seems perfectly content to occupy himself with his studies and summoning so long as he is not disturbed—Zemar Phaw does not tolerate interruptions or thieves.

As far as anyone can tell, Zemar Phaw has lived in Quodeth for at least two hundred years. It is commonly assumed that he is a human whose sorcery has prolonged his life greatly. In fact, Zemar Phaw died decades ago and exists now as a lich. Due to his reclusive habits, none in Quodeth know the truth. On the rare occasions when the authorities seek his advice and Zemar Phaw chooses to answer, he employs conjurations or sendings to carry his words.

# QUODETH



## KEY

- |                              |                                |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. The Mammoth Gate          | 15. Fallen Gate Tavern         | 25. High Temple of Ishtar      |
| 2. Grand Bazaar              | 16. Tower of Black Flames      | 26. Ziggurat of Heroes         |
| 3. Knifehold                 | 17. Hall of the Forgotten One  | 27. Court of Queen Nadersha    |
| 4. The Slave Market          | 18. Palace of a Thousand Doors | 28. Onther Tower               |
| 5. The Queen's Gate          | 19. The Missing Dais           | 29. Palace of Golden Minotaurs |
| 6. Temple of Set             | 20. Golden Citadel of Mithra   | 30. The Sapphire Palace        |
| 7. Quosa Bourse              | 21. The Silk Exchange          |                                |
| 8. Viceroy's Bridge          | 22. Spire of Dawn              |                                |
| 9. House of Ror Baak         | 23. Astrologers' Guild         |                                |
| 10. The Beggars' Palace      | 24. Tower of the Moon          |                                |
| 11. House of the Fallen Star |                                |                                |
| 12. Hall of the Broken Gate  |                                |                                |
| 13. Csando Shipyards         |                                |                                |
| 14. House Krinth             |                                |                                |

WEST

YARDS 0 400 800

## EXPLORING QUODETH

When a traveler first arrives in Quodeth, the first thing that greets his or her eyes is the city wall. A 40-foot wall surrounds the landward sides of the city, studied with low square towers. There are only a handful of gates in the city wall, each fitted with massive bronze doors and wooden portcullises. Detachments of Quodethi soldiers stand guard at each gate all day and night. Anyone wishing to enter or leave the city at night must be able to convince the captain of the gate that his or her business is worthwhile (a bribe often helps prove the point).

Most buildings in Quodeth are made of stone or brick (old and crumbling in the poorer neighborhoods, of course). Glass windows are quite rare and usually found only in palaces; common buildings use light lattices or thin oiled parchment instead of glass. Doors and windows are usually protected by heavy bars or shutters—crime is a problem in Quodeth, after all.

## BAZAAR QUARTER

The bustling, commercial heart of Quodeth, the Bazaar Quarter is home to hundreds of merchant houses, trading companies, emporiums, and workshops. It lies on the northern side of the city, just across the Quosa from the similarly busy Canal Quarter. The Bazaar Quarter is under the control of the Seven Knives, who generally keep the streets safe for business, but the Red Furies have a toehold in the southern parts of the quarter. There is no love lost between the two guilds, and midnight duels on the rooftops are not unusual.

## GATE OF MAMMOTHS

The largest and busiest of Quodeth's city gates is the awesome Gate of Mammoths, a towering portal built between the 50-foot tall statues of glowering woolly mammoths facing out at the world beyond the walls. The road leading north from the Gate of Mammoths follows the west bank of the Quosa for a hundred miles or so, eventually falling into disuse as it nears the ruins of the city of Hurhun on the shores of the Kalayan Sea.

## GRAND BAZAAR

Eight square blocks of winding alleyways crowded with shops and stalls, open market squares, counting-houses, artists' workshops, wine shops, street vendors selling grilled meat and sweet confections, hookah and opium dens, grocers, tailors, jewelers, and almost any other trade or diversion that one could imagine make up the central part of the Bazaar Quarter. The Grand Bazaar is nominally under the control of the Seven Knives, but the place is so large and so crowded that a number of independent pickpockets and cutpurses can operate under the guild's

nose. The Seven Knives "captain" of the bazaar is **Eyardo**, a stoop-shouldered man who appears to be lazy and slow, but is actually a vicious thug.

## THE KNIFEHOLD

The headquarters of the Seven Knives is a sprawling stronghold known as the Knifehold. Most of the complex is underground, with extensive halls, dormitories, armories, storerooms, and treasuries built from the cellars and foundations of the buildings above. There are scores of secret entrances and exits, each extremely well hidden, trapped, or guarded. Most Quodethi know more or less where the Knifehold lies, but finding a way in is a different matter. Any kind of open assault would require hundreds of soldiers, and would almost certainly miss large portions of the complex.

**Hiroom Jarth**, the Second Knife, often holds court in a lavishly furnished den or throne-room festooned with stolen luxuries. His sorceress, the mysterious mage known as the **Auspex**, is never far from his side. At least three or four of the other Knives maintain public lives as leading citizens of the city and keep their affiliation with the guild secret.

## XHONDOR JAO'S CURIOSITIES

Nobody in Quodeth routinely deals in magical items. However, if there is one merchant in Quodeth who is likely to trade in such things, it would be **Xhondor Jao**. A Lomari of sixty years' age, Xhondor buys and sells anything with an occult significance, such as mysterious books or scrolls, charms and amulets (most powerless, of course), potions and elixirs (many likewise powerless), and reagents or spell components (most fake). Despite the fact that Xhondor's shop is full of things that aren't really magical, he is not a fraud; he simply accepts the claims of authenticity or magical powers made by the people he buys from, and relays these claims without judgment to customers examining his wares. Despite the unreliable nature of these claims, it is widely believed that the shop is protected from thieves by potent curses and supernatural guardians.

## CANAL QUARTER

Most districts of Quodeth are accessible by canal, but the canals of the Canal Quarter are the most extensive of the city. As a result, many of the city's warehouses are located in this district. It is also home to a large number of businesses or artisans who need to bring large amounts of raw materials—or fuel—to their workshops. Many of Quodeth's metalworkers, potters, and woodworkers live and work here.

The Canal Quarter is more or less under the control of the Bargemasters, but the Seven Knives also operate freely in this district.



## HOUSE OF ROR BAAK

The most notorious house of ill repute in the city, the House of Ror Baak stands in the southern portion of the Canal Quarter, right on the border with the Sark. Sailors from the Stonequays, caravan drivers from the Bazaar Quarter, and rogues and scoundrels from Old Quodeth and the Sark all find their way here, spending their hard-earned coin on the favors of Ror Baak's harlots. While the owners of Ror Baak's prefer to remain anonymous, the madam who runs the place is well known. **Lady Gretha** is a dark-haired beauty, but she is also a hard-headed businesswoman, and she is not available for customers. In fact, Lady Gretha is known to be quite handy with a knife and usually has several enforcers close by in case customers get out of hand.

## THE QUOSA BOURSE

This large, open trading-hall serves as the main exchange and meeting-place for Quodeth's merchants and shippers. Here merchants can buy or sell shares in cargoes and interests in various commodities, seek or offer loans, or record the purchase or sale of future interests in goods that are not yet available. It should be noted that there are no laws or rules governing the activity of the Quosa Bourse. The only guarantees of

fair dealing are the personal honorableness and reputations of the individual merchants, although deals recorded in writing are rarely broken.

The Quosa Bourse also serves as the de facto headquarters for the Bargemasters. The High Protector of the Guild of Pilots and Masters (and current master of the guild's ruling council) is a corrupt, thuggish man named **Brune Hayet**. Master Brune owns and operates more than thirty barges, and has scores of legbreakers and enforcers at his command.

## THE SLAVE MARKET

Quodeth's slave market is located on the banks of the Quosa, not far from the Queen's Gate. The market is not very large, at least not compared to the slave auctions in Marg or Ikath, but scores of hapless men and women are bought and sold here every day. More than a few are luckless souls who were abducted from the streets of the city's more dangerous quarters just a few hours before, drugged or beaten until they can hardly stand upright, let alone fight against their unfortunate fate. The Slave Market is supervised by a panjandrum known as the Master of the Block; the position is currently held by a heartless woman named **Tarena Dyal**, who has been bought herself by the Seven Knives.

## TEMPLE OF SHADOWED SERPENTS

Built on the foundations of an ancient temple from the serpentman city of Bhaal Pruth, the Temple of Shadowed Serpents is one of the oldest buildings in all of Quodeth. It stands in the middle of the quarter, a dark and mysterious pile of stone crowded close by the buildings of more recent years, almost as if the city has tried to cover up the ancient shrine over the centuries. This is Quodeth's temple of Set, and many strange and sinister rites are enacted in its hidden sanctuaries. A good number of Quodeth's more ambitious and greedy individuals—for example, influential nobles, merchants, and thieves—regard Set as their special patron, and would not stand for any effort to remove the Temple of Shadowed Serpents from its place.

The high priest is a man named **Yezin Rhond**. He is reputed to be a powerful spellcaster.

## VICEROY'S BRIDGE

Perhaps the single greatest architectural marvel in Quodeth, the Viceroy's Bridge is a stone span almost a quarter-mile in length across the main channel of the Quosa. It links the Canal Quarter (and the whole of the east bank) to Old Quodeth and the western half of the city. The center of the bridge consists of two wooden drawbridges 50 feet in length, providing a 100-foot wide passage for vessels that cannot step their masts in order to pass beneath the bridge.

The river is deep and strong here, and the Atlantean engineers who built the bridge first had to build two huge submerged caissons to support the span. The bridge was originally named after the Atlantean viceroy that commissioned the project hundreds of years ago, but has come to be known simply as Viceroy's Bridge today.

## OLD QUODETH

Geographically, Old Quodeth is the heart of the city. A long time ago, all of Quodeth was encompassed on the large island between the Little Quosa and the Middle Quosa. Over the centuries, the city grew to the other islands and the river banks, and leaving the original city site as just one district in a much larger Quodeth. Much of Old Quodeth is dark, crowded, and dilapidated; the noble houses and wealthy merchants long ago moved to more fashionable parts of the city. Only the poor remained.

Old Quodeth is no longer a thriving commercial district, but it is home to many small, eclectic shops and artisans' workshops. The Red Furies hold much of the western part of the district, but the dominant criminal faction is the Muggers' Guild; Old Quodeth may be the single most dangerous part of the city to pass through after dark.

## DWERTH EMPORIUM

The Dwerth Emporium is a crowded, ramshackle old building on the north side of Old Quodeth,

near the Bazaar Quarter. Here a bewildering variety of secondhand goods are offered for sale—jewelry, tableware, weapons, books and scrolls, and even a handful of exotic pets in their cages. The proprietor is a chubby, middle-aged man of Dhari descent by the name of **Slen Dwerth**, and he claims to be a simple pawn broker. Every thief in Quodeth knows that Slen Dwerth is in truth the very prince of fences, eagerly buying up the stolen goods of half the city. Slen is in good favor with both the Seven Knives and the Red Furies, which is a noteworthy feat in and of itself.

## GOLDEN HALL OF MITHRA

While much of Old Quodeth is run-down, one of the most splendid temples in the city stands in the northwest portion of the district. The Golden Hall of Mithra is just across the Little Quosa from the Temple Quarter and the Palace Quarter. High walls and well-guarded gates isolate the compound from the blighted streets nearby. Important priests of Mithra rarely set foot in the streets of Old Quodeth, instead traveling in golden barges that moor by the temple's boat landing on the river. The High Curate of the temple is a priest named **Oruk-Maneth**, and at his command, alms are freely given to all who come in need at noon each Mithra's Day.

## HALL OF THE FORGOTTEN ONE

A dark and sinister structure made from heavy basalt blocks, the Hall of the Forgotten One serves as the headquarters of the Muggers' Guild, and very few people other than muggers venture inside. The guild leader is a huge, vicious brute of a man who goes by the name of **Sloth**—presumably after the fierce and gigantic Thulean ground sloth, not the deadly sin. What few people other than muggers know is that the Hall of the Forgotten One is actually Quodeth's temple to Herum. The deeper levels hold sinister shrines and crude altars to the ape-god, and a wicked priest named **Gongh Hur**—perhaps the last priest of Herum in the city—leads the muggers in their crude and brutal rites.

## THE MISSING DAIS

This peculiar public house is one of the more popular establishments in Old Quodeth. It is renowned as a place where odd wagers, foolish boasts, and tests of strength or agility take place every night. For example, patrons might armwrestle, balance on a small stool while quaffing jacks of ale, or throw knives to knock apples off a participant's head. The place is named for its most unusual feature, a large section of patched floor where a raised stage once stood. How or why the stage was removed, no one will say; the speculation is that all who witnessed the wager that led to the stage's demise were sworn to secrecy.

The proprietors are named **Dedrik** and **Hedrik**, and they claim to be brothers. However, while Dedrik

seems human enough, Hedrik is barely half the size of a dwarf, and doesn't seem to belong to any race or kindred known in Thule.

## PALACE OF A THOUSAND DOORS

Near the center of Old Quodeth stands the crumbling façade of an ancient noble palace. Abandoned by its wealthy family centuries ago, it is now the home of the dread wizard Zemar Phaw. Few dare to intrude on Zemar Phaw, and the locals avert their eyes as they hurry past the place. It is said that the Palace of a Thousand Doors is so named because countless magical gates and doorways leading to distant worlds or alternate dimensions stand within its shadowed hallways, but Zemar Phaw is not very forthcoming about what secrets might or might not be found in his home. Visitors are usually turned away by a huge servant or chamberlain called Losk, whose whispering voice, doughy flesh, and dead eyes suggest that he is not entirely human himself.

## PALACE QUARTER

Situated on the heights of the west bank of the Quosa, the Palace Quarter floats like a golden mirage above the crowded streets and labyrinthine canals of the lower city. Not all of Quodeth's palaces are located in this quarter, but many of them are, including the royal palace and the palaces of several important noble families. The most important and impressive civic buildings are located here as well, including the major courts and administrative centers of Quodeth. Here, at least, the city's omnipresent thieves keep a low profile—none of Quodeth's guilds claim to control the Palace Quarter, although most of them occasionally work here.

## COURT OF QUEEN NADERSHA

Known throughout the city as "the Queen's Court" or "Hall of the Magistrates," the Court of Queen Nadersha is named for the last of the Paland monarchs, the heroic Queen Nadersha. A magnificent fountain stands before the court building, featuring a 20-foot-tall statue of the long-dead queen with her sword upraised. As one might guess, this building houses the magistrates' courts, as well as many of Quodeth's records and deeds. The building's basement levels include dungeons for holding prisoners, as well as barracks and armories for the guards entrusted with the task of protecting the Courts and enforcing the magistrates' rulings.

## ONTHER TOWER

The kings and queens of House Onther are not remembered well in Quodeth, but they did one thing right: They established the Onther Tower, a library where learned men and women can share their wisdom. Access is free for individuals who are accredited through the good graces of the Peacock Throne; in practice, this

means that a hefty bribe must be put in the hands of the panjandrums who administer the Tower and safeguard its collection. More than once bold bands of thieves have slipped into Onther Tower to pilfer some old map or mysterious scroll to further their own larcenous ends, so the place is well guarded, day and night.

Most of the books, scrolls, and maps assembled here are perfectly harmless, but there are rumors that tomes of dark sorcery are securely locked away within the Tower's deepest vaults. Access to these hidden collections can only be approved by the Master of the Tower, the panjandrum **Tormal Vorzin**. A vain and quarrelsome old man, Master Tormal is too wealthy to be easily bribed.

## PALACE OF GOLDEN MINOTAURS

Ancestral home of House Taroth, the Palace of Golden Minotaurs is named for the gilded statues that stand on either side of its mighty entrance. The golden minotaur is the symbol of the Taroth family, and the motif of bulls and bull-headed monsters is repeated throughout the palace's architecture. The Minotaur Palace is home to Prince Dredan Taroth, member of the Royal Council and a leading figure among the Quodethi aristocracy. The palace's defenses are said to include sorcery that can animate the golden minotaurs and bring them to life as loyal, fearless, and nigh-indestructible defenders of House Taroth.

## THE SAPPHIRE PALACE

The royal palace of Quodeth is known as the Sapphire Palace or the Blue Palace. It is not made from sapphire, of course, but it does possess a casing of remarkable sea-blue larimar stone blocks. Originally built by the viceroys of Atlantis during their centuries of power, the Sapphire Palace has been home to Quodeth's monarchs for more than two hundred years.

While the Sapphire Palace is a sprawling and luxurious complex, not much governing takes place here. The monarchs of House Hazeda are insulated from the everyday business of ruling. Various revels, dances, and formal occasions are scheduled throughout the year, and naturally all of the high officials and important nobles attend, but the Grand Vizier and the Royal Council oversee the real functioning of the government. Queen Deyane is quietly working to change that, but she must be careful—more than one Quodethi monarch has become a prisoner in this very palace.

## THE SARK

The worst neighborhood in Quodeth is the sprawling slum known as the Sark. The origin of the name is not clear; some people say that it is derived from the nearby Sarvin Bay, some say it is named after a local chieftain from the days of the city's founding, and still others claim the Sark gained its name because one would be

wise to wear a mail shirt—or “sark,” in the old turn of phrase—when one ventures into its streets. The district is desperately poor, and so wretched that none of the city’s thieves’ guilds bother to claim it as their own territory.

## THE BEGGAR PALACE

The headquarters of the Beggars’ Guild is a sprawling, ruined amphitheater that hosted great gladiatorial games and performances of music and drama in better days, when the Sark was not such a dismal slum. That day passed centuries ago, and the great amphitheater long ago fell into disuse. With no better place to call their own, beggars and vagabonds took to sheltering in its spacious arcades. Over the years, the denizens of the ruin built ramshackle walls and crude lean-to shelters, turning the open amphitheater into a warren-like maze of tiny cubicles and blind alleyways, all leading to a dismal throne room where the King of Beggars holds court. The current king is a freakishly tall, twisted, and spider-like man named **Narbo**, who dreams of expanding his domain into the neighboring districts.

## HALL OF THE BROKEN GATE

In the last few months, a mysterious order of priests converted an old warehouse on the riverfront into a meeting-hall of sorts known as the Hall of the Broken Gate. The priests of the Broken Gate wander the streets by day, searching for the desperate or impressionable and cajoling them to come to the Hall for food, shelter, and a message of hope. After dark, strange rituals devoted to the One Who Waits (Cthulhu) begin. Submerged tunnels lead from the cellars of the Broken Gate out to the waters of the Great Quosa, and sometimes terrible things swim in from the sea to commune with the cultists.

## HOUSE OF THE FALLEN STAR

If there is a more sordid establishment in Quodeth, it would be hard to name it. The Fallen Star is a sprawling, ramshackle fighting-pit where bloody arena fights are staged almost every night. Raucous taprooms, brothels, and a bustling black market are located in various parts of the rambling stone structure. The place was built atop the crater left by a good-sized meteorite that struck a decrepit block of buildings fifteen years ago, knocking down half the block with the force of the impact. The meteorite still lies in the middle of the fighting-pit and remains warm to the touch even to this day.

The master of the Fallen Star is a strapping Nimothan barbarian named **Setesh Uttikal**, a former freebooter and mercenary who adventured all over Thule in his youth. His two wives—a Dhari woman named Eamel from a tribe Setesh befriended in his travels, and Valebel, an elf that he saved from Crimson Slavers—help him to run the place. A dozen heavy-handed enforcers and legbreakers make sure the revels don’t get out of hand each night.

## STONEQUAY

Quodeth’s harbor district is known as Stonequay. It is a busy commercial quarter, with teeming wharves, crowded warehouses, busy workshops, and huge shipyards where the sinews of Quodeth’s mercantile power are shaped from wood, line, and canvas. The Middle Quosa physically divides Stonequay in two, but scores of small sculls and barges stand ready to ferry travelers or cargo from one side to the other at all hours of the day or night.

Stonequay is disputed territory in the struggles of Quodeth’s thieves’ guilds. The Bargemasters hold much of eastern Stonequay, although the Beggars’ Guild virtually overruns the area. The western island is contested between the Seven Knives and the Red Furies. Rare is the morning when some murdered thief or thug isn’t fished out of the river.

## CSANDO SHIPYARDS

Sprawling for hundreds of yards on the Great Quosa waterfront, the Csando Shipyards are the largest and finest in Quodeth. At any given time, four to six large galleys are under construction. It takes about four months to build a merchant galley, although the shipwrights can hurry the process in an emergency, at the cost of improper curing and preparation that drastically reduces the ship’s usable life. Hundreds of woodworkers, smiths, sailmakers, and ropemakers work in the Csando yards.

The supervisor of the yard is the noted shipwright **Podrenius**, a genius of Atlantean descent who experiments with unusual designs not seen since Atlantis sank beneath the waves. Mysteriously enough, some unknown party has sabotaged his last three prototypes.

## FALDINE KRINTH

Mistress of House Krinth, Faldine is an ambitious young woman of thirty-three who took over the family business from her hapless father two years ago. House Krinth was badly weakened by decades of extortion from the Seven Knives, but Faldine set out to reverse years of the merchant house’s misfortunes. Under her direction, House Krinth sold off several marginal interests to concentrate on oil and wine, becoming Quodeth’s largest importer of olives and olive oil. Behind the front of this profitable trade, Faldine Krinth secretly directs a network of informants, spies, and diviners, making it her business to know everything she can about anything that catches her interest. Her ultimate goal is to expose and destroy Quodeth’s thieves’ guilds one by one—or better yet, help them destroy each other.

## FALLEN GATE TAVERN

Located in the more prosperous part of Stonequay, the Fallen Gate is one of the more interesting taverns to be found in the city. Here foreigners, freebooters, seafarers, and travelers of all description seem to collect, armed with the latest news and rumors from all points of the compass. While merchants and captains from Thulean ports

such as Katagia, Orech, or Akal-Amo are regular visitors to the Fallen Gate, on any given night one might find a seafarer from some far quarter of the world—one of the ports of the eastern continent or the western continent—drinking by the fire and telling tales of strange travels.

Quodeth's thieves generally leave visitors to the Fallen Gate alone. The tavern is neutral ground, where tales and rumors are considered more valuable than a few coins in a seaman's purse. Even the bitterest rivals agree to leave each other in peace here—usually.

## THE TOWER OF BLACK FLAME

This mysterious structure has stood near the border of Stonequay and Old Quodeth for centuries, seemingly occupied by a succession of sages, sorcerers, mages, diviners, and magicians. The current occupant is a reclusive and widely disliked fellow named **Kelauklyth**, who is said to be a master of serpent-related spells. By night, an eerie aura of dark flame (sometimes a faint blue or green in color) dances and crackles around the tower's uppermost floor.

The Tower of Black Flame is described in more detail in the adventure later in this chapter.



## TEMPLE QUARTER

As one might expect, the Temple Quarter is so named because several of Quodeth's more notable temples are located in this part of the city. In addition to its temples, the quarter is also home to a good deal of commerce and industry, mostly in luxury goods and fine art. Here the metalworkers are goldsmiths and jewelers, not coppersmiths or blacksmiths. The Red Furies are the dominant thieves' guild in this part of the city, and they jealously defend their rich territory against the Seven Knives, the Muggers' Guild, and the Dyers' Guild, which is seeking to expand into the southern part of the Temple Quarter.

## HIGH TEMPLE OF ISHTAR

The largest and wealthiest temple in Quodeth, the High Temple of Ishtar is a splendid alabaster dome graced by slender minarets. Ishtar has always been regarded as the special protector and patroness of Quodeth, and her temple is therefore at the forefront of every civic celebration or important decision. The Daughters of Ishtar may not command as many temple warriors as the priests of Mithra or Tarhun, but the inner circles are known to wield powerful magic, and few in Quodeth dare to challenge them. The leader of the temple is High Initiate Mother **Zarissa**, who also is a member of Quodeth's royal council. She is a white-haired woman of sixty years, a legendary beauty in her youth and still graceful today.

## MARSESK PALACE

This grand old villa is surrounded by gardens and high walls. The Marseks are one of the three great noble houses of Quodeth, with wide estates outside the city and a vast fortune. They have a reputation for arrogance and haughtiness, and are quick to take offense (or even draw blade) in the face of any slight, however minor. While they can be stubborn and prickly, the Marseks are also quite proud of their honor, and never go back on their word or break a vow. The current head of the house is Prince **Tromin Marsek**, a dignified old gentleman of seventy-seven with five middle-aged children and a dozen grandchildren. Several of the younger Marseks are already noted duelists and rakehells.

## TOWER OF THE MOON

Centuries ago, this place was a temple dedicated to Selene, the goddess of the moon. Over the years, the power and influence of the faith waned, and the worshipers of Selene eventually were absorbed by the growing faith of Ishtar. The temple was abandoned—but now it serves a different purpose. The thieves' guild known as the Red Furies uses the abandoned temple as their headquarters. Unlike the Seven Knives, whose headquarters is a virtual stronghold, the Red Furies

rely on secrecy to safeguard their base. The overgrown gardens surrounding the old temple are protected by guardian gargoyles (summoned long ago by the moon priestesses, but now loyal to the thieves) and deadly pitfalls, but few of the thieves are actually present at any given time.

## ZIGGURAT OF HEROES

Quodeth's temple of Tarhun is the Ziggurat of Heroes, located on a hilltop at the western end of the district. The ziggurat itself is relatively small as far as pyramids go, but it is surrounded by open plazas and wide halls where the priests of Tarhun celebrate their martial ceremonies and observances. Tarhun's worship is popular with the lower classes of the city and Quodeth's soldiers, but the priesthood is not very influential at court or among the nobility—a situation that the Lord High Priest **Harath Mordru** finds somewhat galling. A vigorous man of fifty-three, Harath frequently preaches against the dissolute and sinful ways of Quodeth's rulers.

## TIR-PALAND

Long ago, this entire quarter was the private property of House Paland. During the rule of the Atlantean viceroys, much of House Paland's land was brought under the city's control, plotted out, and sold off piecemeal over the years, leaving only the name of the new district to commemorate Quodeth's old royal line. Tir-Paland is a busy, prosperous district with a mix of commercial and industrial interests, plus a handful of noble houses and temples in its better parts.

Tir-Paland is tightly policed by the Dyers' Guild, a mercantile powerhouse that collects heavy dues from its members but fights fiercely against the encroachments of Quodeth's thieves.

## ASTROLOGERS' GUILD

Nothing like a wizard's guild exists in Quodeth; there simply aren't all that many arcane spellcasters in the city. However, the Astrologers' Guild comes close. The guildhall consists of a squat tower on a hilltop crowned by a large dome, which contains an observatory with instruments for measuring the movements of the stars. The guild is dedicated to preserving the high arts of astronomy and divination, and in many ways is an academy of sorts in which young men and women are taught the complex observations and calculations of the astrologer's trade. The guild records include the only complete set of scrolls written by the great astrologer Tasheena of Hurhun, a prophetess who lived several centuries ago. Tasheena's predictions have proved uncannily accurate over the years, and it is whispered that several of her more dangerous prophecies are shut away in the guild's library.

## ETHWEL THREEFINGERS

A swaggering giant of a Nimothan, Ethwel Threefingers seems more like some sort of barbarian chieftain or sea-reaver than a merchant. Appearances can be deceiving—while Ethwel was in fact a noted freebooter and sellsword in his younger days (and in fact lost two fingers in a tavern brawl), he is now an industrious and successful merchant prince. Ethwel's principal trade lies in the icy northern waters of the Boreal Sea; he deals in walrus ivory, seal fur, whale oil, and gemstones found in the polar regions. Ethwel frequently travels to visit the tribes with whom he trades, and is quite knowledgeable about the northern regions of Thule.

## THE SILK EXCHANGE

Tir-Paland is the center of Quodeth's silk trade. The district is home to the workshops of weavers, dyers, tailors, and merchants dealing with silk. The Silk Exchange is a large, bustling hall where the precious material is bought and sold raw, woven, dyed, or finished. Merchants from all corners of Thule come here to buy their precious cargoes, and Quodeth's silk producers come here to vend their wares.

The Exchange is nominally under the control of a high-ranking panjandrum who holds the title of Minister of Silk and Measures, but in practice the leaders of the Dyers' Guild run the Exchange. Five members are elected each year to serve as the guild council and direct the guild's activities, but the real power lies in the hands of the immensely rich silk trader **Notho Reesh**. A merchant of common birth, Notho has held his position on the council of the Dyers' Guild for more than twenty years, and secretly controls the guild's enforcement and protection activities.

## SPIRE OF DAWN

Standing prominently on the headland at the west end of Quodeth's harbor, the Spire of Dawn is the city's temple of Asura. It faces the open waters of Sarvin Bay and is the first building in the city to catch the rays of the rising sun in the morning. Merchants and sailors setting out on new voyages often come to the Spire of Dawn to make a sacrifice to Asura, praying for good fortune in their new venture—a practice that arouses the jealousy of Tiamat's priests, although few of those are present in Quodeth. The High Diadem of Asura's temple is a scholarly woman named **Liana Vorzin**. A member of the powerful Vorzin family, she has commissioned a special project to build a great mosaic map of the dominions of Atlantis in the Spire's central hall, and is seeking ancient scrolls and codices with information about the farthest outposts of the island empire.

## THE TOWER OF BLACK FLAME

An Adventure for Character Levels 1–2

In the heart of Quodeth, the Tower of Black Flame rises into the sky, a dark six-story edifice of stone that stands alone. The abode of a dark sorcerer who is never seen to emerge, the Tower has seemingly always stood here, home to sorcerer after sorcerer. There's a large door at street level in the bottom of the tower, but no other doors or balconies or lower windows are visible in its black stone sides, and most of the time, the Tower is a place of brooding silence. But sometimes, late at night, eerie witch-lights dance around the Tower's uppermost floor, and strange flashes flare behind the large windows that ring the top of the Tower.

No one knows much about the current resident, although his name is rumored to be Kelauble or Kelauklyth or perhaps Glaarkyth. Some swear the sorcerer experiments on children, beggars, and visitors to Quodeth snatched by night by the strange monsters who serve him; others say he breeds serpents and cares nothing for humans, save as food for his slithering pets. Whatever the truth, all tales agree the sorcerer is powerful, dangerous, and fabulously wealthy—and all of his riches are inside the tower.

### BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs may be drawn to investigate the Tower of Black Flame by any of the following adventure hooks.

**Sudden Silence:** Rumors are being muttered around Quodeth that the flashes of spells being cast haven't been seen coming from the top of the tower for many days now. Is the sorcerer ill? Dead? Gone away? Transformed by magic, or injured in a fall and lying helpless? Thieves of the Seven Knives guild have been seen lurking near the tower, watching it. They must be contemplating grabbing the sorcerer's magic, gold, and secrets before anyone else does . . .

**The Merchant's Daughter:** A spice merchant named Ahreb Gluor is greatly agitated and offering a rich reward for the safe return of his beautiful daughter Naraye—her own weight in silver coins! She has simply vanished, and many men—including, some say, thugs who are members of the Seven Knives—have now scoured the city. They insist that she's either gone from Quodeth, or in the one place they haven't yet looked: Inside the Tower of Black Flame, presumably in the clutches of the sinister sorcerer. Gluor is offering a lot of coins for Naraye's safe return . . .

**The Moneylender's Cure:** Rich old Verglar Dethen, a miserly moneylender who owns scores of properties in Quodeth, has been bitten by a poisonous snake, and lies delirious, sinking toward death. His frantic family offers any five buildings Dethen

owns to whoever can bring him an antidote—but the snake got away, and no one knows what sort of serpent it was. The sorcerer in the Tower of Black Flame is said to know all about snakes, and to use snakes in his magic, but he doesn't answer the door. Whoever is bold enough to force their way into the tower and bring back an antidote that saves Dethen will become a wealthy landlord of Quodeth overnight!

### TOWER FEATURES

The Tower of Black Flame consists of six floors and five stairways. Each floor above the first is a single large room about 30 feet by 40 feet; the stairs are 3-foot wide halls that stand north and south of the main room in the floor, separated from the room below and the room above by doors. The walls are made of superior masonry, but have no coat of plaster—the blocks are visible.

**Illumination:** Unless stated otherwise, rooms are lit by small oil lamps, providing dim light. The stairs are not lit (so Kelauklyth normally carries a candle or small oil lamp when he goes from floor to floor).

**Doors:** The doors between the stairs and the rooms are large, single stone doors balanced on hidden pins. Each door has a metal lock plate and a pull handle near the middle of its right-hand edge. Each door is locked, but the lock is relatively simple—it only requires a successful Dexterity check (DC 15) to pick the lock. A door can also be forced open with the use of a pry bar (or similar tool) and a successful DC 20 Strength check.

### THE TOWER ENTRANCE

An old, massive, sturdy pair of stable doors stands shut in the base of the Tower, facing out to the cobbled alleys. Each door is made of wood reinforced with bronze, and stands six feet wide and ten feet tall. The doors are painted black, with bronze edge-frames covering the hinges. A large keyhole can be seen in the frame where the doors meet.

The doors are locked, and the locking mechanism within them is heavy. Anyone with access to something slender and made of hard metal can easily pick the lock (Dexterity check DC 5), but can't avoid making enough noise to warn anyone in the room inside the doors. The doors could also be forced open with a successful Strength check (DC 20).

The Tower doors lock automatically whenever closed, but a handle on the inside opens them readily.

## GROUND FLOOR

The room beyond the alley doors is about 40 feet square, with a 15-foot ceiling. This chamber was obviously once a stable for mules; it still smells faintly of their dung, and has rusty, crumbling tether-rings set into the walls on the left and right. The room is dark, illuminated only by the light through the open doors. A closed stone door with a metal pull-ring handle stands at the west end of the room's back wall, and there is a trapdoor in the floor near the middle of the back wall.

Along all four walls are heaped large, dusty barrels and crates that look as if they've been sitting undisturbed for some time; there are dozens of them, and they've been stacked rather untidily in groups that form walls about five feet high, a little way out from the stone walls behind them.

Standing in the center of the room is a ten-foot-tall metal statue of an armored minotaur with a trident in its hand. Its free hand is open and raised in a "stop" gesture as it faces you. Around its neck on a fine chain hangs a wooden sign that reads: "Go back or perish."

Beyond the statue, six human skulls with glowing eye-sockets hover in the air about five feet off the ground and ten feet or so in front of the far wall. They gaze intently at you.

The old stables now serve as storage space for the Tower's occupant. Kelauklyth is well aware that anyone infiltrating the Tower must first pass through this room, so he has arranged some surprises to deter intruders. While his own abilities are somewhat limited, the Tower itself possesses magical defenses that are keyed to respond to the commands of the Tower's owner, and the sorcerer has been experimenting with these for months now.

**The Skulls:** The six human skulls are a programmed illusion. They appear to keep looking intently at the PCs, and move to continue their unbroken scrutiny as any PC moves. They're constantly in motion, drifting gently about in midair. Although they move independently and energetically around this room—even peering over the shoulders of PCs!—they are intangible, can't speak or do any harm, and are nothing more than a scare tactic against intruders.

**Barrels and Crates:** These are filled with basic provisions such as flour, salted pork and beef, weak ale, cheese, jugs of wine, and lamp oil. They were bought several years ago by the Tower's previous occupant, and have all gone bad, except the oil. There are two oil casks holding 20 flasks' worth each, and a third cask which is mostly empty and appears recently used. If the PCs inspect the barrels on the east side of the room, they discover they are not alone—see Hidden Company, below.

**Trapdoor:** This heavy stone slab has a single iron pull-ring set in the center and is counterweighted, so it opens easily. It reveals a staircase leading down to the Tower cellars, as well as the horrendous stench of old sewage.

**The Minotaur Statue (200 XP):** If any PC touches or attacks the statue, or moves past the flying skulls and closer to the rear door than the skulls, the "statue" will animate. It's actually the animated skeleton of a minotaur, made to resemble a statue with mock armor, putty, and paint.

- 1 damaged minotaur skeleton (33 hp, CR 1)

Each time the PCs hit the skeleton, pieces of its disguise fall off; allow the character nearest the skeleton to attempt a Wisdom/Perception check (DC 10) to realize that the statue is a disguised skeleton. Once activated, the skeleton attacks any PC that moves until that PC falls motionless or departs the room. (The PCs can avoid being attacked by "playing dead.")

**Hidden Company (300 XP):** When the PCs enter the room, three Seven Knives thugs are hiding in this room behind the crates and barrels on the east side of the room. They have been here for a couple of hours, trying to get past the locked door. They heard the PCs' attempts to open the outer doors, and hid behind the crates and barrels.

- 3 Seven Knives thugs (see Chapter 6)

The thugs do not attack unless the PCs discover their hiding place—so if the PCs don't happen to look behind the barrels and crates, the thugs won't reveal themselves. Instead, they lie low in the hope that the PCs find a way to open the door to the north. The thugs then plan to stealthily follow the PCs, allowing the PCs to take the damage from traps and guardians for them. All Seven Knives know that if they freeze, the guardian "statue" will ignore them.

The Seven Knives have been camping in this room in shifts, so half a day (or night) after the first PC entry into the tower, another shift of three Seven Knives thugs will show up. If they discover any of their fellows dead or missing, two leave the tower to summon reinforcements (another three Seven Knives thugs), while one hides in the alleyway outside to see who exits the Tower and where they go. When they get the chance, the six thieves fall on the heroes and seek revenge for their fallen comrades.

## THE CELLARS

The trapdoor in the Ground Floor leads to a set of stairs descending 20 feet to the Tower cellars. Contrary to the rumors in Quodeth about treasure, the storage chambers beneath the Tower are flooded with sewage. Pipes from the higher floors carry waste from the privies down to this level, where a main then carries it out to the city's sewer. The Tower's sewage main rusted through years ago, with the expected result. Fortunately the Tower's covered well is in a different part of the cellar, and was not affected. Hand-pumps on higher floors draw water from the well via copper water pipes.

## THE SERPENT DOOR

The door leading from the Ground Floor to the stairs climbing up to the next level is a formidable barrier. It has stymied the Seven Knives thugs for days now.

**This 5-foot wide stone door has a ring-shaped metal pull-handle set into a metal plate at the midpoint of its left-hand edge. The metal plate is pierced by a keyhole, and appears to be the door's locking mechanism.**

The door is locked, although the lock is not very good. It only requires a successful Dexterity check (DC 15) check to open it, but the lock isn't the obstacle.

**Snake Trap (250 XP):** Affixed to the back of the door is an airhole-perforated box, home to five small, venomous snakes. Each is in a compartment that opens through the door's lock plate in a small, hidden hatch-cover. A character examining the door for traps discovers the hidden hatch-covers in the lock plate with a successful Wisdom/Perception check (DC 15). The trap can be disabled by blocking or sealing the hatch-covers, which requires a Dexterity check (DC 10).

Whenever someone tries to pick the lock, a wrong motion (any check that fails by 4 or more) triggers a spring mechanism that pushes a snake from its compartment through its hidden hatch-cover, dropping it in the lap of anyone working on the lock. The snake is naturally aggravated by this treatment and attacks (with surprise, the first time this happens). If the PCs break open or force the door, the box with the snakes in it drops to the floor when the door is opened, and all five snakes get out at once.

- 1 or 5 poisonous snakes

## FIRST FLIGHT OF STAIRS

When the Serpent Door is opened, the PCs see:

**Just beyond the door, a narrow stairway leads steeply up to the right, climbing up into darkness. There is no light in the stairway, and the air smells of mold and damp.**

This 3-foot-wide stair climbs 20 feet to the level landing in front of the Second Floor Door (see below). When the foremost PC reaches the seventh step, the footprint of a bare adult human left foot suddenly appears on the step, glowing with an eerie greenish-yellow radiance.

**Strange Signs:** The moment any PC moves beyond that seventh step, a voice whispers from the empty air farther on up the stair: "Come closer." A few moments later, it repeats, "Closer."

This is another "scare off intruders" illusion devised by a previous master of the Tower. It is harmless and does nothing else. The glowing footprint fades away a few minutes after it first appears, and won't reappear for at least 24 hours, when triggered again.

## SECOND FLOOR

**This square stone room is the same size and height as the room below. It seems to be divided between storage of personal effects, magical reagents, and a pantry.**

To your left are rows of cabinets and wooden shelves. The cabinets are filled with a wide variety of small clay jars. The shelves are crowded with fat glass jars filled with all sorts of things. Among the cabinets stands one whose entire top is a copper sink. A handpump, identical to the one you saw in the room below is fastened to the back of the sink so its spout pours into the sink. To your right sit sacks of flour, a "tower" of six stacked wheels of cheese, and an A-frame of wooden poles from which hang nets of onions and garlic, strings of sausages, and a net holding an open box containing round loaves of bread.

Across the room are two ornate stone doors, side by side. These doors are carved with two different but similar scenes of dragons flying amid clouds, apparently engaged in aerial combat with each other.

Out from behind the stacked cheeses comes a black cat. It stares at you, and meows plaintively.

The black cat is a perfectly ordinary housecat that Kelauklyth brought to the Tower to keep down mice and rats. (It's not the "pet" referred to elsewhere in this adventure.) It is friendly to the PCs if they're gentle with it, but will hiss, bite, and scratch if they don't treat it nicely.

**Mysterious Warning:** If any person other than Kelauklyth touches any of the cabinets or the jars of reagents stored in them, an unfriendly voice speaks out of thin air: “What is the secret that will keep you alive?” This is another glamer designed to deter intruders; nothing else happens, and it doesn’t matter if the PCs answer the voice or ignore it.

**Jars:** The clay jars in the cabinets contain ointments and potions (medicines, not magical) for the Kelauklyth’s personal use. The glass jars contain strange and unpleasant materials such as pickled human eyeballs, pickled squid tentacles, chicken bones, the claws and paws of many small birds and animals, a large number of small cloth bags that contain teeth and fangs from many creatures (one sort per bag), mummified bats, dried severed human fingers, charcoal, iron nails, and powdered human bone.

One large clay jar rattles with a hollow sound when examined: It contains a key that opens all the doors in the Tower (this is where Kelauklyth hides a spare).

**Spear Trap (200 XP):** The carved dragon door on the left is locked, but leads to the second flight of stairs. The door on the right conceals a spear trap. A character examining the door detects the trap with a successful Wisdom/Perception check (DC 20). Otherwise, the trap is triggered when someone attempts to open the door on the right or poke, push, or prod at its surface. The trap mechanism holds seven spears, each shooting out from a different hidden port in the door; one spear fires each time the trap is triggered. The spear attacks with a +7 bonus and inflicts 2d6 + 3 damage if it hits. Behind the trapped door is a shallow closet containing nothing but the mechanism of the trap.

## SECOND FLIGHT OF STAIRS

The left-hand door in the paired doors on the Second Floor is locked, and must be picked or forced open. It leads to another stairway identical to the previous flight of stairs.

**Ghostly Figure:** This stairway is not trapped, but it is home to another of the Tower’s frightening illusions. Whenever the door to the Third Floor is touched, a ghostly, wraith-like human figure bursts through the stone. Have the players roll initiative, and take whatever actions they like; the ghostly figure ignores any attacks they make. At the end of the round, the apparition charges down the stairs, passing through PCs in its way, and then fades harmlessly away. It is a simple illusion, not an undead creature or a magical attack.

# THE TOWER OF BLACK FLAME



## THIRD FLOOR

This square stone room seems to be divided between a living area and a sleeping area. A closed stone door stands on the opposite side of the room. A large wicker basket with a lid stands just to the right of the door. There is a curtained-off alcove in the room’s northeast corner, with a cabinet sink and handpump nearby.

A table and pair of chairs stand in the middle of the room. On the table is an unlit oil-lantern that looks full of oil, flint and steel, a tankard, a fine wineglass, a plate, a bowl, two small eating knives, a pair of forks, and a ladle. Everything’s clean, and you can’t see any food.

In the middle of the south wall, curtains hanging from the ceiling enclose a large triangular bed that has posts at its three corners, supporting a heavy cloth canopy above it. The posts are made of gilded wood. They are carved to show multiple snakes coiling up each one. The wooden serpents are posed with their wide-jawed heads raised to spit or bite.

The curtained-off corner in the northwest corner is a privy with a bench-seat toilet, flushed by a handpump jutting from the wall above it. The bed has a straw mattress covered with a sheet, a thin blanket, and a mound of five plump pillows.

Under the pillow is a foot-long, thin stick of wood carved to look like a scaled serpent with an arrow-shaped head. Although it looks like a wand, it isn't—yet. It's just a carved stick that Kelauklyth hopes to turn into a wand some day. He sleeps with it under his pillows, in the belief it will become "one" with his thoughts or dreams.

**Snakes in a Basket (300 XP):** The wicker basket beside the far door contains several live and quite dangerous snakes. If the basket isn't disturbed or its lid lifted, they remain coiled up and quiet, but if aroused, they spring up out of the basket to attack.

- 3 giant poisonous snakes

In addition to their normal abilities and attacks, these snakes have a fly speed equal to their normal movement rate—a curious magical effect of the Tower. The snakes fly at the PCs like seeing-eye arrows that

can change course in midair, rushing about until their gaping, poisoned fangs strike something solid.

**Treasure (100 XP):** Kelauklyth keeps a modest amount of booty in a small wooden chest beneath the bed. The chest contains 110 gp, 400 sp, a small silk pouch with three agates worth 10 gp each, and a *potion of healing*.

## THIRD FLIGHT OF STAIRS

The door in the south wall of the Fourth Floor chamber leads to the now-familiar stairway passage. Yet another disturbing sight awaits the party here, but this one is real, not illusory.

A noose of black tarred rope hangs down from the ceiling above the seventh step. It seems to dangle through a small aperture in the ceiling, not much larger than the diameter of the rope.

If this still-sturdy rope is left undisturbed, nothing happens. If the noose is touched or attacked, a deep warning bell tolls from some unseen bell higher in the tower. This alerts Kelauklyth to the approach of very persistent and dangerous intruders.

At the head of the stairs, there is a small landing in front of a closed stone door similar to others you have seen in the Tower. This one seems to have a spredeagled human skeleton fused into its surface, protruding halfway out of the stone. There's something dark inside its bony ribcage, something that hisses at you and starts to move!

The skeleton has been magically fused onto this door. The door is locked. However, picking the lock or forcing the door is difficult, since the skeleton's ribcage holds a coiled mass of small snakes.

**Creatures (250 XP):** The snakes begin to stir and grow angry when anyone other than Kelauklyth approaches. They can easily wriggle out of the rib cage to attack characters who attract their attention.

- 5 poisonous snakes

## FOURTH FLOOR

The Tower's fourth floor isn't a single open room like the lower levels. It's divided into three parallel hallways running between a transverse corridor just inside the door you're looking through, and what looks to be a matching open area on the far side of the level. There's a closed stone door in the wall opposite your door.

The central hallway has plain walls, but the two hallways on either side of it have walls covered with shelves and wooden pigeonholes for holding scrolls. All of them look empty, except for three rolled-up parchments halfway along the rack to your far right.



Kelauklyth intends to make this level into his library, filling the shelves and grid racks with books and scrolls, and painting the plain walls of the central hallway with scenes of his triumphs. Allow the players to have a half a minute at most of talk or debate and answer any explanatory questions about what they see. Then read:

**Suddenly some small, scaly creature scurries into the far end of the hallway to your left—something that rears up in size with astonishing speed. It's a dragon, its jaws opening as it glares at you and rushes forward without a sound!**

The PCs see this same sight at the end of all three far archways, as three lizards grow before their eyes into dragons that silently charge them!

**Creatures (350 XP):** The three “dragons” are actually ordinary, harmless lizards, each about the size of an iguana. They look like dragons because programmed illusions (a magical property of this level of the Tower) are triggered by the lizards’ release and create the images of dragons wherever the lizards go. Have the players roll initiative when the “dragons” appear; the lizards act last in the round.

The illusory dragons ignore any attack or injury, but if a lizard is killed, the dragon image tied to it fades away. Since the lizards are hard to see behind the dragon illusions, there is only a 1 in 6 chance that any attack against a “dragon” happens to target the lizard within the illusion. The lizards are trained to run up to first person they see and wait for a treat, so the dragon images appear to charge up and then wait expectantly.

The lizards are normally kept in small cages in the northwest corner of the room, out of sight of characters at the entrance to the room. They were released from their cages by the room’s true guardian—a dangerous skeleton—when the monster heard the door from the lower stairway open. The skeleton moves to follow one of the “dragons” as it charges the PCs by the door, and plunges through the illusory dragon to engage the PCs on the round after the dragon’s “charge.”

- 3 lizards
- 1 damaged minotaur skeleton (33 hp, CR 1)

**Treasure (100 XP):** Two of the rolled-up scrolls are blank, but the third holds a scroll of *chromatic orb*.

## FOURTH FLIGHT OF STAIRS

This stairway resembles the stairways of the lower levels—and, like them, it is protected by the Tower’s magical defenses. Once the leading PC reaches the third step, a frightening apparition appears:

**An eerie blue-green radiance kindles around a skull that suddenly appears out of thin air near the head of the stairs. Then the skull flies down the stairs toward you!**

The skull is a programmed illusion. It reacts like a living creature as it swoops down, ducking and dodging attacks, then darts right at the face of a random PC. The skull seems to pass right through the target character and then dissipates, leaving the target with an icy, crawling sensation and blinking at a bright blue-green flash in his or her eyes—unnerving, but harmless.

Another skull, identical in looks and behavior, appears for each step ascended after the third, until six skulls have appeared. All strike at random PCs.

**Skull Trap (100 XP):** The first five skulls are harmless illusions, but the sixth and last one is a magically animated skull of bronze that strikes like a mace. The skull attacks with a +6 bonus, and deals 1d8 damage when it hits. The PCs are surprised if they have decided to ignore the skull illusions. The animated skull attacks once per round after its first strike. The magic animating the skull can be disrupted by targeting or striking the skull with any spell or magical effect. It can also be defeated by five successful weapon attacks (the skull is AC 15 due to its small size and agility).

At the head of the stairs is a landing, and a door leading into the Fifth Floor:

**The stair ends at a closed stone door that seems to have a stylized bronze skeleton design sculpted on the surface of the door. The image’s skull is missing, leaving an empty socket about the size and shape of the animated skull you just encountered.**

The rest of the bronze skeleton is harmless. The door is locked, like the others in the Tower.

## FIFTH FLOOR

**This floor is dominated by a dome 20 feet across in the center of its ceiling. Around the lip or lower edge of this dome runs a ring of archways formed by a circle of twelve slender stone pillars. Standing tall and sinister at the center of this ring is a high-backed throne carved of some dark, green-black stone. Its arched top resembles a staring serpent head, and its side and arms are adorned with snarling open-mouthed fanged serpents. It emanates a faint acrid smell and has a waxy, unhealthy look.**

**Beyond the throne and the ring of pillars, directly across the room from your door, is the usual closed-stone door leading to the next level.**

This is where Kelauklyth likes to sit and think or read tomes of magic. He isn’t here at the moment, and can be found on the Sixth Floor.



**Poisoned Throne:** Small clear dabs of contact poison are smeared on the undersides of the arms of the throne. If any PC sits on the throne or searches it without wearing a glove, there is a 50% chance that he or she accidentally touches the contact poison.

- Carrion crawler venom

**Creature (200 XP):** Lurking behind the throne, hiding behind its bulk until the PCs get close, is Kelauklyth's pet, a foul little creature called the Kelauble. The creature skulks around the tower, hiding in various spots. If it notices intruders, it attempts to hide until someone approaches the throne, then spring out and attack. It also attacks if the party continues on to the door leading to the next flight of stairs without investigating the throne. The Kelauble fights to the death, but isn't interested in suicide; it moves from PC to PC, trying to wound or disable and move on to another target. It goes after obvious spellcasters first, then what it deems to be the weakest PCs, leaving the strongest foes until last. "Hit and run" is its fighting style.

- The Kelauble (see Chapter Six)

**Treasure (100 XP):** A secret compartment in the back of the throne contains six onyx gemstones (50 gp each) and a *potion of growth*. The PCs must succeed on an Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 15) to find the hidden compartment.

## FIFTH FLIGHT OF STAIRS

The final flight of stairs is identical to the stairways of the preceding levels. There is one final trap for the PCs to overcome—an alarm system.

**Chiming Steps:** The third, fifth, eighth, eleventh, and thirteenth steps don't look any different from the safe steps, but each one sinks an inch or so under the weight of someone stepping on it. This strikes a large chime hidden under the step, making a loud, rolling note. The chimes under each step vary in tone, so the five notes are each different. A character searching for traps on the steps can find the chime-striking steps with a successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 15); the DC drops to 10 to find all remaining chime-striking steps after the PCs experience the first one. Disabling the steps is not very hard, requiring only a Dexterity check (DC 10), but it is of course simpler to just step over the trapped steps.

The chimes are harmless, but they are loud, and they alert Kelauklyth in the room above that someone is approaching.

## SIXTH FLOOR

The top floor of the Tower is a square room about 50 feet across. Large windows smudged with the soot of fiery spells or experiments stand in each wall, each covered by heavy wooden shutters. A wooden ladder fixed to the west wall leads up to a trapdoor in the ceiling—the roof, or so you would guess. The trapdoor is secured from below by a heavy bolt.

Worktables and shelves are arranged around the perimeter of the room, cluttered with various notes and diagrams on old parchment and a collection of strange powders, flasks, wands, amulets, and other devices of arcane significance. A rather scorched pedestal lectern stands near the center of the chamber. Three skeletal warriors stand motionless in the middle of each wall.

If the PCs pulled the rope on the third flight of stairs or stepped on a chiming step in the fifth flight, Kelauklyth is ready for them. Read the following text.

Across the room from you is a dark, writhing wall of serpents as high as a tall man's chest. From behind this barrier, a tall, thin, tuft-bearded man in green robes glares coldly at you. He seems to be perhaps thirty years of age, and his scalp is clean-shaven. "Who are you?" he demands, as the serpents hiss and snap in front of him. "Why have you invaded my home?"

This chamber is where Kelauklyth comes to work spells, obsessively trying to perfect new magics by modifying written spells created by others (the flashes of these spells are often seen by citizens of Quodeth, as they flare behind the many large windows of this room). Warned by the sound of the chimes from the stairs outside his door, the serpent-mancer is prepared to make a stand and defend his home. The wall of serpents is a harmless illusion, although Kelauklyth hopes that it will deter his enemies from charging him all at once.

**Adventure Objective:** If the PCs are here to search for Naraye Gluor, the spice merchant's daughter is here, tied up in a chair. Kelauklyth abducted her with the idea of ransoming her back to her father, and is holding her to raise the price. If the PCs are here to find an antivenin for Verglar Dethen, the room's contents include a healer's kit with a large selection of specific antivenins. Kelauklyth might be persuaded to sell the antivenin for a princely sum, but if the PCs try to pay him with treasure they've taken from other levels of his tower, the serpent-mancer flies into a rage.

**Room Features:** The windows are about 2 feet wide and 6 feet tall, and are made with glass panes in a light wooden frame—if the shutters weren't secured, it would be easy for someone to leap out (or be pushed out) and fall 100 feet to the cobblestones of the alley outside. Opening the shutters takes an action.

The trapdoor in the ceiling opens onto the steeply pitched roof of the tower. Up there, Kelauklyth keeps a scroll of *feather fall* hidden in the mouth of a gargoyle (a simple rain spout, not a monster). If Kelauklyth gets a chance to flee by this route, he will take it.

**Creatures (550 XP):** Kelauklyth remains behind his wall of serpents as long as possible, raking the party with magical attacks. (See the description in Chapter Six for details of his powers and preferred tactics.) He naturally favors serpent-themed spells, and several of his powers have minor serpent-themed variations (such as magic missiles that look like tiny golden snakes).

The skeletons are quite weak, and intended to serve as a distraction; they move to defend their master when combat is joined.

- Kelauklyth (see Chapter 6)
- 3 decrepit skeletons (hp 6, CR 1/8)

If all three skeletons are destroyed and Kelauklyth is at half hit points or less, he attempts to retreat. He either dashes for the door leading down to the fifth stairway or heads for the ladder to the rooftop, depending on which direction looks like his best bet. If escape is clearly impossible, he's not too proud to surrender and try to bargain for his life. He tries to convince the PCs that there is a treasure hidden on the rooftop, hoping he can distract the party long enough to grab the scroll there and leap to safety. If that fails, he promises to lead the PCs to a rich treasure hidden somewhere in Quodeth, and seek to escape when the opportunity presents itself.

**Dealing with Kelauklyth:** If the PCs choose to parlay with the sorcerer, Kelauklyth is coldly furious that the PCs have invaded his tower. He is arrogant and ruthless, and he will promise anything but abide by his word only when it benefits him. He hungers to gather ever more magic, and although he doesn't want worldly power, he also doesn't want to be told what to do by anyone. If the party shows any signs of weakness or indecision, Kelauklyth blasts them—he hopes to catch them off guard and finish them with a barrage of spells.

**Treasure (300 XP):** In addition to any quest objective that may be present and the gear Kelauklyth wears, wooden cases on the worktables contain additional treasure: a small pouch containing six carnelians worth 50 gp each, a *brooch of shielding*, and three *beads of force*.

## CONCLUSION

With Kelauklyth and his foul little pet dead or captured, the Tower of the Black Flames belongs to the PCs—or does it? If the party did not discover the Seven Knives thugs hiding in the Ground Floor, the thieves may attempt to overwhelm the heroes with a sudden attack after they finish with the sorcerer, or ambush them on a lower floor. If the PCs leave behind any valuable treasure on the lower floors, the Seven Knives who follow them naturally help themselves, and may in fact choose to leave with the loot.

The Tower itself is a valuable prize; the PCs may want to claim it as their own lair in Quodeth. Its magical properties and defenses are not easily puzzled out, however—it will take characters with arcane talents months to figure out how the Tower's magic can be used to create illusions and animate objects or undead guardians, during which time the PCs may discover new secrets of the Tower of Black Flames.

## CAVERN OF GOLDEN TEARS

An Adventure for Character Levels 2-4

The Ghan Peninsula is a rugged region of deep jungle and dismal swamps a short voyage from Quodeth. The area is home to fierce tribes and dangerous beasts, but a handful of bold jungle traders roam the Ghan, bartering Quodethi metalwork and textiles for the gemstones, ivory, and exotic pelts the friendlier tribes sometimes trade. One such trader was a man named Jodom, who ran into ill fortune and found something extraordinary.

Jodom and his porters were exploring a little-traveled region of the Ghan known as the Mozar Vale when they were set upon by beastmen marauders. The jungle trader was forced to flee. He blundered into the overgrown ruins of a lost city, and hid in a cavern temple. Here Jodom discovered a strange thing indeed: A huge stone throne on which sat the mummified corpse of a mighty king of old. From the dry eye sockets of the dead king, rivulets of liquid gold slowly ran, solidifying into great gold stalagmites around the body.

Jodom snapped off a chunk of gold the size of his forearm, and later crept back out of the temple to make his way back to the civilized outpost of Ghanport. Unfortunately, his wounds or the poison of jungle vermin proved mortal. He died shortly after he was tended by priests of Set.

Drawn by this mysterious tale, the heroes have come to the jungles of Ghan to find this cavern of gold, explore the ruins of the lost city, or perhaps investigate Jodom's death. But they aren't the only ones interested in the jungle trader's story—Mador Kheb, the priest of Set who tended Jodom in his last hours, is also after the fabulous cavern of golden tears.

### BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

What brings the PCs to the jungles of the Ghan? They may be drawn to this wild landscape for several different reasons. Choose the adventure hook that seems best to you.

**Greed, Pure and Simple:** The story of the jungle trader who found a cavern full of gold makes its way to the heroes, and they decide to seize the day. Choose one of the PCs who might conceivably have a contact in one of Quodeth's merchant houses. That contact passes the story on to the PC as a rumor, which the party then decides to investigate.

**Scrolls of Moz:** A Quodethi sage named Tyarna has studied stories of the lost city of Kal-ne-Moz for years. When the story of Jodom reaches her, she realizes that the jungle trader found the lost city, which means that the legendary Scrolls of Moz might be within her reach. Tyarna hires the PCs to journey to Kal-Ne-Moz and bring back the Scrolls of Moz, offering to pay the party 1,000 gold pieces for the scrolls.

**Avenging a Friend:** One of the PCs is a friend of the trader Jodom. When word comes that Jodom is wounded and delirious after a jungle expedition, the PC (accompanied by the rest of the party) races to Ghanport to help, only to arrive too late. The servants who tended Jodom claim that he was beginning to rally before Mador Kheb, the priest of Set, tended him. Now Jodom is dead, and Mador Kheb has vanished. He was last seen heading up the Ghan River.

### GHANPORT AND QUODETH

This adventure takes place in the wild Ghan peninsula, a hundred miles or more from Quodeth. A small walled town named Ghanport stands at the mouth of the Ghan River, on the shore of the Kalayan Sea. Here several Quodethi merchants have outposts to deal with the local jungle traders.

From Quodeth, it's only a three-day voyage up the River Quosa and across Sunrise Bay to Ghanport. Finding a galley bound for Ghanport is simple enough, so the PCs can get from the city to the jungle without much trouble. Details of Ghanport are not important in this adventure, since the adventure start assumes that the PCs already stopped there, spoke with those who attended Jodom, and are now on their way to the Mozar Vale.

### ADVENTURE START

This adventure starts in the middle of the action. The PCs traveled to the Ghan, got the gist of Jodom's story, paddled up the Ghan River to a small trader's landing, and set off into the jungle. Now they're being chased by a large band of beastmen. Give the players the minimal explanation below, and fill in the extended version after the first encounter.

Refer to the Mozar Vale map. The PCs are at the 'X' marked Start.

You are fleeing for your lives.

Three days ago you left Quodeth in search of a legendary ruined city and a cavern of gold in the jungles of the Ghan Peninsula. Yesterday you left your boats at a small landing on the banks of the Ghan River, but at dawn beastman scouts picked up your trail. Scores of savage warriors are pursuing you through the jungle. You can hear them grunting and hooting to each other behind you, while sudden flights of jungle birds and the sounds of thrashing brush makes it clear more are closing in.

You break into the open for a moment, and discover an old stone roadway crossing your path. What do you do?

## FIGHT OR FLIGHT

The players need to come up with a strategy to save their skins—there are too many beastmen to fight in the open. They need to outrun or evade their pursuers in some way. Strategies that might work include:

**Keep Running:** Have the party make three group Constitution (or Endurance) checks to escape. The first is DC 5, the second is DC 10, and the third is DC 15. If the party succeeds on all three checks, they successfully outrun the beastmen. Ignore the *Spears in the Shadows* encounter below (but award experience for overcoming the encounter), and continue with the *Mozar Vale*.

If the party fails at the first or second check, they blunder into a beastman ambush. Go to *Spears in the Shadows*. The party is surprised, and characters who failed the Con check suffer 1 exhaustion level. If the party fails at the third check, the beastmen overtake them after a long chase. The party is not surprised, but characters who failed the check are exhausted as described above.

**Hide or Divert Pursuit:** The party must succeed three times in efforts to be stealthy or distract their pursuers in order to escape. A combination of hiding and creating a distraction is the best choice. If they succeed, skip the *Spears in the Shadows* encounter (but award experience for overcoming the encounter). If they fail, continue with *Spears in the Shadows*.

Tactics that may work in this challenge include:

- *Hide:* Make a group Dexterity/Stealth check. The DC is 10 for the first success, 15 for the second, and 20 for the third.
- *Mimic Calls or Lead Astray:* One character may attempt a Charisma/Deception check at DC 15 to gain one success.
- *Magic:* Use of an appropriate spell (anything that can help conceal the party, or conceivably distract pursuers) counts as one automatic success.

**Set Ambush:** The party tries to take out one of the pursuing groups and make a hole in the cordon. Have the PCs attempt a group Dexterity/Stealth check, DC 15. If the party succeeds, go on to *Spears in the Shadows*; the PCs have surprise. If the party fails, the beastmen sniff out the ambush and attempt to counter-ambush; have the PCs attempt a group Wisdom/Perception check (DC 15). If they fail, the beastmen surprise them in the *Spears in the Shadows* encounter.

## GROUP SKILL CHECKS

To make a group skill check, each PC in the party attempts the check. If half or more of the PCs succeed, then the group succeeds. Otherwise, the group fails. If the party splits up—for example, some PCs hide, and some run—treat each group trying the same action as its own separate group.

## SPEARS IN THE SHADOWS

Run this encounter if the PCs fail to outrun the pursuing beastmen, ambush them, or decide to make a straight-up fight of it.

You find a vine-covered stone ruin not far from the old road. The structure has no roof, but the walls look to be about two feet thick, and still stand about 10 feet tall. There are several old embrasures choked with vines looking out toward the road. The embrasures are awkwardly high for humans, at least 5 feet above the ground. It looks like as good a place as any to make a stand against the beastmen!

If the beastmen surprised the PCs because the PCs failed in *Fight or Flight*, the beastmen are waiting in ambush around the building. The party is about 20 feet away when the beastmen break cover and attack. If the PCs aren't surprised, they can set up in and around the ruin, and the pursuing beastmen appear about 50 feet behind the party.

**Creatures (900 XP):** The beastman tribe pursuing the party has broken up into a number of small bands, spreading out to cover more ground. This group consists of:

- 3 beastman warriors (see Chapter 6)
- 3 beastman hunters (see Chapter 6)

This is intended to be a somewhat challenging encounter for the party. If the hunters are killed, any remaining warriors flee. If all three warriors and at least one hunter have been killed, the surviving hunters flee.

**Conclusion:** When the PCs defeat the beastmen, move on to *Player Background*, and then continue the adventure in *The Mozar Vale*. If the beastmen defeat the party, they strip the PCs of arms and armor, tie them up, and prepare to kill them in horrible fashion. The PCs will need to make a heroic escape!

## PLAYER BACKGROUND

After the PCs deal with the immediate challenge of escaping the beastmen, fill in the rest of the background for the players.

You came to the jungles of Ghan on the trail of a wild story. A few days ago, a jungle trader named Jodom stumbled out of the jungle and died in delirium shortly after, but not before telling his story. Near a nameless ruin in the Mozar Vale, Jodom's party was set upon by beastmen. Fleeing the bloodthirsty savages, the trader blundered into a cavern temple.

Here Jodom discovered a stone throne on which sat the gigantic mummified corpse of a mighty king of old. Rivulets of liquid gold slowly ran from the dry eye sockets of the dead king, solidifying into gold stalagmites around the body. Jodom snapped off a chunk of gold, and made

his way back to the outpost of Ghanport. There he died shortly after he was tended by priests of Set, who took the gold tears and admonished Jodom's household that it was better not to dabble in the jungle's secrets.

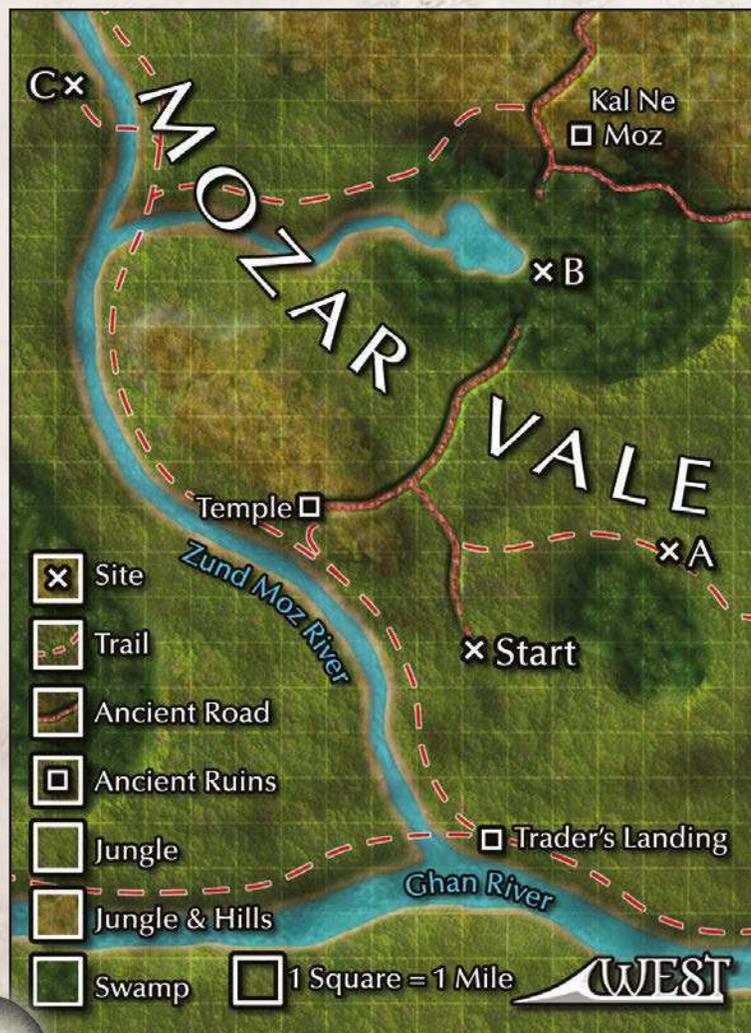
After speaking with Jodom's servants and other traders in Ghanport, you set out to find this wonder for yourself . . . but, as you've seen, this is beastman territory.

Add details as necessary for the adventure hook you're using. Continue with *The Mozar Vale*, below.

## THE MOZAR VALE

Once the PCs have successfully eluded or driven off the beastmen hunting them, they can continue on their quest. The next challenge is locating the ruins they are looking for; the jungle is dense and difficult to navigate.

No other parties of beastmen seem to be nearby at the moment—this seems like a good chance to get moving again. From the old ruined guardhouse, you can spy the steep limestone bluffs of a tall hill a mile or two away to the northwest. The old, overgrown road continues toward the north. You know that the Ghan River and the place where you landed lie several miles behind you to the south.



The PCs can march off in any direction they like. If they follow a road or trail, they can march at their normal pace (generally about 2 miles per hour). Cutting cross-country is tougher, and slows them to 1 mile per hour. The Cavern of Golden Tears lies in the ruins of Kal-Ne-Moz, on the northern side of the Place of Sinking Stones.

### A. ABANDONED CAMP

The trail leads beside a swampy lowland broken by several large, open lakes. Near one lakeshore you find the remains of a destroyed camp. A tent lies in tatters, and packs of provisions have been torn open and scattered around the area. Two half-devoured humans lie dead here, ripped apart by some jungle predator.

Mador Kheb (the priest of Set) and his guards camped here a day before the PCs arrived at the Trader's Landing on the river. The cultists were attacked by an angry ground sloth, and only chased off the creature with the loss of two men. Mador Kheb ordered his remaining guards to leave the tent and supplies damaged by the fighting here, along with the guards who fell to the sloth's claws. Scavenging beasts have taken care of the rest.

A careful examination reveals that the dead humans are dressed in black leather armor and hooded robes. Their weapons are missing. A successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 10) reveals a holy symbol of Set lying beneath one body. A character skilled in Nature or Survival can attempt a skill check (DC 15) to determine that the camp is a day old, a giant sloth attacked it, and that several survivors packed up and marched west along the trail.

**Creatures (600 XP):** While the Thulean sloth that attacked the Setists is not around anymore, there is another danger here: Two crested eagles are perched on high branches a couple of hundred feet away, watching for likely prey. They are hard to see from the campsite—it requires a Wisdom/Perception check (DC 18) to spot them.

- 2 crested eagles (see Chapter 6)

The eagles attack if the party splits up or spreads out enough so that one or two characters are at least 30 feet away from the rest of the party.

### B. TEMPLE OF MOZ

A stone ruin stands on top of this steep jungle ridge. A wide plaza or terrace of heavy stone serves as the base for a ruined building with thick walls and a simple corbel roof, now collapsed in places. Ancient bronze doors hang crookedly in the entrance, and a number of strange statues—each depicting a tall warrior with not-quite-human features, dressed in ancient arms.

From this vantage you can make out the muddy brown ribbon of a river below you to the southwest, while seven or eight miles to the northeast, another hilly area climbs up out of the jungle floor. But as you get your bearings, you note that the jungle is eerily silent here.

Any character making a close examination of the statues can attempt an Intelligence/History check (DC 15) to identify the warriors as janni, one of the races of geniekind. No janni civilizations are known to exist in the current day, but old texts suggest that genies or their descendants once lived in Thule.

The beastmen are afraid of these ruins and will not come within sight of this place.

**Creatures (600 XP):** The temple is cursed and guarded by the undead. If any character enters the temple, skeletons animate and rise from the dusty floor and rubble inside, attacking until destroyed.

- 6 skeletons

**Treasure (300 XP):** The stone altar has a hidden compartment that can be found with a careful search. Inside is a tattered silk pouch with eight malachites worth 10 gp each, and a *peript of health*. The treasure was concealed here long ago by a priest who tended this temple.

### C. PLACE OF SINKING STONES

The old stone road gives out and vanishes altogether in a low, swampy area, and the forest canopy is thick enough that it soon becomes difficult to keep your bearings.

This patch of swamp is known as the Place of Sinking Stones to the tribes of the Ghan jungles, named for the half-drowned Moz ruins that can be found here and there. Parties following the old stone road they discovered in the Adventure Start scene will find that it ends here.

To cross the swamp with minimal danger, the party must find their way through, while avoiding exhaustion and dangerous creatures. The party can move at 1 mile per hour in the swamp. Each hour, they must make three checks: one to find the way, one to manage the terrain, and one to avoid danger.

*Find the Way:* The party must pick one character to follow. The character leading the way must succeed on a Wisdom/Survival check (DC 10) to move toward Kal-Ne-Moz. On a failure, the party makes no effective forward progress for this hour.

*Manage the Terrain:* Each character must make a Constitution save (DC 10) each hour. PCs who fail gain 1 exhaustion level until the party takes a long rest. Characters who are already exhausted gain another level of exhaustion, but can't gain more than 2 exhaustion levels from failing this challenge.

*Avoid Peril:* Once per hour, the party must attempt a group skill check at DC 10 to avoid blundering



into a dangerous encounter. Each PC may choose to use Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Perception or Survival) for this check. If the party fails the group check, they meet a dangerous predator.

**Creature (1,100 XP):** The swamps of Thule are home to the dreaded sabertooth cat. If the party fails to avoid peril as they move through the swamp, they meet a hungry sabertooth.

- 1 sabertooth cat (see Chapter 6)

If half or more of the characters in the party have at least 1 exhaustion level, the sabertooth cat gains surprise. The beast lets loose with an earsplitting snarl and bounds out of the undergrowth, singling out a random character to be its next meal.

### D. KAL-NE-MOZ

Old overgrown ruins and vine-covered obelisks mark the location of an ancient city. The place must be thousands of years old—not a single building is still standing, and jungle trees many centuries old are rooted atop the tumbled stone rubble of the walls. There doesn't seem to be much left here, but a path leads beside a small stream up the hillside to the east, where you can make out a dark cave mouth.

The cave mouth is the entrance to the Sacred Cavern of Moz (see below), the cave where Jodom hid from the beastmen just a week or two ago. Most beastmen shun this place and refuse to approach. The surface ruins are in such poor condition that it's impossible to tell anything about who built them or what purpose various buildings served.

The true story of the city is that Kal-Ne-Moz was built by janni, one of the more humanoid races of geniekind. The Moz were peaceful and advanced, ruling over a subject population of human tribes who revered them as godlike teachers and kings. But civil war and a dark curse brought down the civilization a thousand years before the rise of Atlantis, and the city was abandoned.

## SACRED CAVERN OF MOZ

The ancient Moz used this cavern as a royal crypt and a place where the rulers of the city could go to commune with their ancestors and perform secret rites. The few local peoples who have discovered this place avoid it, but the shamans of the nearby beastmen tribes do venture into this place, performing primitive and foul rituals to honor the evil spirits they worship.

**Features:** Floors in the caves are even and smooth, having been chiseled flat and sanded long ago. The walls are natural stone, except for the carved-out alcoves. Holes bored in the ceiling are largely overgrown, but still admit a dim, gloomy light that makes it possible to see in the sacred caves, at least if it's daylight outside. By night, it's pitch dark in here.

**Statues:** More than thirty statues are carefully arranged in the Sacred Caverns. These generally stand about 7 to 8 feet tall and are made of stone. They were painted in lifelike colors long ago, but only a few flakes of pigment still remain. Each statue is different, depicting a specific man or woman among Moz's royal house. Each statue also holds a small urn (or stands by a small urn) in which the ashes of the deceased royal were interred.

### I. CAVERN ENTRANCE

Weathered stone steps lead up to an entrance of natural stone, smoothed and worked to form a relatively clear passage. Worn bas-reliefs depict tall, toga-clad humanoids with sad, wise faces. It looks like they are depicted as being significantly taller and more nobly proportioned than humans. Most of the faces have been crudely chiseled out or smashed.

The beings shown in the reliefs are janni, a race related to geniekind. They are not widely known in Thule. Characters who succeed on an Intelligence/History check (DC 15) recall legends of a race of

geniekind philosophers and magic-users who were said to inhabit the Ghan long ago. They are known today only by the mysterious stone ruins they left behind in the jungles.

The damage to the reliefs appears recent (most likely within the last few years).

### 2. THE SILENT SENTINELS

Three large statues stand in an alcove in the side of the passage. They depict tall, regal-looking warriors with vigilant expressions; the facial features are not quite human. Each is carved with a round shield, a helm, a shortsword, and a foot-tall urn or jar standing by its feet.

These three individuals were honored warriors known as defenders of the Moz people in their time. At death, each was granted the honor of guarding the royal crypts for eternity. The urns contain the warriors' ashes, along with a few bits of charred bone.

### 3. WITCH DOCTOR'S CAVE

A flight of wide stone steps climbs up to a large chamber. Six large statues similar in style and execution to the ones in the passage just inside the cave entrance stand here, grouped into two alcoves containing three statues each. Two additional incomplete statues stand in the middle of the room, surrounded by mounds of broken stone, and two gigantic skeletons lie slumped against the eastern wall. Across the chamber from you, a vile beastman wearing a headdress of bones and feathers squats by a small fire that gives off reeking smoke.

This chamber was one used by the artisans of Moz to prepare their sacred statues; the incomplete images are kings they simply didn't get to before the city fell into chaos. These statues depict rulers, not warriors; they are dressed in robes and carry scepters.

**Creatures (1,700 XP):** This cavern is the lair of the vile beastman witch-doctor Yhurgya, who uses his association with these mysterious and frightening ruins to terrify the other members of his tribe. He is the one who defaced the reliefs outside.

- 1 beastman cursemaker (see Chapter 6)
- 2 ancient minotaur skeletons (33 hp, CR 1)

The large skeletons are ancient guardians of the caverns, and Yhurgya has discovered that they are the work of the evil king entombed in area 7. Quite by accident Yhurgya discovered that the king's ring allows him to command the skeletons; Yhurgya wears it as an amulet around his neck, tying it with a leather thong. The beastman gleefully commands the skeletons to



## SACRED CAVERN

1 square = 5 feet



destroy any intruders, but flees if both of his undead servants are destroyed.

**Treasure (300 XP):** The ring Yhurgya wears as an amulet is moderately valuable (500 gp). It isn't magical—the skeletons were simply commanded long ago to obey anybody who wore it.

### 4. CAVE OF THE GUARDIANS

Five more statues line two alcoves in this chamber. These depict wise kings and queens of the mysterious ancient people who lived here. A swift subterranean stream flows into this room through a low arch in the northeast and exits the room through another low arch to the west. An old stone bridge crosses the stream near the middle of the cavern.

The passages through which the stream enters and exits are actually passable—the stream is about 2 feet deep, and the passage ceiling is about 2 feet above the water surface, so a human-sized character can stoop and splash his or her way to area 7 or area 5 by following the stream.

**Creatures (800 XP):** Lurking behind the big statues are the room's undead defenders—shadows. The creatures are difficult to spot behind the statues. They wait until intruders reach the middle of the room (for example, crossing the bridge), and then spring out to

attack. Each character is allowed a Wisdom/Perception check (DC 16) to avoid being surprised.

- 4 shadows

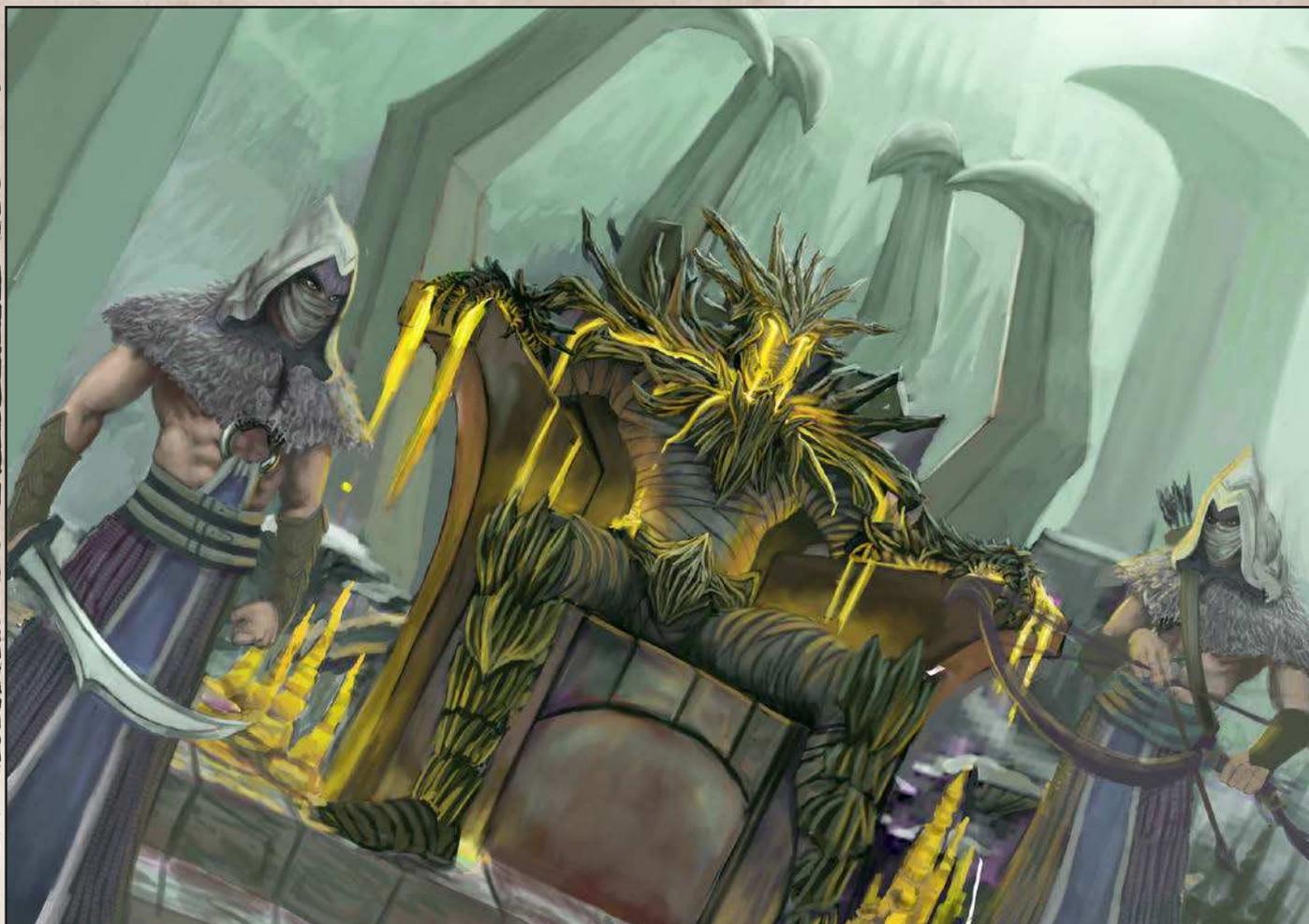
The shadows are (or were) human; long ago, the janni elites of Moz were served by large households of human slaves and warriors. These shadows were created to help safeguard the resting places of their masters.

### 5. SECRET CAVE

The only way to reach this cave is to wade through the stream tunnel from area 4, or to scramble up behind the waterfall near the cave entrance (area 1). Unlike other chambers, this room is quite dark.

The stream flows from one end to the other of this dark chamber, entering and exiting through low, wide natural passages at the south and north end of the room. Five more statues stand here, although these are not like the others you have seen. Instead of wise or peaceful expressions, they look distinctly sinister, with harsh scowls or unsettling leers. They are also shown in what seem to be wizards' robes, and each carries a large scroll tube.

Late in the history of Kal-Ne-Moz, a short-lived cabal of wizard-kings assumed power and jointly governed



the city. Because of their royal pedigree, they too were entombed here, but the Moz craftsmen chose to hide them away from the rest of the city's rulers. The images are alarming, but harmless.

**Treasure (900 XP):** The scroll tubes in each statue are hollow, and the five scroll tubes together hold the Scrolls of Moz. These are arcane treatises stamped on sturdy copper foil, the secret wisdom of the Moz wizard-kings. If you are not using the Scrolls of Moz adventure hook, the five scrolls are potentially valuable to a sage or collector (200 gp each).

## 6. PRIESTS' CRYPT

Stone steps lead up to a low-ceilinged cave that appears to be located high in the cavern complex. Three more statues stand along the south wall; these appear to be depicted in ceremonial robes and headgear. Several bedrolls are arranged on the floor of this room, with packs full of provisions nearby. To the north, a narrow gallery or ledge looks out over a much larger cavern below. A stream runs through the large cavern, but its most impressive feature is a huge stone seat in a clump of stalagmites. A small, rubble-filled passage descends from this chamber to the northeast and appears to lead to the lower cavern.

This chamber is where the Moz artisans interred several priest-kings, monarchs who served as the city's high priests as well as its rulers. The bedrolls and provisions belong to Mador Kheb and his guards; the Setists are camping here while Mador Kheb tries to determine the safest way to deal with the summoning trap protecting the throne in area 6. The passage to area 7 is cluttered with rubble, but is generally passable—it's only difficult terrain.

**Creatures (0 or 1,300 XP):** If the PCs have not yet encountered Mador Kheb or visited area 7, then the priest of Set and his warriors are here. See *Unexpected Company*, on the next page.

**Treasure:** There are no valuables in the villains' bedrolls or packs, but if the party is running low on provisions, there are five packs with six days' rations each here.

## 7. CAVERN OF THE WEeping KING

The stone steps lead to a beautiful natural cavern with glittering chips of mica in the walls and weird flowstone curtains and stalagmites. No less than seven impressive statues, all showing ancient kings, stand watch in this room. Across a rushing stream of cold, clear water, you

see the great stone throne told of in the jungle trader's tale. A huge, ancient mummy nine feet tall slumps in the seat, dressed in the remains of lacquered armor now green with age. A ceremonial headdress crowns its great skull, but it's the glitter of gold on its withered cheeks that catches your eye. Just as the jungle trader said, the trickling gold forms half a dozen glittering stalagmites at the dead king's elbows, feet, and waist.

This is the body of Kaldraz, the last king of the Moz. The avarice of Kaldraz instigated the civil strife that consumed Kal-Ne-Moz and led to his city's downfall. Greedy and grasping, he was cursed by the gods for the crime of murdering his own kin to ensure his grasp on power.

A successful *detect magic* (or similar effect) reveals that necromancy and conjuration effects are anchored to the long-dead king. The conjuration effect is a summoning trap (see below) of moderate power surrounding the throne, while the necromancy effect is an unusually powerful curse that affects the remains of Kaldraz (the divine curse that makes the dead body weep golden tears).

The amount of gold trickling from the eye sockets is miniscule, maybe a few ounces per month. Tiny gold flake is suspended in real tears: the dead king weeps for eternity, it seems. The gold stalagmites that have formed around the throne total almost 1,000 pounds in weight, but are relatively impure.

**Summoning Trap:** The body of Kaldraz is protected by a summoning trap. If any creature touches or damages the mummy, the old spell summons demons to punish the offender. The trap is also set off if anyone uses magic within 10 feet of the throne, or casts a spell on Kaldraz or the throne. Jodom did not set it off because he simply crept up and broke off a piece of a stalagmite without touching the mummy. Detecting the summoning trap requires a successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 14). A character can disarm it with a successful Intelligence/Arcana check or dispel it with *dispel magic* (both DC 14).

**Creatures (600 XP):** If the efforts to disarm the trap fail, or if the PCs inadvertently set it off, demons are summoned to attack the intruders.

- 6 dretches

The demons concentrate their attacks on the individual who set off the trap.

In addition, Mador Kheb and his guards are nearby in area 6. If the PCs get into a serious fight here, the cultists send a scout to the gallery overlooking this chamber to see what's going on. Allow the PCs a Wisdom/Perception (DC 16) to notice the cultist spying on them from the ledge above.

## UNEXPECTED COMPANY

If the PCs did not encounter Mador Kheb in area 6 before coming here, the cultists are alerted by any sounds of battle against demons. They wait for the PCs to dispatch the demons, and then make their appearance. Two temple guards take up positions on the upper gallery to threaten the party with bows, while Mador Kheb and the remaining two guards enter the room from the passage to the southeast.

A rustle of movement from the passage to the southeast attracts your attention. Stealthy hooded figures in black robes are making their way into the chamber, followed by a tall priest in dark armor with a serpent design on the front. He scowls in irritation when he sees you.

"I see that Jodom's secret did not die with him," the priest observes. "I am Mador Kheb, priest of Set, and I claim this place in the name of the King of Night. Depart, and I shall spare your lives. As you can see, I have the advantage." He gestures at a ledge or gallery high above the south end of the room, and you see two more cultists with bows taking up positions there.

**Creatures (1,300 XP):** Any response other than immediate compliance causes Mador Kheb and his followers to attack.

- Mador Kheb (see Chapter 6)
- 4 temple guards of Set (see Chapter 6)

If all four temple guards are killed, Mador Kheb attempts to surrender, and claims that the Temple of Shadowed Serpents in Quodeth will pay 500 pieces of gold to ransom his life. If the priest is killed, the guards fight fanatically to avenge his death.

**Treasure:** Mador Kheb carries the items mentioned in his stat block, as well as a belt pouch containing a fistful of small gemstones (nine zircons worth 50 gp each).

## CONCLUSION

With the defeat of Mador Kheb and the discovery of the golden tears (or the Scrolls of Moz), the PCs have accomplished everything they set out to do. They can retrace their steps back to the Traders' Landing and return to Ghanport at their own pace. The golden stalagmites of Kaldraz's tears are somewhat difficult to transport, since the total weight is half a ton. The value of the gold in the stalagmites is not quite as much as the PCs might hope, since it is not very pure. However, it is still a prize worth 3,200 gp.

The Scrolls of Moz are an excellent way to provide the PCs with additional clues or leads to mysterious ruins in the jungles—if you are looking for an opportunity to provide the party with a treasure map, the Scrolls are the perfect hiding place.

## THE SCENT OF JASMINE

An Adventure for Character Levels 5–8

The cults lurking in the shadows of Quodeth will take adherents anywhere they can find them—from the lowliest beggars to the decadent scions of noble houses. In this adventure, the PCs must find a young noble they believe was kidnapped by the Priests of the Broken Gate. When they find her, they learn a chilling truth: she's not the cult's victim but its high priestess.

In this adventure, the players try to find Metira Sedarnel, a young woman born to one of the city's most powerful noble houses. The Sedarnels believe that Metira was kidnapped, so they've hired the PCs to scour the city and rescue her. The PCs' search may take them to rival noble houses, the city's teeming marketplaces, and its dangerous streets.

The investigation can follow many paths, but the successful ones lead to the cultists' underground shrine to Great Cthulhu. Furthermore, the PCs learn that they are the true intended victims, lured there by the cult to fuel a dread ritual they're planning. Metira wasn't kidnapped at all. Secretly a high priestess in the Broken Gate cult, she orchestrated her own disappearance so she could lure would-be rescuers into a sacrificial ritual to weaken the barriers that keep Cthulhu apart from Thule.

One thing to consider as you set up this adventure for your players: it has misdirection at its heart. The dramatic reversal is the moment when the "damsel in distress" turns out to be neither a damsel (she's spurned her noble heritage) nor in distress (she's running the show). If the players immediately latch onto the damsel in distress trope, let them. They'll figure it out soon enough. If they have doubts, on the other hand, they'll feel all the smarter when they thwart Metira at the adventure's end.

### BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure works best if the PCs have attained some measure of notoriety among Quodeth's power brokers, even if their names aren't known to Quodeth at large. As long as they have the ability to move among Quodeth's districts and aren't already affiliated with a noble house or guild, the PCs are exactly what the Sedarnels are looking for.

That's the default way to start the adventure, but consider the following variants.

**Connection to Metira:** If you're a long-term planner when it comes to campaigns, introduce Metira Sedarnel to the PCs in an earlier visit to Quodeth—as

an information source or patron. As a young noble, Metira has a lot of money to spend but few responsibilities. That makes her exactly the sort of noble that might consort with low-level adventurers on occasion.

And while Metira calls Quodeth home, it wouldn't be unreasonable for the PCs to encounter her anywhere House Sedarnel can get a ship to. As an aficionado of rare luxuries (like jasmine perfume), Metira might have tagged along on a Sedarnel trade mission and met the PCs that way.

If the PCs know Metira already, have her invite the players to the Sedarnel villa when they arrive in Quodeth. (She'll deliver the invitation through a House Sedarnel servant.) When the PCs arrive, the villa is in disarray because Metira is missing. Neither the Sedarnels nor the PCs realize yet that she engineered her own disappearance to lure the PCs into her trap.

**Connection to the Sedarnels:** The heart of the Sedarnels' wealth is trade in luxury goods like gemstones, rare herbs, delicacies, and liquor. They're always looking for new sources for those goods—and trying to protect the sources they have. If the PCs have ever protected a trade caravan or recovered luxury trade goods, they may have attracted the attention of the Sedarnels.

If that's the case, the invitation to visit the Sedarnel villa comes from the Sedarnel contact the players already know. That NPC can either lay out the story of the missing Metira or introduce Jania Sedarnel (in which case it plays out as in "Adventure Start" below).

**Connection to Sedarnel Rivals:** The Sedarnel family is not without enemies—including the Vorzin and Marsesk families (traditional noble rivalries) and House Taroth (because House Sedarnel would like to expand into the spice trade). Those rival families have enough agents in the lower echelons of House Sedarnel to "plant" the PCs' names as potential agents. The rival house—which believes that the kidnapping is legitimate and wants to "obtain" Metira as leverage—then contacts the PCs and says, "The Sedarnels are going to ask you to solve a kidnapping. Solve it, but after the rescue, bring the victim here instead . . ."

The PCs are working for two masters, but the bulk of the adventure plays out the same way because the kidnapping was faked to begin with. If the PCs somehow extract Metira from the cult chambers without killing her, they'll be stuck with her. Metira's connection to the Priests of the Broken Gate, once discovered, makes her worthless as "leverage" in the intrigues of Quodeth's noble houses.

## THE SEDARNEL VILLA

The Sedarnel villa, a sprawling collection of architectural styles from the last several centuries, lies on the periphery of the Palace Quarter. It has three high towers and about a dozen interconnected buildings spread across two acres. The adventure begins with the PCs summoned here to take on the mystery of Metira's kidnapping and make their initial inquiries.

As the players walk around the Sedarnel villa at the beginning and conclusion of the adventure, impress two things upon them: the Tiamat iconography everywhere and the crumbling, ramshackle nature of the estate.

Tiamat has long been a symbol for the Sedarnels, whose far-flung mercantile interests give them every reason to seek relief from storms. Long-time players may be taken aback at all the five-headed dragon statues, door handles, candelabras, and other decorative elements, but it's an opportunity for them to learn that in Thule, Tiamat is far from the pinnacle of evil.

The villa is in livable shape, but it's not in perfect repair. Cornices are sometimes absent, water-stains mark where the roof leaks, and support columns are starting to crumble. PCs who remark on the disrepair get one of two answers. If they ask a noble, they're answered with a shrug and a dismissive, "Why repair things here when the Sapphire Palace will soon be available?" If they ask a servant (and there are no nobles nearby to hear), the answer is very different: "They'd rather pay for brandy than marble."

## ADVENTURE START

This adventure starts when the players converse with Jania Sedarnel, head of the powerful noble house that bears her name. She's summoned them to help her with a matter of some delicacy: the probable kidnapping of her niece, Metira.

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*It all started with the fawning servant lying prostrate at your feet, hands clasped in supplication.*

*"A thousand pardons, august visitors!" the servant cries. "House Sedarnel seeks both your presence and your wisdom!"*

*Dusting herself off, the servant rises to her knees but keeps her eyes downcast. "If the august visitors will only follow this humble servant, they'll be richly rewarded for a brief meeting at House Sedarnel's luxurious villa."*

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The servant is a message-carrier and doesn't know why House Sedarnel wants to talk to the PCs. But she can assure them that the meeting won't take long, they'll be quite safe, and that the house is "certainly among Quodeth's wealthiest . . . and most generous."

If the PCs don't follow the servant, House Sedarnel will repeat the entreaty twice more—once with a servant and once with a minor noble named Leyaro, one of Jania's cousins. They'll continue to dangle money

in front of the PCs, and they'll even spread some coin around if it'll get the PCs to the villa.

The PCs can carry reasonable weapons and armor with them into the Sedarnel villa, but if they look dangerous, a squad of house guards will shadow them throughout their time there.

Jania, the head of House Sedarnel, meets them in one of the villa's courtyards, a sun-dappled garden with a reflecting pool and immense rosebushes (now grown somewhat wild). She's reclining on a stuffed couch with a half-dozen servants ready to offer her wine or fruit.

Jania cares very deeply about her missing niece, but the PCs perceive that concern only through a haze of decadence. (Most of the Sedarnel nobles spend their time in search of rarefied pleasures, so that's not unusual.)

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*The woman—conventionally pretty, even if the cosmetics aren't hiding her age well—beckons you forward with a languid gesture.*

*"Thank you for indulging me. I'm Jania Sedarnel, and my family could use your help. Wine? Southern fruits?" She flicks her fingers at her servants who scurry forward with goblets and trays.*

*"My niece, Metira, disappeared from her bedchamber in the western tower last night. Locked door, but an open, broken window." She dabs at her cheeks with a silk handkerchief. "The house guard is combing the city for her . . . but there are places the house guard can't go, questions they can't get answers to." She takes a sip of dark wine. "That's where you come in. Someone kidnapped Metira, and I want her returned safely to us. We'll pay, of course."*

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## NEGOTIATIONS

Jania offers a fairly low reward (1,200 gp) for Metira's return, but the PCs can easily negotiate for higher pay. Depending on the proclivities of your table, you can either play this out with social skill checks or roleplay the negotiation. Jania quickly expresses boredom and a sort of weary irritation with protracted bargaining; she'll quickly skip to her maximum price (3,000 gp) so she gets the PCs out of her hair.

If even the maximum price isn't sufficient to get the PCs to take the job, Metira's patrician manners are barely able to keep her irritation in check. She'll get creative, sweetening the pot with promises of future employment on House Sedarnel's trade missions, keys to the House's libraries and workshops, access to Quodeth's noble salons, and anything else that isn't cash on hand.

Jania is also flexible on giving the PCs an advance— as long as she's confident that the PCs won't take the money and run, that is. She just wants her niece back, and she's worried her house guards won't be able to find Metira.

## INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS

Once the negotiation is complete, the players can see Metira's bedchamber for themselves, talk to the other denizens of the western tower, and gather clues. Everyone at House Sedarnel—whether servant or noble—is inclined to be helpful. The PCs shouldn't need to intimidate or otherwise coerce cooperation out of House Sedarnel's people.

That doesn't mean that they're the most competent witnesses, however. No one saw Metira leave her bedchamber and no one heard anything. None of the Sedarnels believe they have any clues.

That doesn't mean there aren't clues, however. Specifically, Metira's love of jasmine perfume can lead the PCs to Quodeth's Bourse, where they can follow Metira's scent to the lair of the winged apes and then to Metira in the chambers underneath the city. The PCs will also learn that Metira has a connection to the Priests of the Broken Gate (even if they have no idea of the extent of that connection). Both avenues of investigation ultimately lead to Metira—and the confrontation at the adventure's climax.

*Metira's bedroom is as luxurious as you'd expect—a massive feather-bed with silk pillows strewn across it, several armoires of dark mahogany, and tapestries of oceans and mountains hanging on the walls. A window on the far wall—easily eight feet across and five high—has a jagged hole in the middle. A neat pile of glass lies on the floor beneath the window, with a broom and dustpan leaning against a nearby wall.*

*The bed-covers are thrown back, and a hope chest at the foot of the bed has an embroidered gown lying atop it. One of the servants accompanying you, a woman named Drannell, says, "She just bought that dress; I set it out so she could wear it today."*

*The door frame is splintered where the bracket for the door-bar was ripped out.*

*The ceiling is covered with carefully pruned vines bearing tiny white flowers. The room smells strongly of jasmine. A faint breeze blows in through the hole in the window.*

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

Metira has been training her winged apes for months to carry her aloft (a training process that earned her a number of bruises and cuts). The evening when Metira was ready to break away from her family, she followed her usual night routine, dressed in a nightgown, and dismissed her chamber servants.

Alone in her chamber, Metira used a simple spell to beckon the apes from across the city. The winged apes flew through the window, which Metira intentionally left closed so that it would look like a break-in. Metira then unmade her bed and stepped to the window ledge. One winged ape took each of Metira's arms, and off they flew to the Broken Gate's chambers.

The PCs' investigations can take any number of courses. If you have to improvise some answers or fabricate extra clues, guide them toward the Bourse (and the perfume shop) or the Broken Gate headquarters.

**Jasmine:** Its scent is almost overpowering in this room, despite the breeze. No other part of the Sedarnel villa smells of jasmine, which is Metira's signature scent. (Even nobles who don't know Metira will say, "Oh, the woman who smells of jasmine!" if the PCs mention it.) There's a cut-glass vial of jasmine perfume on the desk, but it's nearly empty. There's enough perfume left for two heavy doses or four light doses.

The vines on the ceiling are jasmine plants, and an arborist comes in every afternoon to prune and water them. The roots extend through the stone floor, then down the exterior of the tower to the ground.

**The Window:** The window is (or mostly was) a simple pane-and-muntin affair. It overlooks one of the villa's courtyards and has a view of the Quodeth skyline beyond. There's no opening mechanism for the window as a whole, but the lower-left pane swings open to let fresh air in.

The broken glass is almost entirely in the room, but there's a single glass shard on the courtyard grass below the window (one of the winged apes brushed against it on the way out). Servants being servants, they started cleaning up the mess before a House guard (Odero) came by and ushered everyone out of the room.

**Drannell:** Metira's personal servant, Drannell thinks she's privy to most of her mistress's secrets. While it's true that she knows all sorts of noble gossip and details about Metira's various romances and assignations, she doesn't know the one secret that matters: Metira's identity as the high priestess of the Broken Gate. She will spin all sorts of stories about jealous nobles, romantic rivals, and the like, but none of them rise to the level of something you'd execute a kidnapping over. The PCs should quickly ascertain that Drannell's lifeblood is gossip, and she's more than a little eager to spread tales of "the rough-looking characters who are trying to find kind Lady Metira" as soon as the PCs dismiss her.

Drannell can confirm Metira's whereabouts and movements on the evening before she was kidnapped. Drannell helped Metira undress for bed (a process that involves a careful disassembly of an elaborate hairstyle). Drannell brought a final brandy to her (and it's sitting on a nightstand, untouched), then departed. Metira always barred her door in the evenings, Drannell said, because "otherwise all sorts of not-so-noble gentlemen would be knocking on her door, and Metira wouldn't get any sleep."

The one thing that puzzles Drannell is the minor cuts and bruises Metira had recently (from training the winged apes). Drannell helps Metira dress and undress every day, so she's the only one who sees the injuries. She didn't dare ask Metira about them, and Metira didn't volunteer any information. But Drannell is sure that "a proper lady like Metira" doesn't ordinarily have cuts and bruises like that.

**Bruthak, House Guard Captain:** Bruthak shows up a few minutes after the characters start looking around Metira's bedchamber—whether he's summoned or not. He's too spit-and-polish to say so, but Bruthak is not at all happy that Jania hired outsiders to look for Metira. He sometimes takes on bodyguard duties when the Sedarnel nobles leave the villa, but he's never interacted with Metira one-on-one. "This house is crawling with young cousins and distant relatives, if you'll pardon my saying," he announces stiffly. "I can't tell you how many times a missing member of the House turns up a few days later in various embarrassing positions."

Bruthak isn't the brightest guard, and his current theory is that Metira broke the window as she was leaving, then climbed down the jasmine vines. As the PCs will probably point out, this is a terrible theory for two reasons: The broken glass is in the room (indicating it was broken on the way in), and the vines running down the tower wouldn't support a child, let alone a full-grown adult like Metira.

**Odero the House Guard:** One of the House guards assigned to this tower, Odero, is fond—perhaps a little *too* fond—of Metira. He wants Metira returned safely, so he'll approach the PCs if the PCs don't question him first.

Odero frequently acted as Metira's bodyguard when she shopped or went to parties outside the villa. Odero even accompanied her to the Priests of the Broken Gate headquarters a few times; Metira feigned a casual interest in the priests' creed when Odero was around, then ordered her minions around while Odero was distracted.

If asked about Metira's movements over the last few days, he'll mention a shopping trip to the Quosa Bourse two days ago, a masked ball at House Taroth three nights ago, and a brief visit to the Priests of the Broken Gate yesterday.

If asked whether anyone has motives to kidnap Metira, he replies, "Beyond that the family is rich? You can't hate Metira. At worst, you might find her superfluous. But she had hidden depths, if you ask me. She was more than just another spoiled noble. She was . . . thoughtful."

**Divination Magic:** A successful *detect magic* (or similar effect) reveals some faint sources of illusion magic, mostly in the armoires and Metira's dressing desk. Some of Metira's dresses and cosmetics have minor illusion magic to make them sparkle or change hues.

**Wrapping Up the Investigation:** Once the PCs have learned one of the two key clues (the Priests of the Broken Gate or the shopping trip to the Quosa Bourse), they can move onward. Depending on your players' preferred style, you can extend the investigation by including more red herrings. Metira's servants may suggest that she has an admirer in one of the noble houses. When the PCs question that noble house, they learn that the noble in question has a solid alibi, and along the way they may learn more about Metira's personality.

## PRIESTS OF THE BROKEN GATE

The Broken Gate headquarters—part soup kitchen, part sanctuary, part living quarters—used to be an old warehouse, but the priests have assiduously rebuilt it to look more temple-like. It's not in the nicest neighborhood, but the priests themselves tended to harass and eventually scare off would-be criminals. If you want to add an encounter to this adventure, have the PCs be accosted by ruffians of some sort en route to the Broken Gate HQ.

What the PCs encounter at the Broken Gate HQ depends on what time of day it is. During the day, there are only a few priests at the headquarters. Most of the others are proselytizing in the streets of Quodeth. Some beggars are eating a meager meal in the headquarter's main hall, and a few priests are available to handle visitors who want to learn more about the Broken Gate philosophy.

A Broken Gate priest might introduce herself to visitors this way:

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Greetings, fine folk! I'm so glad you're here. So many seek after so many different things in this cruel world. Yet life could be better for all if we could break the barriers that separate us from the truth. What truth do you seek?

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Overtly the Broken Gate philosophy is a lot of feel-good nonsense about achieving a higher purpose and becoming a better person. The truth, of course, is much more sinister. Eventually adherents learn that the real purpose of the Broken Gate priests is to break one specific gate: the one that has Great Cthulhu behind it.

The priests won't push too hard when they first meet a new possible convert. They are nothing if not patient. Give the PCs a dose of higher-purpose philosophy, then let them ask questions related to their investigation. Everyone here knows who Metira is, but no one will admit it. A Wisdom/Insight check (DC 20) may reveal that the priests are hiding something. But under no circumstances will they willingly give up the truth about their high priestess.

## THE TOOTHLESS MAN

The PCs are free to wander around the Broken Gate HQ as long as they're willing to put up with the priests' proselytizing. After they've walked around a bit (but before they make an organized search of the place), a bedraggled, toothless man rushes into the temple, followed by four thugs.

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*The man is shouting something, but beyond "Heb may!" you can't make out the gibberish. His pursuers continue to advance toward him, weapons drawn.*

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**Creatures (3,600 XP):** Metira's agents hired some run-of-the-mill thugs (something Quodeth has in abundance) to chase the toothless man into the Broken Gate headquarters. The thugs don't know this, but they're simultaneously testing the PCs' fitness to be sacrifices in Metira's ritual and making the toothless man into a sympathetic character.

- 4 berserkers

If subdued and questioned, the thugs know only that they were paid 30 gold coins each to rough up the toothless man near the Broken Gate temple, with the promise of another 20 gold at the end of the beatdown. They were hired in a dive tavern by a "fat guy in dark robes," and that fat guy never shows up at the tavern again. (If you want to expand this adventure, the thugs' contact is another possible route that'll lead to the underground chambers and the adventure's climax.)

**The Toothless Man:** The bedraggled man covers and shouts gibberish throughout the fight, but he calms down when the battle ends. He's hard to understand—have some fun with the voice-acting, GMs—but understandable if the players are patient.

The toothless man claims to see visions, and he's been hanging around the headquarters of the Broken Gate for some time because a vision told him to. The toothless man says that "a eebul barkmef" (evil darkness) lies underneath the Broken Gate, and that "wohby eerosh" (worthy heroes) will be tested in "blub, mimb, am harp" (blood, mind, and heart). If the PCs don't get it right away, have the toothless man emphasize the "underneath" part. He's working for Metira, and he wants to get the PCs to find the trap door in the storage chamber.

## INTO THE SEWERS

The trap door in the storage room doesn't require a skill check to find, just a push to the crate that's covering it. A rough tunnel leads to Quodeth's storm sewers. From there, the path is clear for PCs who were paying attention to the toothless man, because a vertical set of graffiti—a blood-drop, a skull, and a heart—marks the right path at each junction.

When the PCs approach the glyph gate (described below), they'll start to smell Metira's jasmine perfume. The PCs have an advantage when they reach the glyph gate: they know which sequence of glyphs opens the gate.

To expand this adventure, make the trip through the storm sewers more dangerous. This is Quodeth, after all. Wererats, gangs of thieves, mutant crocodiles . . . almost anything can have its lair down in the sewers or be traveling its tunnels on unrelated dark errands.

## THE QUOSA BOURSE

Quodeth's center for mercantile exchange, the Quosa Bourse, bustles day and night. Metira's favorite perfumerie, Craylirah's, is on one of the streets that leads into the Bourse itself, surrounded by other upscale shops.

The street in front of the store does indeed smell of jasmine. Once the PCs enter, Craylirah is eager to talk about one of her best customers.

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*"Lady Metira has impeccable taste, even if she is a little set in her ways," the rail-thin woman says. "I am always trying to expand her 'scent palette,' but she loves jasmine. To tell the truth, she overuses it a little. But I haven't seen her in more than a week now."*

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If the PCs press Craylirah and succeed at moderate social skill checks, she'll confess to a secret she's been keeping.

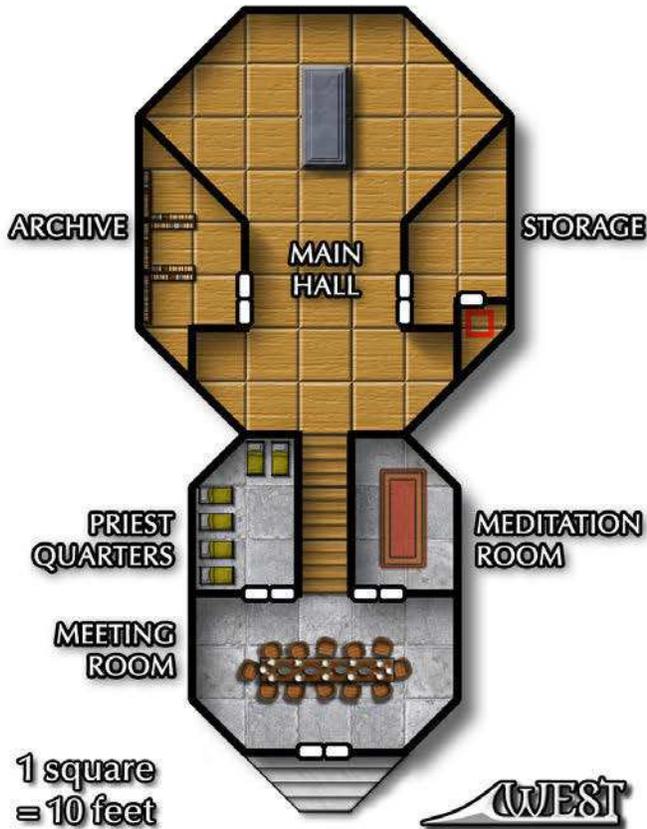
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*"Don't tell anyone in her family, but she didn't come here just for the perfume. It was a cover," she says. "Her guards would stand outside—I think the scents in here are a little strong for them—and Metira would pass through my shop into the alley behind us. She was usually out there for about an hour, but I don't know why. Maybe she was meeting a suitor?"*

---

The real reason for the deception is that Metira was checking on her winged apes in the construction site behind the shop. If the PCs don't get Craylirah to admit her part in the ruse, the scent of jasmine itself might draw them behind the store. Especially after they've been inside the shop (which has dozens of intermingled scents), the PCs will realize that the alley smells only of jasmine, not of the other scents.

## THE BROKEN GATE



## BOURSE INVESTIGATION



### A CLUTCH OF APES

A construction site behind the perfumerie is where Metira's trained winged apes live, squatting in the foundation pit during the day and perched atop the surrounding buildings by night. The whole area smells strongly of jasmine.

**Creatures (5,400 XP):** As the PCs search the construction site, the winged apes either descend from their perches or rise from the foundation pit, depending on the time of day.

- 2 winged apes (see Chapter 6)

The apes fight until slain—Metira ordered them to guard this entrance to the storm sewers—but they fight cautiously. This gives the PCs time to put the terrain of the construction site to good use.

**Construction Materials:** The construction site is a wonderland of “destructible cover” and terrain that the PCs can use to their advantage. Stacks of bricks are precarious and can collapse with a push (intentional or not). Bundles of timber can become suddenly unbundled. Climbable scaffolding can help the PCs reach their flying foes . . . until it comes crashing to earth. The logs stretched across

the foundation pit are a good balance challenge for nimble PCs. The apes aren't imaginative when it comes to the terrain, but they'll learn from what they see the PCs do. They'll be susceptible to all sorts of PC trickery, but they won't fall for the same trick twice.

**The Pit:** The foundation for a future building has been excavated, and it's a 20-foot drop to the earthen bottom. A crude tunnel in the pit leads to the storm sewers (and the adventure's climax); the pit otherwise has only winged ape guano in it. Yet it doesn't smell of guano—it smells of jasmine.

**After the Battle:** If one of the PCs is a ranger or otherwise familiar with animal training, mention that artificial scents can be used as a marker when training a beast to seek something out. This doesn't require a skill check because it's really just flavor and doesn't reveal anything. The PCs might jump to the conclusion that Metira's kidnappers trained the apes to home in on Metira by the scent of jasmine.

The jasmine scent leads through the tunnel into the storm sewers, where it's easy to follow (no skill check needed). After a meandering path through Quodeth's sewers (and some combat encounters if you're expanding this adventure), the PCs arrive at the Glyph Gate.

## THE GLYPH GATE

The PCs can arrive here by following either the graffiti markings from the Broken Gate headquarters or the scent of jasmine from the Quosa Bourse. Either way, the investigation is over at this point—and the PCs must run a gauntlet to reach Metira and the final confrontation.

But first, they have to get through the gate.

You see a set of stone doors, made with far more care and skill than the crumbling masonry of the sewers. They have no handles or visible hinges, and they're flush with the ceiling and the floor. The only notable feature is a row of five circular glyphs carved in bas-relief at eye level. From left to right, they are: skull, lightning bolt, heart, droplet, flame.

The phrase "Prepare to be tested" is scrawled in Low Atlantean on the floor in a reddish-brown pigment.

**Glyphs (3,000 XP):** The five symbolic glyphs are the combination lock that opens the way to the test gauntlet Metira has created. PCs who remember what the toothless man said know the correct combination: droplet (blood), skull (mind), heart. For the other PCs, it's a matter of trial and error, divination, or bypass.

*Trial and Error:* If the PCs touch a glyph, it retracts about an inch into the stone of the doors, where it remains until a second and a third glyph are also touched. (Touching the same glyph while it's retracted doesn't do anything.) If the PCs entered the right combination, blood-mind-heart, then the doors swing open. If it wasn't the correct combination, then the third glyph the PCs touched detonates.

- **Skull:** 5d6 necrotic damage to all creatures within 15 feet of the gate, or half damage on a successful Con save (DC 14).
- **Lightning:** 6d6 lightning damage to the PC who touched the glyph, then 5d6 to the next closest PC, and so on until all PCs have been threatened once or there's no one within 20 feet of the last PC hit. On a successful Dex save (DC 16) a character takes no damage.
- **Heart:** All PCs within 15 feet gain 1 exhaustion level.
- **Droplet:** Bolts of acid attack each PC within 15 feet (+6 to hit, 2d6 acid damage). A character hit by the bolt suffers an additional 2d6 acid damage each minute until treated by any magical healing or a successful Wisdom/Medicine check (one minute, DC 15).
- **Flame:** 5d6 fire damage to all creatures within 15 feet of the gate, or half damage on a successful Dex save (DC 14).

Clever players may come up with elaborate schemes for touching the glyphs without being near enough

to get blasted by them; that's fine! With 120 possible combinations, assume that the PCs hit on the right combination after about an hour. Tell the PCs what the correct combination was, because it foreshadows the next three encounters.

*Divination:* PCs with access to divination magic may be able to discern the correct combination; that's fine, too! The cultists fundamentally want "worthy rescuers" to get through the gate, after all.

*Bypassing the Glyphs:* Five successful Intelligence/Arcana checks (DC 14) are sufficient to get the doors open. Each failed check detonates the magic of that glyph, as described above.

## TEST OF BLOOD

Beyond the glyph gate is the first of Metira's three tests: the test of blood.

The immense chamber before you has a scattering of small islands surrounded by water—or something like water, at any rate. You can see thick, reddish clots, perhaps a fungus of some sort, drifting in the murky water that laps at your toes. Each drip of moisture from the ceiling makes the water ripple.

On the far side of the chamber is a closed set of double doors.

**Water:** Except where indicated on the map, the water is only about a foot deep, and the red fungus isn't dangerous when it's immersed in water. The real danger is the fungus *before* it gets wet—and the servitors lurking in the deeper parts of the water.

**Fungus:** The red fungus falls from the ceiling in moist clumps about the size of baseballs. Check whenever a PC starts a turn underneath the areas indicated on the map; there's a 50 percent chance that fungus will drip down from the ceiling, dealing 2d6 acid damage per round until it's either immersed in water or the PC receives magical healing.

The monsters aren't affected by the fungus because they're wet from being immersed in the water. Check for fungal drip at the start of their turn anyway, because the players may get a clue when you describe the red fungus sliding harmlessly off their wet hides.

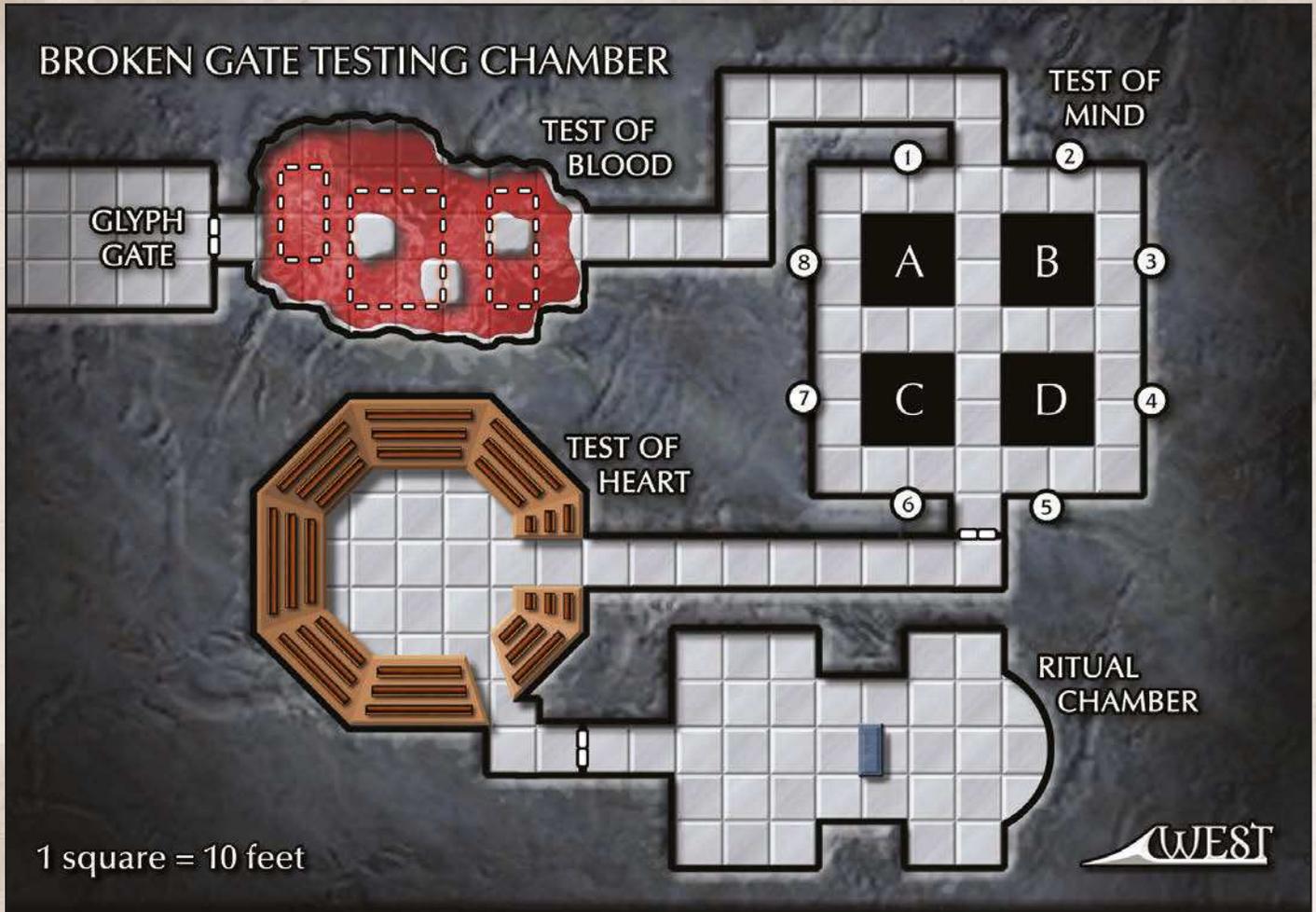
If the players have a bright light source, they can take an action to observe the ceiling and discover the extent of the fungal drips.

**Creatures (3,600 XP):** There are a few deep spots in this chamber, and that's where Metira's guardian creatures await the PCs. They'll rise to the surface and attack as soon as the PCs start making their way across the chamber.

- 4 gibbering moutherers

The guardians fight until slain.

**Doors:** The double doors are closed but unlocked. A short passageway leads to the next chamber.



## TEST OF MIND

In this chamber, the PCs must deal with shifting walls and undead who take advantage of their own incorporeality.

The passageway opens into a network of hallways. You see a glowing, ghostly presence flicker around a corner ahead of you.

**Shifting Walls (3,000 XP):** The massive stone blocks start magically shifting as soon as the PCs enter the chamber. The shifts, which happen at the start of the second and subsequent rounds, follow a set pattern. Once the PCs realize this, they can avoid being crushed by the walls.

Round	Which Walls Move
2	Block A toward 1, B toward 3, C toward 7, D toward 5
3	Block A toward 8, B toward 2, C toward 6, D toward 4
4	Blocks A and B toward each other, C and D toward each other
5	Blocks A and C toward each other, B and D toward each other
6	Repeat Round 2, and so on.

The walls don't completely close against each other, but they come close, dealing 6d6 crushing damage to Medium PCs and 3d6 damage to Small PCs. Constricted passageways become difficult terrain, cutting movement in half for corporeal creatures.

**Creatures (1,200 XP):** The incorporeal undead ignore the shifting walls, of course, and they have an additional surprise for the PCs. Whenever a PC ends a turn within 20 feet of one of the undead, he or she must make a Charisma save (DC 10). PCs that fail must move away at their normal speed in a random direction. Use 1d6 whenever the PC reaches an intersection: 1–2 right, 3–4 straight, 5–6 left, altering as necessary if it's not a four-way intersection (PCs won't reverse direction).

- 3 specters

**Doors:** The double doors at the far side of the chamber are closed but unlocked. A short passageway leads to the final test.

## TEST OF HEART

The third test pits the PCs against Ruuk Nath, a cult-bred gladiator who grows stronger and fiercer with every foe he defeats. A renowned pit fighter in the fighting-dens of Quodeth, Marg, and Katagia, Ruuk Nath is a soulless killer who believes it is his holy purpose to crush the life from others with his bare hands.

This chamber looks like a gladiatorial arena, but in the stands are scores of corpses, each propped up to stare blankly at the center of the arena. There an immense man—almost an ogre in size—stalks impatiently, flexing his bare fists.

“Have you the heart to face me in combat?” he taunts. “Or will you flee back to the surface, to live among the . . . unworthy?”

If any PC makes a special effort to examine the corpses in the stands, add:

The stands are occupied by the remains of dead warriors—gladiators, you would guess from their colorful fighting harness and odd assortment of weapons. Some are nothing more than carefully bleached skeletons, others are desiccated corpses years old, and a few probably haven't been dead for more than a week or two. Most show evidence of broken limbs and terrible, battering blows. They include men and women of almost every race. The smell of death is thick in this room.

**Arena:** The chamber itself is good, open ground for a fight. The corpses are not combatants—they are ordinary bodies posed here as grisly trophies. Here Ruuk Nath collects as many of his defeated foes as he can recover from the arena sands or the graveyards after his victories.

**Creatures (2,900 XP):** Ruuk Nath wants to prove the PCs unworthy, so he'll taunt every miss or tactical error they make, and he'll dismiss any wounds he takes as minor. His main tactic is to daze or stun as many opponents as possible, spreading his attacks around to neutralize multiple foes before concentrating on the weakest opponent and pummeling him or her to death.

- Ruuk Nath (see Chapter 6)

When Ruuk Nath dies, he croaks out, “You passed the final test. You are . . . worthy.” Then he expires.

**Doors:** The double doors are closed but unlocked. A short passageway leads to the last chamber, where Metira awaits them.

## METIRA'S RITUAL

Here's the adventure's big reveal, where the PCs learn that Metira isn't a kidnap victim at all, but the leader of the cultists of the Broken Gate. She needed “worthy rescuers” for her ritual, so she faked her own kidnapping, then led the PCs to the sacrifice.

A scantily clad woman—Metira!—lies on a stone altar, surrounded by cultists wearing robes like the ones the priests of the Broken Gate wear.

With a practiced languor, she rises to a sitting position, and you notice that she's not bound or chained. “Every ritual demands a sacrifice . . . in this case, several worthy would-be rescuers. Let the sacrifice begin!”

**Creatures (5,000 XP):** Metira and the cultists attack right away. If possible, they lure the PCs close to the altar, because that's where they want the blood spilled, but they'd rather have a dead PC that they can exsanguinate later than a live PC disrupting their ritual. (The ordinary cultists are so weak they don't contribute much to the difficulty of the encounter.)

- Metira (cult priest; see Chapter 6)
- 1 cult fanatic
- 4 cultists

**Altar:** The altar gives Metira and the cultists some protection once the PCs activate it by bleeding nearby. As soon as a PC takes damage while standing adjacent to the altar, describe the blood flowing into the altar as if the blood were flowing downhill. The runes on the altar softly glow thereafter, and Metira and the cultists gain a cumulative +1 bonus on all saves each time this happens.

**Metira Monologues:** As she fights, Metira taunts the PCs. (The cultists maintain a grim silence.) If a conversation interspersed with combat develops, it's an opportunity for Metira to reveal the sinister side of the Broken Gate organization and explain why she bothered with the ruse of faking her own kidnapping. (The short answer: she needed deluded do-gooders tough enough to pass the three tests, which ruled out the house guards and others associated with House Sedarnel.)

**Treasure (1,400 XP):** A small coffer at one side of the chamber contains 250 gp, 160 pp, 8 amethysts worth 100 gp each, a *ring of warmth*, and a *wand of web*.



## CONCLUSION

If the PCs emerge with an unconscious or helpless Metira, the representative of House Sedarnel pays the PCs quickly and discreetly, offers a quick “we’ll see that she’s well-taken care of,” then departs for the Sedarnel villa in haste. PCs who ask around will hear that Metira is “in seclusion” for the next few weeks. Then the Sedarnels stop talking about her, and she’s never seen again.

If the PCs emerge on the surface with Metira’s dead body, a House Sedarnel seneschal (or Leyaro if the PCs met him earlier) is on the scene, quick to disavow any connection to the house. “That can’t possibly be Metira—it looks nothing like her,” he piously exclaims. “I suppose we’ll never learn the truth of where she went. So sad.” Then he pays the PCs and scurries away. Play up the noir angle here—the mean streets of Quodeth have swallowed up another victim, and no one seems to know or care except for the PCs.

Even if the Sedarnels aren’t willing to dwell on Metira’s fate, they’re grateful for the PCs—as long as word doesn’t spread about Metira’s connection to the Priests of the Broken Gate. Discreet PCs may get future job opportunities, including some connected to Jania’s search for the *diamond of thought*, and they can count on help from Sedarnel nobles should they be caught up in Quodeth’s intrigues.

The PCs’ new friends in House Sedarnel are counterbalanced by a new enemy: the Priests of the Broken Gate. Either through eyewitnesses or divination spells, the cultists of Great Cthulhu know that the PCs thwarted their plans. Cultists of Cthulhu are nothing if not patient, and if the PCs walked into a trap once, well. . . .



# 6: MONSTERS AND VILLAINS

*The continent of Thule is home to countless dangerous beasts, tribes of subhuman savages, bloody-handed cultists, horrors from other dimensions, and more than a few Things that Should Not Be. It is a world that is hostile to humankind; death in a hundred terrible forms lurks in every shadow. If it is true that the quality of a hero can be measured by the foes against which he or she is pitted, then the heroes of Thule are extraordinary indeed.*

**S**ome fantasy worlds possess their own fantastic ecologies; for example, one expects to find centaurs in forests, storm giants in mountains, or blue dragons in deserts. The world of Thule is innately less magical and more mundane than the typical fantasy setting. The basis for Thule's ecology is the flora and fauna of the Ice Age. Instead of orcs, heroes battle savage Neanderthals (generally referred to as "beastmen" by Thule's more civilized races). Saber-tooth cats, dire wolves, and mammoths are far more common than creatures such as griffons or wyverns, and every bit as deadly in combat.

While the general ecology of Thule is not fantastic, legendary creatures do exist in the primeval continent; they simply aren't widespread. Many monsters immortalized in the myths and tales of the ancient world exist in Thule in small numbers. Somewhere in Thule there is a ruined temple guarded by a sphinx, a jungle vale where a manticore makes its lair, or a dismal swamp haunted by a coven of harpies. But an adventurer wouldn't normally encounter such monsters outside of the specific, isolated spots where these rare and terrifying creatures happen to lurk.

## THINGS FROM BEYOND

In addition to savage Ice Age fauna, Thule is also threatened by things that are completely outside earthly experience or explanation. In this age, Earth is still haunted by creatures of fantastically alien origin. Some of these are the survivals of antediluvian ages that still linger in the world's desolate places, such as shoggoths. Others are visitors from the stars that stumble across the Earth in their travels or are drawn to it by their own inimical purposes; the mi-go, moonbeasts, or the star-things of Nheb fall into this category.

**Extraterrene Subtype:** These creatures are alien to the Earth and possess very different material substance or life-processes than those of earthly life. Some spells or magical effects affect extraterrene creatures differently than other creatures; for example, an *elder sign* is a potent defense against extraterrene creatures.

## MONSTERS BY CR

New monsters and villains introduced in this chapter are listed below by challenge rating.

CR	Creature	Entry
1/4	Beastman Warrior	Beastman
1/4	Seven Knives Thug	Seven Knives
1/4	Temple Guard of Set	Villains
1/2	Beastman Hunter	Beastman
1	Crested Eagle	Animal
1	Seven Knives Enforcer	Seven Knives
1	The Kelauble	Villains
1	Kelauklyth the Serpentmancer	Villains
2	Beastman Cursemaker	Beastman
2	Mador Kheb, Priest of Set	Villains
2	Musk Ox, Thulean	Animal
2	Sword Spirit	Rakshasa
3	Elk, Thulean	Animal
3	Beastman Warchief	Beastman
3	Chosen Cultist	Servant of R'lyeh
3	Deep One Halfbreed	Servant of R'lyeh
3	Phoori Beast Master	Headhunter
3	Seven Knives Darkblade	Seven Knives
4	Nightgaunt, Khoori	Extraterrenes
4	Phoori Death Adder	Headhunter
4	Plague Nomad	Great Old One
4	Saber-tooth Cat	Animal
5	The Fourth Knife	Seven Knives
5	Serpentman Fang Guard	Serpentman
5	Short-faced Bear	Animal
5	Winged Ape	Winged Ape

CR	Creature	Entry
6	Abominable Sloth	Animal
6	Giant Viper	Animal
6	Mi-go, Starcrown	Extraterrenes
6	Phoori Dark Shaman	Headhunters
6	Slave of the Chalice	Great Old One
7	Cult Priest	Servants of R'lyeh
7	Mosasaur	Animal
7	Ruuk Nath, Pit Juggernaut	Villains
7	Serpentman Nessk Champion	Serpentman
8	Black Circle Agent	Black Circle
8	Frost Corpse	Eidolon
8	Moonbeast	Extraterrenes
8	Nephys, Sorceress	Villains
8	Rakshasa Honor Guard	Rakshasa
9	Serpentman Nessk Charmer	Serpentman
9	Star-thing of Nheb	Extraterrenes
10	Cyclops, Thulean	Cyclops
10	Gnoph-Keh of Serex	Extraterrenes
10	Rakshasa Infiltrator	Rakshasa
11	Dark Servant of Carcosa	Extraterrenes
12	Black Circle Wizard	Black Circle
13	Dragon, Thulean	Dragon
14	Polar Eidolon	Eidolon
17	Shoggoth	Extraterrenes
22	Lorthnu'un of the Golden Chalice	Great Old Ones
24	Dhuoth, Giver of Eyes	Great Old Ones

## ANIMALS, THULEAN

The savage continent of Thule is home to a number of dangerous beasts. Many are large and powerful predators, such as the saber-tooth cat or the dire wolf, that are perfectly willing to prey on humans when the opportunity presents itself. However, Thule's herbivores are often big, aggressive, and short-tempered, too. The giant sloth, musk ox, or Thulean elk are beasts that are even more likely to attack humans than predators are, especially if surprised.

### ABOMINABLE SLOTH

*This massive beast is covered in thick, shaggy fur. Its forelegs end in huge sickle-like claws, and it gives off an absolutely putrid reek.*

The sloth of Thule is a territorial and aggressive variety of giant ground sloth. It is an especially large and powerful animal, only a little smaller than a mammoth; the typical abominable sloth weighs 4 to 5 tons, and stands more than 15 feet tall when rearing up on its hind legs.



#### ABOMINABLE SLOTH CR 6

Unaligned Huge beast XP 2,300

Senses average Perception 10

#### BASE STATS

AC 11 (natural armor)

hp 126 (12d12+48)

Speed 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

Str 22 (+6), Dex 9 (-1), Con 19 (+4)

Int 2 (-4), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 5 (-3)

#### TRAITS

Saves Con +8

**Awful Stench** Any living creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the sloth must make a Con save (DC 16) or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the stench for 1 hour.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The sloth makes two claw attacks.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d10+6 slashing damage, and if the target is Medium size or smaller, it must make a Str save (DC 18) or be pushed 10 feet away and knocked prone.

### CRESTED EAGLE

*This fierce-looking bird of prey has golden-brown plumage with a striking collar and crest of red feathers. Its wingspan is easily 10 feet or more.*

The largest natural eagle species, the crested eagle is a very dangerous predator that is known to take down far larger prey, including elk, wolves, young bears—and humans. The average crested eagle weighs nearly 40 pounds, and has a wingspan in excess of 10 feet. Its talons are like 3-inch knife blades, powerful enough to snap a grown man's spine.

Crested eagles are stealthy forest predators. They typically perch on a high branch above the forest floor, looking for likely prey below. When a potential meal catches their eye, they silently launch from their high branch and strike like an anvil with wings. The eagles are clever enough to recognize when a target's back is turned, and almost always strike from behind. The forest tribes hate and fear crested eagles, and go to great lengths to destroy their nests whenever they find one.

## CRESTED EAGLE CR 1

Unaligned Medium beast XP 200

**Senses** average Perception 16

### BASE STATS

**AC** 12

**hp** 18 (4d8)

**Speed** 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 10 (+0)

**Int** 3 (-4), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 7 (-2)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Perception +6, Stealth +4

**Keen Eyes** The eagle has tactical advantage on Wisdom/Perception checks involving sight.

**Forest Hunter** The eagle has tactical advantage on Dexterity/Stealth checks in forest terrain.

**Surprise Swoop** If the eagle surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 2d6 damage from the attack. A Medium-size or smaller opponent is also knocked prone.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The eagle makes two attacks: one with its talons, and one with its beak.

**Talons** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d4+2 slashing damage.

**Beak** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 piercing damage.

## GIANT VIPER

*This terrible snake has a body as thick as a barrel and a head as large as a hippo's. Its foot-long fangs would be deadly weapons even without the glistening blue venom dripping from their hollow tips.*

## GIANT VIPER CR 6

Unaligned Huge beast XP 2,300

**Senses** average Perception 12

### BASE STATS

**AC** 13

**hp** 115 (11d12+44)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 20 (+5), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 3 (-4), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 9 (-1)

### TRAITS

**Serpent Gaze** Any living creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the giant viper must make a Wis save (DC 10). On a failed save, the target is paralyzed until the beginning of its next turn. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the gaze of the giant viper for 1 hour.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d10+5 piercing damage and the target must make a Con save (DC 15) if it is a living creature. On a failed save, the target takes 2d10 poison damage and becomes poisoned. At the start of each of its turns, a poisoned creature takes 2d10 poison damage. At the end of each of its turns, a poisoned creature can attempt a new save, ending the effect on a success.

**Tail Lash** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10+5 bludgeoning damage, and if the target is Medium size or smaller, the target must make a Dex save (DC 16) or be knocked prone.

### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Thrashing Coils** When an attacker hits the giant viper with a melee attack, it can make a tail lash attack against the attacker if the attacker is within its reach.

Perhaps no natural beast in Thule is feared so much as the giant viper. Bigger and stronger than even the mightiest constrictor snakes, it is a stealthy hunter whose venom can kill a mammoth with one bite. The viper's body is easily 50 feet in length and 3 feet thick at its widest, although it usually coils up in a much smaller space. It can weigh more than 2,500 pounds.

The giant viper usually saves its venom for large prey, relying on the sheer strength of its bite and its battering-ram like body to crush and kill human-sized prey. However, when hungry, the viper poisons anything it bites to make sure of a meal. Its venom is so powerful that most victims are instantly paralyzed, and die within the minute.

## MOSASAUR

*This huge reptilian creature has a crocodile-like body with flippers instead of legs and a powerful, finned tail.*

## MOSASAUR CR 7

Unaligned Huge beast XP 2,900

**Senses** average Perception 11

### BASE STATS

**AC** 13 (natural armor)

**hp** 145 (14d12 + 56)

**Speed** 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 24 (+7), **Dex** 10 (+0), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 2 (-4), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 7 (-2)

### TRAITS

**Hold Breath** A mosasaur can hold its breath for up to 30 minutes.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4d10+7 piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, the mosasaur gains a bonus action to use its Swallow attack against the target.

**Swallow** (melee weapon) *Attack:* special, reach 0 ft., one Large or smaller creature hit by the mosasaur's bite. The target must make a Str save (DC 18) or be swallowed by the mosasaur. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, and takes 4d6 acid damage at the start of each of its turns. It has total cover from attacks outside the mosasaur.

If a mosasaur takes damage from a swallowed creature, it must make a Con save (DC equal to damage dealt) or regurgitate all creatures in its stomach. If the mosasaur dies, a swallowed creature can escape by using an action to crawl 10 feet back up its throat.

The inland seas of Thule are home to a variety of large, hungry marine predators, but none are feared as much as the terrible mosasaur. A throwback to a far-distant past when giant reptiles roamed all the oceans of the world, the mosasaur is thankfully rare in the present age. They have been known to sink galleys by ramming them beneath the waterline, then gorge themselves on a dozen or more of the surviving sailors as they struggle in the water. Mosasaurs have also been known to crawl ashore and attack coastal villages, although they are slow and clumsy on land.

## SABER-TOOTH CAT

*Stocky and powerfully built, this great cat's most salient feature is a pair of foot-long fangs jutting down from its upper jaw.*

The legendary “saber-toothed tiger” is the most fearsome of Thule’s natural predators. Not only is the cat exceptionally large and strong, it is absolutely without fear and often hunts in packs. Nothing in Thule’s wilderness is safe from its attentions. The average saber-tooth cat stands 4 feet high at the shoulder and weighs almost 1,000 pounds.

The saber-tooth is not actually a tiger, despite its common nickname. And, perhaps surprisingly, its fangs are somewhat fragile—the cat is careful to strike at soft tissue and avoid bone. The fangs are used to inflict deep puncture wounds that bleed out its prey. The saber-tooth cat usually begins its attack with a sudden rush from concealment, pouncing and grabbing its prey just long enough to make sure of its bite, then retreating a short distance to wait for the victim to bleed to death. When attacking a band of humans, the cat tends to make rush after rush, bounding out of cover to bite a new victim and retreat.

Saber-tooths are notorious gluttons, and often kill more than they can eat.



### SABER-TOOTH CAT

CR 4

Unaligned Large beast

XP 1,100

Senses average Perception 15

#### BASE STATS

AC 12

hp 76 (9d10+27)

Speed 40 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

Str 19 (+4), Dex 14 (+2), Con 17 (+3)

Int 3 (-4), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 7 (-2)

#### TRAITS

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

**Keen Ears** The cat has tactical advantage on Wisdom/Perception checks involving hearing.

**Cat's Pounce** If the cat moves 20 feet or more and hits a target with a claw attack, the target must make a DC 16 Str save or be knocked prone. If the target falls prone, the cat gains a bonus action to make a bite attack against it.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The cat makes two attacks: one with its claws, and one with its bite.

**Claws** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+4 slashing damage.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+4 piercing damage. If the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 14) or lose 1d8 hit points at the start of each of its turns due to bleeding. The wound can be stanchd with a successful DC 14 Wisdom/Medicine check, or any form of magical healing.

## SHORT-FACED BEAR

*This very large bear has long legs and a short, wide muzzle with powerful jaws. Black ring-like markings mask its eyes.*

### SHORT-FACED BEAR

CR 5

Unaligned Large beast

XP 1,800

Senses average Perception 15

#### BASE STATS

AC 12 (natural armor)

hp 95 (10d10+40)

Speed 40 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

Str 22 (+6), Dex 13 (+1), Con 18 (+4)

Int 3 (-4), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 7 (-2)

#### TRAITS

Skills Perception +5

**Keen Nose** The bear has tactical advantage on Wisdom/Perception checks involving scent.

**Bear's Pounce** If the bear moves 20 feet or more and hits a target with a claw attack, the target must make a DC 17 Str save or be knocked prone. If the target falls prone, the bear gains a bonus action to make a bite attack against it.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The bear makes three attacks: two with its claws, and one with its bite.

**Claws** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+6 slashing damage.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+6 piercing damage.

The short-faced bear—usually known simply as the “long bear” or the “great bear” by the tribes who share their home—is one of the largest and most aggressive carnivores of the continent, and one of the biggest bears that has ever lived. Only the largest cave bears (or dire bears) top it in size and weight. A typical short-faced bear stands about 5-1/2 feet high at the shoulder and weighs more than 2,500 pounds. Standing upright, it towers almost 11 feet tall.

Long-legged and tall, the short-faced bear is only distantly related to its brown bear or cave bear cousins. It is a fast sprinter with good endurance, and usually runs down its prey on open ground. The bear is also known to aggressively drive lesser predators from their kills, and mammoth hunters in the Lands of the Long Shadow frequently have a harder time dealing with a scavenging bear than killing the mammoth in the first place.

## THULEAN ELK

*Sporting a rack of antlers more than ten feet wide, this large and powerful elk stands taller than a human at the shoulder.*

**THULEAN ELK** CR 3  
Unaligned Large beast XP 700

**Senses** average Perception 11

### BASE STATS

**AC** 12

**hp** 51 (6d10+18)

**Speed** 50 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 19 (+4), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 17 (+3)

**Int** 3 (-4), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 7 (-2)

### TRAITS

**Elk Charge** If the elk moves at least 10 feet and then hits a target with a gore attack, the target takes an extra 1d8 damage and must make a Str save (DC 15) or be knocked prone.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Gore** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8+4 bludgeoning damage (3d8+4 damage if the elk charged).

Sometimes known as the giant elk or the tundra elk, the Thulean elk is a large and particularly ill-tempered member of the deer family. The elk stands more than 7 feet tall at the shoulder, and its massive rack of antlers can span 12 feet or more. It can easily weigh 1,500 pounds or more.

The Thulean elk is one of the many large and dangerous prey animals common in the continent’s northern plains and forests. It can deliver an extremely powerful charge—few creatures can match its mix of speed, strength, and natural armament. Some of the tribes of the tundra have been known to domesticate the Thulean elk and use the beast as a mount; it is easily as strong as a good-sized horse, and is much harder to spook or startle.

## THULEAN MUSK OX

*This large ox is covered in thick brown hair and is armed with a heavy pair of sharp, curving horns.*

**THULEAN MUSK OX** CR 2  
Unaligned Large beast XP 450

**Senses** average Perception 10

### BASE STATS

**AC** 11 (natural armor)

**hp** 42 (5d10+15)

**Speed** 30 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 18 (+4), **Dex** 9 (-1), **Con** 16 (+3)

**Int** 2 (-4), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 6 (-3)

### TRAITS

**Fierce** If the musk ox takes damage that would reduce it to 0 hit points or less, it can attempt a Con save (DC 8 + damage dealt). On a successful save, it is instead reduced to 1 hit point.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Gore** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+4 bludgeoning damage.

Like most of Thule’s fauna, the musk ox of the northern lands is an especially large and fierce variety. It stands about 5-1/2 feet high at the shoulder, and weighs more than 1,200 pounds.

Musk oxen of other lands tend to be shy creatures, but the Thulean musk ox is noted for its foul temper and sheer fighting instinct. Once a foe catches its attention, the musk ox does its level best to batter it to death with repeated charges and then stamp what’s left into bloody mire in the snow. They are especially aggressive when calves are present.

## MORE BEASTS OF THULE

These aren’t the only beasts found in Thule—these are prehistoric animals native to Thule that aren’t usually encountered in other settings. Other common prehistoric beasts that are found in Thule include: axe beak, dire wolf, giant constrictor snake, giant hyena, giant lizard, and of course the mammoth. Dinosaurs such as plesiosaurus and pteranodon are not unusual in the warm seas or smoking skies of Thule, and it’s not unheard of to meet an ankylosaurus or tyrannosaurus in the more remote jungle regions. Thule’s swamps and vast caverns are home to disturbingly oversized arthropods such as the giant centipede, giant crab, giant scorpion, giant spider, and giant wasp. And, finally, ordinary predators such as the lion, panther, polar bear, or tiger might not be as impressive as their Ice Age forebears, but still pose a mortal threat to travelers in the Thulean wilderness.

## BEASTMAN

Beastmen are a primitive branch of humankind. Brutal, cruel, short-tempered, and contemptuous of anyone weaker than themselves, they are fierce warriors and raiders who pose a great threat to anyone traveling abroad in the wild lands of Thule. Beastmen are especially notorious for seizing captives and dragging them back to their lairs to be put to work as drudges, sacrificed to their bloodthirsty gods, or simply tortured to death in horrible ways for their amusement.

Beastmen hate humans (and most other intelligent races for that matter). They see all other peoples as enemies, and do not hesitate to kill any they cannot carry off into captivity. They have been known to engage in cannibalism, although this is considered a sacred ritual among their kind and requires the appropriate ritual preparations—eating their foes is an act of dominance, not sustenance.

Most adult beastmen are hunters; a beastman who cannot make his or her own kills and keep up with the rest of the tribe is usually left to die. They are strong, hardy foes, throwing themselves into battle at any opportunity. Beastmen know they are stronger and more fierce than most human warriors, so they do not hesitate to attack groups that outnumber them by a small margin.

Beastmen fear arcane magic and usually put captive spellcasters to death in peculiar and horrible ritual murders to ensure that the “bad magic” dies with its users.



## BEASTMAN WARRIOR

*This stocky, hairy sub-human is armed with a stone spear and wears a poorly cured animal pelt around his waist.*

### BEASTMAN WARRIOR CR 1/4

CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 50

**Senses** average Perception 9

**Languages** Urgan

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 12 (shield)

**hp** 6 (1d8+2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 6 (-2), **Wis** 9 (-1), **Cha** 6 (-2)

#### TRAITS

**Keen Nose** The beastman has tactical advantage on Perception checks involving scent.

**Sudden Fury** The beastman has tactical advantage on attacks during the first round of an encounter.

**Equipment** Wooden shield, stone club

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Stone Club** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+3 bludgeoning damage.

Beastmen begin any fight with a burst of raw fury that often overwhelms weaker foes. They have no concept of honor or fair play—in fact, a large gang of beastmen often fall all over themselves in their hurry to get in a cheap hit against outnumbered enemies. A warrior doesn't care how he manages to blood his spearpoint as long as he isn't left out of the “fun.”

## BEASTMAN HUNTER

*Tall, hairy, and thickly built, this warrior appears to be more ape than human. He wears nothing but crude animal skins—but humanlike cunning glints in his dark eyes.*

### BEASTMAN HUNTER CR 1/2

CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 100

**Senses** average Perception 12

**Languages** Urgan

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 13 (shield)

**hp** 13 (2d8+4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 6 (-2), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 7 (-2)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2, Stealth +3

**Keen Nose** The beastman has tactical advantage on Perception checks involving scent.

**Sudden Fury** The beastman has tactical advantage on attacks during the first round of an encounter.

**Equipment** wooden shield, stone axe, 2 sets of bolas

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Stone Axe** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+3 slashing damage.

**Bolas** (ranged weapon) *Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+3 bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a Dex save (DC 11) or fall prone. If the target falls prone, it must succeed on a second Dex save (DC 11) or be grappled and restrained until the grapple ends (escape DC 11).

Most beastmen encountered outside of a tribe's lair are hunters. They are cruel and vicious marauders who often wander far into civilized lands in search of easy prey. Hunters are highly skilled with a beastman version of the bolas, using these weapons to entangle their victims and prevent escape. Beastmen prefer to open battles with a volley of bolas thrown from ambush, but save their second volley for capturing stragglers when their foes begin to break.

## BEASTMAN CURSEMAKER

*Thick-bodied and covered in matted hair, this primitive humanoid wears bits of bone and feather in his beard and hair. He wears poorly cured animal pelts, and carries a bandolier adorned with animal skulls and bones.*

### BEASTMAN CURSEMAKER CR 2

CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 450  
**Senses** average Perception 14  
**Languages** Urgan, Low Atlantean

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 12  
**hp** 39 (6d8+12)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 15 (+2)  
**Int** 9 (-1), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 9 (-1)

#### TRAITS

**Saving Throws** Wisdom +4  
**Skills** Intimidation +1, Perception +4, Stealth +4  
**Keen Nose** The beastman has tactical advantage on Perception checks involving scent.  
**Sudden Fury** The beastman has tactical advantage on attacks during the first round of an encounter.  
**Spells** The cursemaker is a 3rd-level caster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (DC 13, attack +5).  
 At Will: *guidance, message, resistance*  
 1st Level (4 slots): *bane, bless, cure wounds*  
 2nd Level (2 slots): *aid, hold person*

**Equipment** stone spear, 3 juju heads

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Stone Spear** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +4 to hit (reach 5 ft., one target). *Hit*: 1d8+2 piercing damage.  
**Juju Head** (ranged weapon) *Attack*: +4 to hit, range 10/30 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2d8+2 necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a Wis save throw (DC 12) or become frightened. At the end of each of its turns, the target can attempt another save to end the effect.

Beastmen hate and fear most magic, but some are drawn to primitive and bloodthirsty jungle spirits or give themselves to the service of the ape-god Herum. These simple-minded shamans are known as "cursemakers" by other beastmen, and are both feared and hated by rest of their tribe. By tradition, a tribe's cursemaker is second only to the warchief in importance, and wields enough influence to choose which warrior becomes warchief when the tribe is in need of new leadership.

## BEASTMAN WARCHIEF

*This hulking brute stands well over 6 feet tall and seems more ape than man. He wears poorly cured armor made from animal hides, and carries a big two-handed club.*

### BEASTMAN WARCHIEF CR 3

CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 700  
**Senses** average Perception 11  
**Languages** Urgan

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 13 (hide armor)  
**hp** 75 (10d8+30)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 18 (+4), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 17 (+3)  
**Int** 8 (-1), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 11 (+0)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Athletics +6, Intimidation +2, Stealth +3  
**Keen Nose** The beastman has tactical advantage on Perception checks involving scent.  
**Sudden Fury** The beastman has tactical advantage on attacks during the first round of an encounter.  
**Equipment** hide armor, greatclub, 2 javelins

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The warchief makes two greatclub attacks.  
**Greatclub** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2d8+4 bludgeoning damage.  
**Javelin** (ranged weapon) *Attack*: +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d6+4 piercing damage.

#### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Brutal Bash** When an enemy misses the warchief with a melee attack, the warchief can attempt to push the triggering enemy 5 feet. The warchief makes an Athletics check opposed by the target's choice of Strength/Athletics or Dexterity/Acrobatics. If the warchief succeeds, the warchief can make a greatclub attack against any target within reach.

Beastman politics are simple: The biggest warrior is in charge, so most warchiefs are the fiercest and most bloodthirsty warriors of their tribes. They lead by example, charging heedlessly into almost any fight in the hope of striking the first blow. However, most warchiefs possess a certain low cunning to go along with their superior size and strength, making them masters of strategy compared to their fellows.

## BEASTMAN CHARACTERS

Beastmen are not normally PCs, but if the GM wishes to create unique beastman villains, then beastmen have the following racial traits.

**Ability Scores:** +2 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence. Beastmen are strong and hardy, but tend to be cunning rather than bright.

**Keen Nose:** Beastmen gain tactical advantage on Perception checks involving scent.

**Sudden Fury:** Beastmen gain tactical advantage on attack rolls during the first round of an encounter.

**Language:** Beastmen begin play speaking a debased form of Low Atlantean and Urgan.

## THE BLACK CIRCLE

For almost 200 years, a sinister cabal of wizards has ruled the Dhari city of Thran, brooking no dissent and allowing few to pass through the iron walls that encircle the city. That cabal, the Black Circle, doesn't limit itself to Thran, however. Their agents can be found plotting across Thule, always trying to advance Thran's interests . . . and advance their own standing within the Black Circle itself.

Circle agents and their masters are trained in a special sign language they use to communicate on missions. It's not a true language, bereft of abstract concepts and the vocabulary to handle topics beyond an agent's purview, but it's useful when the agents need to be silent or want to say something surreptitiously. Compare the agent's Charisma/Deception check against the average Perception of anyone who can see the agent's hands; if the check succeeds, then the agent's hand signals went unnoticed. The higher-ranking Black Circle wizards rarely use these means to communicate with each other, however, preferring to speak in the cultivated tones of High Atlantean.



There are only thirteen Masters of the Inner Circle, all preparing for the day when they'll attempt to seize power for themselves. Among the most powerful wizards on the continent of Thule, they answer only to Nefron Vir, the High Master of the Circle . . . although most masters are merely biding their time until the day they can challenge Nefron Vir in a spellcasting death-duel and become the Black Circle's new High Master.

## BLACK CIRCLE AGENT

*This cloaked human wields a wicked kukri in one hand, while the other burns with a black flame.*

**BLACK CIRCLE AGENT** CR 8

CN Medium humanoid (human) XP 3,900

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean, Circle sign language

### BASE STATS

**AC** 15 (studded leather armor)

**hp** 58 (9d8+18)

**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 10 (+0), **Dex** 19 (+4), **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 13 (+1), **Wis** 10 (+1), **Cha** 15 (+2)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Deception +5, Perception +4, Stealth +10

**Black Flame** A Black Circle agent has been granted the power of the black flame. As a bonus action, the agent can create a ball of black fire in one hand, with lasts for up to 1 minute. The black fire sheds light that only the agent can perceive, allowing him to see normally in what is otherwise complete darkness to others.

**Throw Black Flame** A Black Circle agent can throw his black flame as a bonus action at a target within 60 feet. If the target fails a Dex save (DC 16), it takes 2d6 fire damage at the start of each of its turns for the next 1d4 rounds. The flame can be put out as an action by the target or any creature adjacent to the target.

**Poison Use** Black Circle agents prefer poisons that hamper a victim's senses, such as *Black Circle poison*. When hit by a weapon coated in *Black Circle poison*, the victim must succeed on a Con save (DC 16) or take 2d6 poison damage and become unable to see any creature not within 5 feet of the victim. The victim can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns to end the effect.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The agent deals 5d6 extra damage with his sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Equipment** studded leather armor, kukri, 5 doses of Black Circle poison

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The agent attacks with his kukri twice.

**Kukri** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d4+4 slashing damage and poison.

A spy, an assassin, a provocateur—the Circle agent has been called all these things and more, usually as she disappears into the night. Working under orders from a wizard within the Black Circle, the agent plots against anyone who has something Thran wants.

Some Circle agents are bodyguards or manservants for wizards of the Black Circle, but others operate autonomously, absconding with rare tomes, poisoning rivals, and sabotaging anyone who challenges Thran's position in the world. Some haven't seen a Black Circle wizard in the flesh for years, receiving assignments through *message* spells and visits from a wizard's familiar.

A Circle agent in a fight seeks advantage above all else. The most common way to obtain it is to hit the target with a poison dart, then take advantage of the blurred vision to land telling blows—or escape, if the fight is irrelevant to the Black Circle's ultimate goals. Circle agents are nothing if not pragmatic, and they rarely fight to the death, choosing to disappear when their targets are still trying to clear their eyes of the stinging haze from the poison. But make no mistake: the Circle's agents can fight when needed.

## BLACK CIRCLE WIZARD

*Clad in a mysterious mask and covered with protective scrolls and fetishes, this human mage possesses a cruel, confident manner.*

The Black Circle wizard is instantly recognizable on the streets of Thran—and the ordinary denizens of the city give him a wide berth. A wizard's face is the last thing you'll see, the folk tales warn, and few are brave enough to test that wisdom. While a typical Circle wizard like this isn't in the Black Circle leadership, he regards that as a temporary condition he's working to rectify. The Black Circle wizard has two great classes of enemy: those who threaten Thran, and rival wizards who stand in the way of advancement.

A Black Circle wizard rarely fights alone; most have used rituals to summon all manner of monsters to act as bodyguards and servitors. The wizard thus hangs back, blasting enemies with ranged spells. If a foe gets too close, the wizard lifts his mask, hoping to blind the enemy and allow time for the wizard's servants to rally or for the wizard to fly away. A wounded wizard uses a big area spell in conjunction with *death for the living*—with no compunction about catching his summoned minions in the blast—to gain a temporary hit point buffer and put the PCs back on their heels.

### BLACK CIRCLE WIZARD

CR 12

NE Medium humanoid (human)

XP 8,400

Senses average Perception 11

Languages Low Atlantean, Kalayan, High Atlantean, Benthic

#### BASE STATS

AC 15 (*mage armor*)

hp 84 (13d8+26)

Speed 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

Str 10 (+0), Dex 14 (+2), Con 14 (+2)

Int 21 (+5), Wis 11 (+1), Cha 15 (+2)

#### TRAITS

Saves Int +9, Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +9, Insight +5, Intimidation +6

**Death for the Living (Recharge 3+)** The Black Circle wizard can draw life from the destruction he causes by using this ability when casting a spell. The wizard gains a number of temporary hit points equal to 5 times the number of targets affected by the triggering spell. Creatures that succeeded on saves against the spell are not counted in this total.

**Dark Immolation (Recharge 3+)** As a bonus action, the Black Circle wizard calls down a strike of black flame, targeting any foe within 30 feet. The target takes 4d8 fire damage (no saving throw or attack roll required).

**Peer Behind the Mask (Recharge 5+)** As a bonus action, the Black Circle wizard can lift his mask and stare at a target that can see him. The target is blinded for 1 round.

**Spells** The wizard is a 14th-level caster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (DC 17, +9 to hit)

At will: *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4): *burning hands*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

2nd level (3): *flaming sphere*, *scorching ray*, *web*

3rd level (3): *bloodlust cloud*\*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *fly*, *protection from energy*

4th level (3): *black tentacles*, *fire shield*, *phantasmal killer*

5th level (2): *cone of cold*, *summon mi-go*\*

6th level (1): *eyebite*

7th level (1): *visions of madness*\*

\*New spell, see Chapter 7

Equipment staff

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Staff** (melee weapon) Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

## MONSTERS NOT FOUND IN THULE

Many settings are defined at least in part by the monsters an adventurer doesn't meet, and Thule is no different. Classic fantasy creatures conspicuously absent from the primeval continent include chromatic and metallic dragons, drow, most types of fey, goblins, kobolds, orcs, and ogres. Beastmen are the orcs of the Primeval Thule campaign.

## CYCLOPS, THULEAN

*Standing more than 12 feet tall, this powerfully muscled creature has thick, gray-green skin and carries a club longer than a full-grown man. Massive tusks jut from its heavy jaw and twisting horns crown its head, but its most distinctive feature is the single dark eye in the middle of its fierce face.*

The cyclopes are an ancient race that ruled wide kingdoms in Thule before humankind came to the shores of the island continent. They are few in number now, lingering in a few remote vales of the Zinandar Mountains and the high passes of the Starcrowns. The cyclopes nurse a bitter hatred for humans of all races and cultures, believing that the human tribes of ages past were responsible for the fall of the long-lost cyclops realms and the decline of their race.

The cyclopes of the current age are reclusive and territorial. They protect their dwindling homelands with single-minded ferocity, aggressively attacking any intruders that wander into their territory. The monsters

are literally fearless in battle, throwing themselves against almost any number of foes and trusting to their great strength to carry the day. Conversely, enemies who meet the fierce gaze of their single eyes are sometimes rooted to the spot by sheer terror.

Some who challenge cyclopes assume that they are dealing with dull-witted savages driven by unreasoning rage, but they dangerously underestimate the creatures. Cyclopes are highly skilled builders in stone, and many of their old citadels or mountain roads remain standing thousands of years after they were first built. Their style features massive blocks joined without mortar, creating literally Cyclopean labyrinths of brooding walls and steep stairs. Many cyclops lairs are protected by simple but deadly stonework traps. Some cyclopes are also knowledgeable in primitive metalworking.

### THULEAN CYCLOPS

CR 10

NE Large giant

XP 5,900

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., average Perception 16

**Languages** Giant

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 15 (natural armor)

**hp** 142 (15d10+60)

**Speed** 40 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 23 (+6), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 19 (+4)

**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 12 (+1)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Con +8, Wis +6

**Skills** Athletics +10, Intimidation +5, Perception +6

**Immune** frightened

**Fierce** If the cyclops takes damage that would reduce it to 0 hit points or less, it can attempt a Con save (DC 8 + damage dealt). On a successful save, it is instead reduced to 1 hit point.

**Cyclops Charge** If the cyclops moves 20 feet or more and hits with a greatclub attack, the target takes an extra 2d10 bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must make a DC 18 Str save or be pushed 10 feet and knocked prone.

**Equipment** stone greatclub, 3 rocks

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The cyclops makes two greatclub or rock attacks, and one terrible gaze attack.

**Greatclub** (melee weapon) **Attack:** +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 2d10+6 bludgeoning damage.

**Rock** (ranged weapon) **Attack:** +5 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., one target. **Hit:** 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage.

**Terrible Gaze** The cyclops chooses a creature within 60 feet to make a Cha save (DC 14). On a failure, the creature is frightened for 1 minute, or frightened and paralyzed if it fails the save by 5 or more. An affected creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns.

#### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Brutal Bash (Recharge 5+)** When an enemy misses the cyclops with a melee attack, the cyclops can attempt to push it away. The cyclops makes a Strength/Athletics check opposed by the enemy's Strength/Athletics or Dexterity/Acrobatics check. If the cyclops wins, it pushes the triggering enemy 5 feet or knocks it prone, and it can make a greatclub attack against that enemy.



## DRAGON, THULEAN

*This massive, reptilian beast is armored in thick scales of reddish brown. It has vast, batlike wings, a long neck and even longer tail, and a crocodilian head with prominent horns. Incendiary venom drips from its mighty jaws.*

A legendary beast even in a time of legend, the Thulean dragon is a powerful reptilian predator that fears nothing that walks, swims, crawls, or flies in the primeval continent. Long ago dragons were commonplace in Thule, but in this age only a handful are left, lurking in the deepest swamps or the most forbidding mountain peaks. Few living humans have ever seen one of these mighty beasts, and fewer still have lived to tell the tale.

Unlike the dragons of other worlds, Thulean dragons are not distinguished by color or the type of breath weapon they possess. Most have scales of rusty red to dull black, and all can expel jets of jelly-like venom that ignites on contact with air and burns fiercely, sticking to unfortunate victims. The venom makes a dragon's bite almost as dangerous as its fiery breath, and is reputed to be one of the deadliest poisons known to man. Thulean dragons make little use of their clawed feet in battle, but can strike powerful blows with their long, whip-like tails.

Perhaps the most important difference between a Thulean dragon and similar creatures from other worlds is that the Thulean dragon is barely sentient. It is a very clever beast, wiser and more cunning than even a mammoth or a giant viper, but it is incapable of speech and is driven only by its natural urge to hunt, to kill, and to feed. Even so, it is a living engine of destruction that only the most foolhardy hero would dare to challenge.

### THULEAN DRAGON CR 13

NE Huge dragon XP 10,000

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., average Perception 12

**Languages** understands Draconic (can't speak)

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**hp** 195 (17d12+85)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 24 (+7), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 20 (+5)

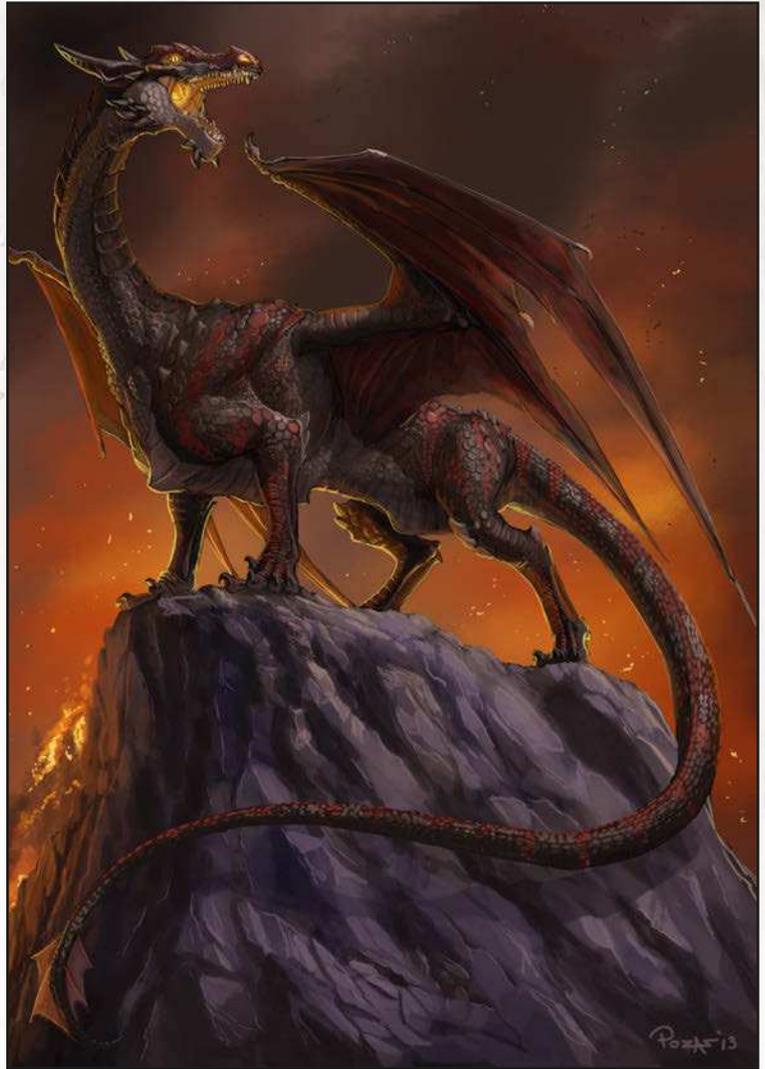
**Int** 5 (-3), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 13 (+1)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +5, Con +10, Wis +7, Cha +6, tactical advantage on saves against spells and magical effects.

**Resist** fire, poison

**Ignite** A target that fails a save against the dragon's fiery breath catches on fire, taking 2d8 fire damage at the start of each of its turns. Creatures burning from the dragon's breath have tactical disadvantage on attacks and ability checks. An ignited target can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns to end the effect.



#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The dragon makes two bite attacks and one tail slap attack.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d10+7 piercing damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 18). On a failed save, it takes an additional 4d10 poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a successful save, it takes half damage.

**Tail Slap** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+7 bludgeoning damage.

**Fiery Breath (Recharge 5+)** The dragon breathes fire in a 60-foot cone. Each target in the cone takes 10d8 fire damage, or half damage on a successful Dex save (DC 18). Targets that fail their save are also ignited (see traits).

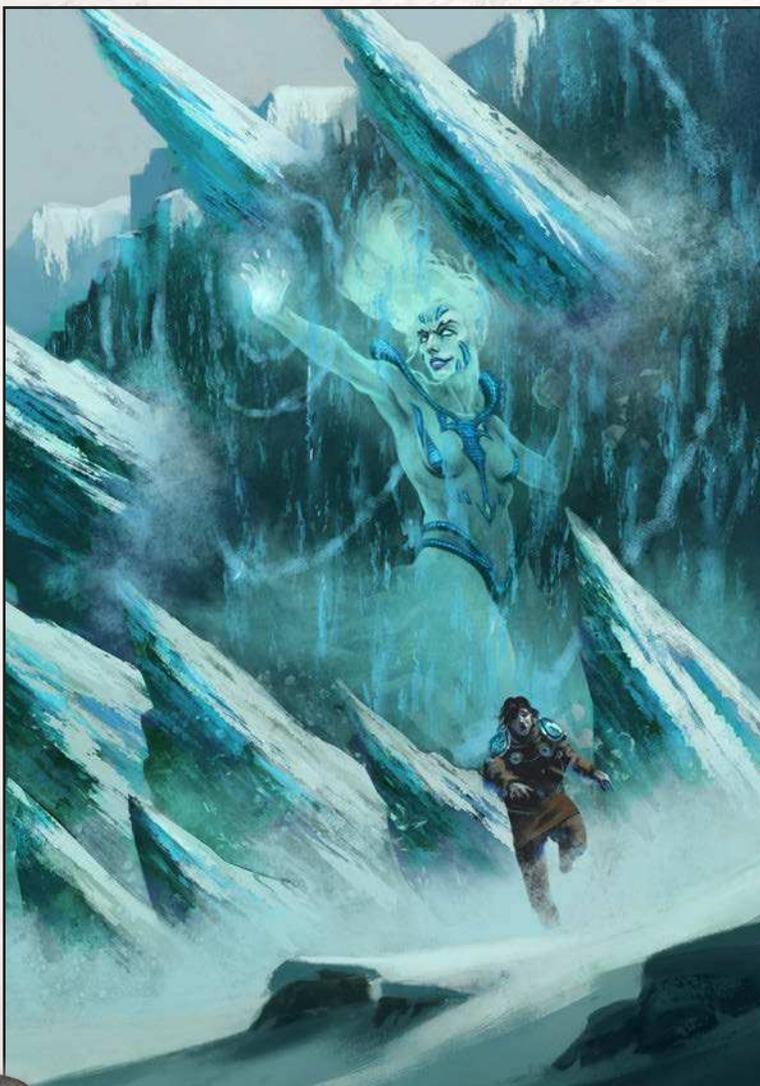
#### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Wing Bash** When an enemy hits the dragon with a melee attack, it can react with a wing bash. Each target within 10 feet must make a Dex save (DC 18) or take 1d10+7 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

## EIDOLON OF THE GLACIER

The eidolons of Thule's colder regions are strange exemplars of the polar wastes, part giant, part nature spirit, and all malevolence. They prefer to slumber within the ice of Thule's glaciers, but if awakened, they can prove to unfortunate travelers that ice is but a temporary prison. The eidolon lures those who wander too close, subtly pulling them alongside the glacier edges, or into caves and crevices deep inside Thule's glaciers, so that it may drain them of the heat it despises.

Those killed by a polar eidolon rise the next day as frost corpses unless their bodies are kept warm for 24 hours. Frost corpses lie unmoving in the snow most of the time, rising only to defend the eidolon or otherwise serve it. At a glance, their bluish-tinted skin and ordinary appearance might fool the unwary into dismissing them as ordinary travelers who died of exposure . . . until they rise, reaching out with frost-scarred hands to drag the warm-blooded ever closer to their master.



## FROST CORPSE

*These corpses are covered in hoary frost and snow, but the suddenness of their movements and faint blue glow of their eyes are clear indicators of the unnatural.*

**FROST CORPSE** CR 8  
NE Medium undead XP 3,900

**Senses** average Perception 11  
**Languages** Nimothan, Low Atlantean

### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (mail cuirass)  
**hp** 76 (8d8+40)  
**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 17 (+3), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 20 (+5)  
**Int** 5 (-3), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Immune** cold

**Cold Aura** A creature that ends its turn adjacent to the frost corpse takes 4d6 cold damage. If a creature is adjacent to more than one frost corpse, it takes the damage once, but the damage is increased by 2d6 for each additional frost corpse beyond the first.

**Path of Frost** When a frost corpse moves, the spaces it travels through become difficult terrain for 2 rounds as hoary ice builds up in its wake.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The frost corpse makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, then the target must succeed on a Str save (DC 16) or become restrained as ice forms around the target, immobilizing it. Breaking free of the ice requires an action and a Strength/Athletics check (DC 14). The ice can also be broken by dealing 15 points of damage to it, or any amount of fire damage.

**Slam** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+5 bludgeoning damage plus 4d6 cold damage.

Most frost corpses are content to lie dormant until intruders disturb them, but a few have built primitive altars to the nearby polar eidolon, and a rare few travel short distances away from the eidolon to run errands and perform simple tasks for it. They behave like zombies when awakened, but the frost corpses have at least a modicum of intelligence and can speak—though they use their voices only when speaking as the polar eidolon (see below).

If the PCs encounter frost corpses, then a polar eidolon is near, and the frost corpses' battle tactics involve moving the PCs closer to the eidolon or keeping the PCs close once the eidolon reveals itself. Because they're a much lower-level monster than the eidolon itself, use them in large numbers to help the eidolon control the battlefield.

Because decomposition slows to a crawl in polar climates, many of the frost corpses are centuries or even millennia old. The eidolon cares little for wealth or the trappings of civilization, so frost corpses often have possessions (including maps and magic items) from bygone ages.

## POLAR EIDOLON

*A giant spirit trapped in ice, the polar eidolon defends its turf with every fiber of its being. It starts a battle behind a layer of ice, but it doesn't stay there for long.*

The eidolons are patient if pernicious denizens of Thule's colder regions. Content to bide their time meditating within frozen columns of ice or within a glacier itself, they rouse to anger when intruders come near.

At first, the polar eidolon is safe behind a layer of ice. It can't move or make melee attacks, but it can blast the PCs with *northern lights* and its spell-like abilities. The PCs may attack the ice to get at the eidolon. If they don't the eidolon may eventually start breaking through the ice itself to engage the PCs in melee, at which point it uses Chill Aura and Icy Thrust to make short work of the intruders.

The polar eidolon can't speak directly while encased in ice, but it can use a limited form of telepathy to speak through any and all nearby frost corpses. No matter what they're doing, the frost corpses all raise their quavering, cracked voices in unison, speaking whatever taunts and warnings the eidolon sees fit to utter.

### POLAR EIDOLON CR 14

NE Huge elemental XP 11,500

**Senses** average Perception 14, tremorsense 120 ft.

**Languages** Low Atlantean, Nimothan

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 20 (natural armor)

**hp** 250 (20d12+120)

**Speed** 40 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 22 (+6), **Dex** 19 (+4), **Con** 23 (+6)

**Int** 12 (+1), **Wis** 18 (+4), **Cha** 23 (+6)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +9, Int +6, Wis +9

**Immune** cold

**Vulnerable** fire

**Telepathy** 100 ft. (frost corpses only)

**Trapped in Ice** The polar eidolon begins trapped behind a layer of ice. It cannot move or make melee attacks (except against the ice itself) until the ice is gone. Its area attacks function normally, and it can see through the ice without difficulty. However, it has total cover against enemies until the ice is gone. The ice has 150 hit points, and every attack against it automatically hits.

**Chill Aura** Once the eidolon is no longer trapped in ice, the air around it becomes frigid. At the start of the eidolon's turn, all creatures within 10 feet take 4d6 cold damage. Those not immune to cold reduce their speed by half for one round.

**Spell-like Abilities** A polar eidolon can cast the following spells as innate abilities. Its casting ability is Charisma (DC 19, +11 to hit).

3/day: *ice storm*, *wall of ice*

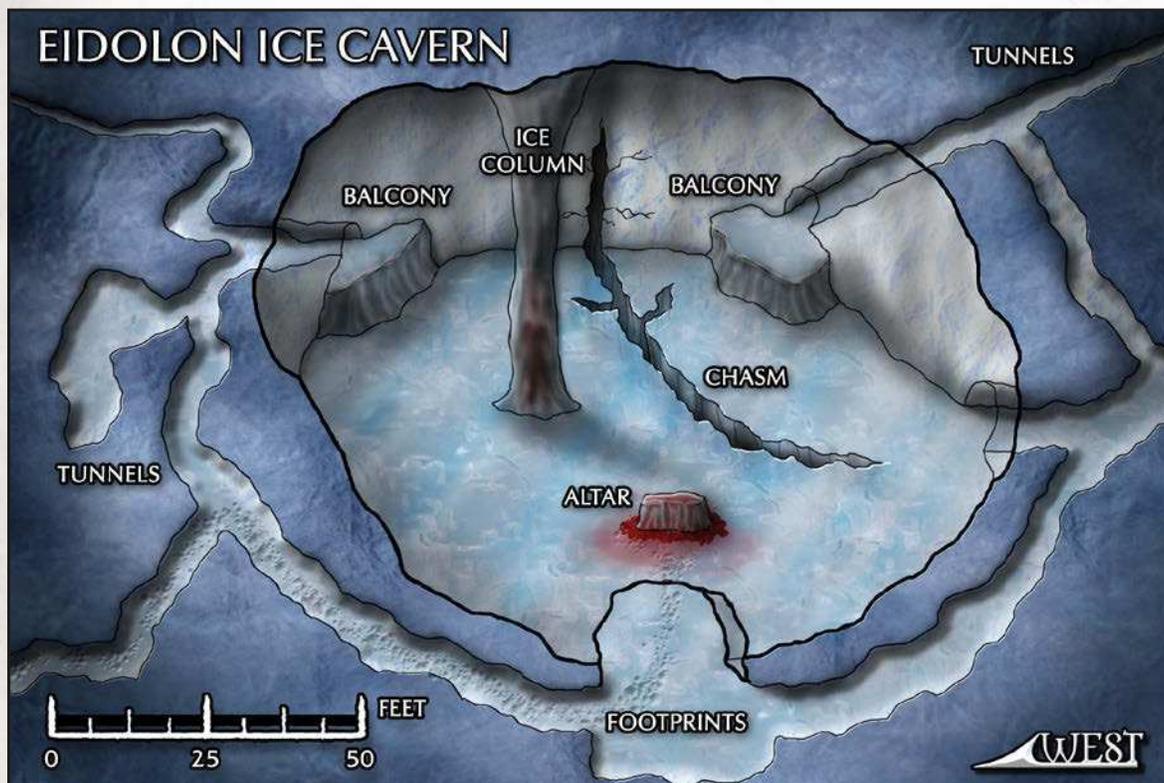
#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The eidolon attacks with two icy thrusts, two polar rays, or one of each.

**Icy Thrust** (melee spell) *Attack*: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3d10+10 piercing damage and the target is restrained unless it succeeds on a Str save (DC 18). A restrained target is trapped in ice until the end of its next turn.

**Polar Ray** (ranged spell) *Attack*: +9 to hit, range 100 ft., one target. *Hit*: The target loses any resistance to cold damage until the end of the eidolon's next turn and then takes 3d10+5 cold damage.

**Northern Lights** (Recharge 5+) The polar eidolon unleashes a blast of unnerving cold in a 20-ft. radius from any point within 50 feet. Creatures in the burst take 5d8 cold damage, or half damage on a successful Dex save (DC 18). If a creature has half or fewer of its hit points remaining after it fails this save, it must then make a Cha save (DC 18) or become dominated (as per the *dominate person* spell) for 1d4 rounds.



## HEADHUNTERS OF PHOOR

Along the western edge of the Golden Sea, amid the dark, musty caves and ancient, half-submerged ruins in the tangled swamps, primitive human tribes survive. These are a violent people, and many still worship ancient prehuman gods, offering sacrifices of beasts and men to garner favor with these forgotten deities. Worst of all, most Phoori tribes are headhunters, recognizable by the severed heads the warriors wear as ghastly trophies. The headhunters believe that by taking an enemy's head they can also enslave his spirit in the afterlife, and so they decapitate their foes, hang the heads from their belts to give them strength in battle, and eventually deposit the skulls in a great pile to guard what wealth a tribe has accumulated.

The most wicked of the headhunter tribes are the Kyr, bloodthirsty savages notorious for their cruelty. They are fond of poisons, particularly those that paralyze, so that their victim is completely aware of the impending beheading. Some victims are kept alive for a short time so the dark shaman of the tribe might sacrifice the captive to their dark gods, ripping out the still-beating heart before the poor soul's head is taken.

## PHOORI BEAST MASTER

*This human savage wears light armor and carries a spear, but most notable are the severed heads that stare vacantly from where they are tied at his belt, silent proof of his fighting prowess.*

**PHOORI BEASTMASTER** CR 3  
CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 700  
**Senses** average Perception 13  
**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean

### BASE STATS

**AC** 14 (hide armor)  
**hp** 52 (7d8+21)  
**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 16 (+3)  
**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Nature +2, Perception +3, Survival +3

**Command Beast** As a bonus action, the beast master causes one animal or monstrosity of 8 Hit Dice or lower within 15 ft. to make an immediate attack.

**Poison Use** Phoori tribesmen prefer poisons that hamper a victim's ability to move, such as *Thulean wasp venom*. When hit by a weapon coated in *Thulean wasp venom*, the victim must succeed on a Con save (DC 14) or take 2d6 poison damage and have his or her speed reduced by 5 ft. for one minute. Additional doses have a cumulative effect on a victim's speed.

**Equipment** hide armor, spear, longbow, 3 doses wasp venom

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Spear** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d8+2 piercing damage and poison.

**Longbow** (ranged weapon) *Attack*: +5 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d8+3 piercing damage and poison.

### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Heeded Warning** The severed heads that Phoori tribesmen carry as trophies sometimes whisper glimpses of the future. When the Phoori tribesman would take damage from any source, he can heed a warning as a combat reaction and take only half damage from that source. Once he has used this ability, he cannot use it again for 1 day or until he reduces a creature to 0 hit points.

The beast master subjugates some of the less dangerous predators of the swamps, such as crocodiles, dire boars, or even panthers, and trains them to help flush out prey. In return, the beasts get a full meal . . . minus the head, of course.

## PHOORI DEATH ADDER

*A wicked dagger smeared with ichor and a small blowgun are the only obvious weapons carried by this shifty savage. Vials and pots are tied to his belt, as is the head of his last victim.*

**PHOORI DEATH ADDER** CR 4  
CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 1,100  
**Senses** average Perception 13  
**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean

### BASE STATS

**AC** 14 (leather armor)  
**hp** 58 (9d8+18)  
**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 14 (+2)  
**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Nature +2, Perception +3, Stealth +8

**Evasion** The death adder takes no damage instead of half damage when it succeeds on a Dex save against an effect that deals half damage on a successful save.

**Blinding Powder** A phoori death adder can concoct a mix of minerals and animal secretions into a fine powder that stings the eyes of its enemies. As a bonus action, the death adder can cast the powder in a 15-ft. cone. Creatures within the cone must make Con saves (DC 14) or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. A death adder typically carries 3 handfuls of blinding powder.

**Poison Use** Phoori tribesmen prefer poisons that hamper a victim's ability to move, such as *Thulean wasp venom*. When hit by a weapon coated in *Thulean wasp venom*, the victim must succeed on a Con save (DC 14) or take 2d6 poison damage and have his or her speed reduced by 5 ft. for one minute. Additional doses have a cumulative effect on a victim's speed.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The death adder deals 2d6 extra damage with its sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Equipment** blowgun, dagger, spiderpot, 3 doses blinding powder, 3 doses wasp venom

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Dagger** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d4+3 piercing damage and poison.

**Blowgun** (ranged weapon) *Attack*: +5 to hit, ranged 25/100 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 piercing damage and poison.

**Spiderpot** New item, see Chapter 7

## COMBAT REACTIONS

**Heeded Warning** The severed heads that Phoori tribesmen carry as trophies sometimes whisper glimpses of the future. When the Phoori tribesman would take damage from any source, he can heed a warning as a combat reaction and take only half damage from that source. Once he has used this ability, he cannot use it again for 1 day or until he reduces a creature to 0 hit points.

This primitive alchemist uses the venoms of the creatures and vegetation of the swamp to fell his foes. A poisoner is not one to stand toe-to-toe with a mighty warrior, and instead lets his poisons do his dirty work.

## PHOORI DARK SHAMAN

*This tall, imposing figure wears a horned skull helm and a great cloak over his bone mail shirt. His fingernails and teeth have been filed to points. He wields a stout club, topped with a skull held in place by wicked spikes, though the skull's mouth seems to chatter of its own accord.*

The age-old ruins and temples sunken in the swamps still harbor dark and ancient power. This power whispers in the dreams of the dark shaman, setting him on a path to sacrifice enough souls to awaken his dark gods from their slumber. The dark shaman is the spiritual, and sometimes literal, leader of the tribe, and continually reinforces the tribe's bloodlust to satisfy the voices from the depths.

**PHOORI DARK SHAMAN** CR 6  
CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 2,300

**Senses** average Perception 16  
**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean

### BASE STATS

**AC** 16 (hide armor)  
**hp** 65 (10d8+20)  
**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 12 (+1), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 15 (+2)  
**Int** 12 (+1), **Wis** 16 (+3), **Cha** 14 (+2)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Intimidation +5, Perception +6

**Dark Sacrifice** Whenever the dark shaman hits a prone enemy, the attack deals 2d8 extra damage and the dark shaman gains the same number of temporary hit points.

**Forced Obesiance (3/day)** As a bonus action, the dark shaman invokes the names of his twisted and evil gods, forcing his foes to bow down to their terrible power. All non-evil creatures within 30 feet must succeed a Wis save (DC 15) or become incapacitated for 1 round and knocked prone.

**Spells** The dark shaman is a 6th-level caster. His spell-casting ability is Wisdom (DC 14, +6 to hit)

At will: *detect poison, resistance*

1st level (4): *bane, cause fear, command, inflict wounds*

2nd level (3): *blindness/deafness, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3): *contagion, curse*

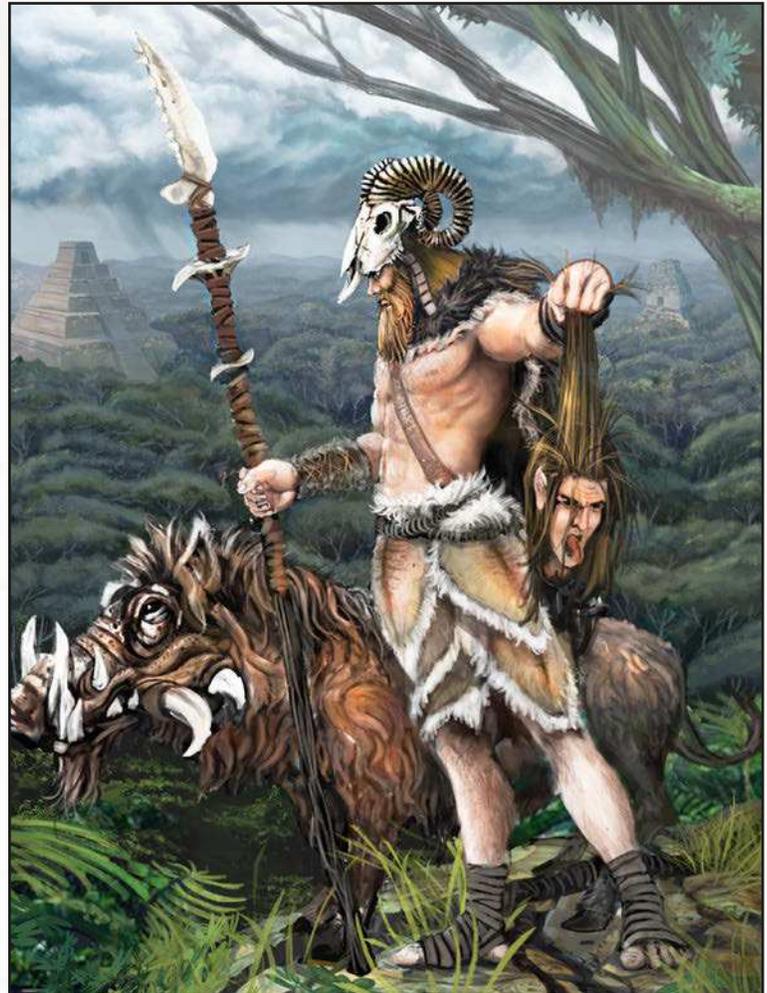
**Equipment** hide armor, club

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Skull-Tipped Club** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+1 piercing damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 14) or take 2d8 poison damage and be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

## COMBAT REACTIONS

**Heeded Warning** The severed heads that Phoori tribesmen carry as trophies sometimes whisper glimpses of the future. When the Phoori tribesman would take damage from any source, he can heed a warning as a combat reaction and take only half damage from that source. Once he has used this ability, he cannot use it again for 1 day or until he reduces a creature to 0 hit points.



## HEADHUNTING

Part of the social compact of most fantasy roleplaying games is the unspoken agreement that the GM rarely kicks the PCs when they are down. Continuing to attack a fallen PC breaks that agreement, especially when the party lacks any sort of resurrection magic, even in the savage, intense world of Thule. But of any foe the PCs might face, the Headhunters have the most reason to take a PC's head, since they believe that by doing so they capture the soul, which will serve them even if they, too, fall in battle.

## RAKSHASA

The rakshasas were drawn to Thule by its resemblance to their homeworld, Lanka. Thule's dark jungles and mighty peaks were like a natural extension of their native lands. At first, their empire grew unchecked, and only the serpentman empire of Nessk approached their might. But thousands of years ago, during the Age of Myth, the rakshasas of this world finally reached their peak when they obliterated the realm of Mesildyar in northern Thule by creating a gate to a demonic dimension and ushering in a horde of demons. That was their last great victory in Thule, and over the following centuries, the armies of elves and their human slaves earned costly victory after victory, and finally forced the rakshasas from Agda Jand, their last bastion, and off of Thule's shores entirely.

Across the Sea of Mists in the rocky peaks of Hel-lumar the rakshasas brood and wait. They long for control of Thule again, and so plot and plan and scheme from their hidden towers. Immortal beings with a ceaseless appetite for evil, the rakshasas have changed their tactics from overt destruction to covert corruption. The rakshasas only reveal their true nature if they are in their homelands or want to gloat over certain victory. Now the rakshasa rajas are building their empires again. Rakshasa spies infiltrate the major city states, learning who to corrupt, and who to kill.

## HONOR GUARD

*Standing like a man, but with the head of a great tiger and strangely backward wrists, this humanoid wears finely crafted chainmail, ornate helm, and filigreed shield, and carries a three-headed flail.*

### RAKSHASA HONOR GUARD CR 8

NE Medium fiend XP 3,900

**Senses** average Perception 15  
**Languages** Low Atlantean, Rakshasa

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 18 (mail cuirass, shield)  
**hp** 76 (8d8+40)  
**Speed** 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 17 (+3), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 20 (+5)  
**Int** 13 (+1), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 13 (+1)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Wis +5, tactical advantage on saves vs spells and magical effects.

**Skills** Insight +5, Perception +5

**Resist** weapon damage, except for magical piercing damage dealt by a good-aligned creature

**Change Shape** As the spell *alter self*, but concentration is not required.

**Protective Strike** The honor guard has tactical advantage when attacking a target that is also adjacent to another rakshasa, and such attacks deal 2d6 extra damage on a hit.

**Equipment** mail cuirass, shield, flail

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The honor guard makes two attacks.

**Flail** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8+7 bludgeoning damage and the target must succeed a Dex save (DC 15) or be knocked prone.

#### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Duty-Bound** When an adjacent ally would be hit by an attack, the honor guard can intervene and be hit by the attack instead.

Servitors of the rakshasa rajas, the honor guard are magically bound to protect their master. They serve well as bodyguards and shock troops, and despite their dwindling numbers, the rajas have no qualms about sacrificing an honor guard or two (or more) to protect themselves and their schemes.

## RAKSHASA INFILTRATOR

*What was once human reveals its true form. It is still humanoid, but with smooth, spotted fur like a jungle panther that matches the feline head atop its shoulders. A wavy-bladed dagger in its backward hand seems to gleam with a dark light, which distracts from the matching blade in its other hand.*

### RAKSHASA INFILTRATOR CR 10

NE Medium fiend XP 5,900

**Senses** average Perception 16  
**Languages** Low Atlantean, Rakshasa

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 19 (natural armor, leather)  
**hp** 93 (11d8+44)  
**Speed** 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 21 (+5), **Con** 19 (+4)  
**Int** 13 (+1), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 13 (+1)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Wis +6, tactical advantage on saves vs spells and magical effects.

**Skills** Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +9

**Resist** weapon damage, except for magical piercing damage dealt by a good-aligned creature

**Change Shape** As the spell *alter self*, but concentration is not required.

**Canny Duelist** If the infiltrator attacks only one target on its turn, that target has tactical disadvantage with weapon attacks against the infiltrator for one round.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The infiltrator deals 3d6 extra damage with its sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Equipment** leather armor, dagger

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The infiltrator makes four attacks.

**Dagger** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+5 piercing damage.

#### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Uncanny Mimicry** When the infiltrator is attacked while at least one creature other than the attacker is adjacent to it, the infiltrator can use change shape to duplicate the appearance of the adjacent creature. The attacker must make an Int save (DC 16) or attack the adjacent creature instead (regardless of range restrictions).

The infiltrator is the ultimate spy, working its way into the powerful circles that rule the human cities of Thule. It is a master of subterfuge, and when fighting a group of foes will magically disguise itself to appear as a trusted ally or innocent bystander, creating a mirror entity nearly impossible to distinguish from the real person.

# RAKSHASA RAJA

This tiger-headed humanoid exudes an air of confidence and elegance with an undercurrent of evil. It is dressed in fine silk robes, with jeweled rings on the fingers of its unnatural hands.

**RAKSHASA RAJA** CR 12

NE Medium fiend XP 8,400

**Senses** average Perception 16

**Languages** Low Atlantean, Rakshasa

**BASE STATS**

**AC** 19 (natural armor, leather)

**hp** 102 (12d8 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft

**ABILITY SCORES**

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 18 (+4), **Con** 19 (+4)

**Int** 17 (+3), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 21 (+5)

**TRAITS**

**Saves** Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +9, tactical advantage on saves vs spells and magical effects.

**Skills** Deception +9, Insight +6, Perception +6

**Resist** weapon damage, except for magical piercing damage dealt by a Good-aligned creature

**Change Shape** As the spell *alter self*, but concentration is not required.

**Phantom Image** As a bonus action, the raja creates an illusion of an exact duplicate of itself. As long as the phantom image is active, melee and ranged attacks against the raja have tactical disadvantage. The effect ends when the raja is hit by an attack.

**Summon Swordspirit (2/day)** The raja summons two rakshasa swordspirits (see below) to fight for it. The swordspirits appear within 30 feet and act immediately.

**Spells** The raja is a 12th-level caster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (DC 17, +9 to hit).

At will: *friends*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4): *charm person*, *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *silent image*

2nd level (3): *acid arrow*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3): *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*, *major image*

4th level (3): *defy death*\*, *dimension door*, *draining mist*\*

5th level (2): *animate blades*\*, *hold monster*

6th level (1): *chain lightning*

\*New spell, see Chapter 7

**Equipment** leather cuirass, kukri

**COMBAT ACTIONS**

**Multiattack** The raja makes three kukri attacks, or makes one kukri attack and uses its recruit ally power.

**Kukri** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d4+4 piercing damage and the target must succeed on a Cha save (DC 17) or become frightened of the raja for 1 round.

**Recruit Ally** The raja magically compels a creature to become its ally, as per the *dominate person* spell (DC 17). The effect lasts for 1 round.

The rakshasa raja is a scheming lord usually surrounded by servitors, either lesser rakshasa or summoned and bound demons. A raja revels in turning its foes against each other and sowing doubt and distrust in its enemies. While it projects an air of sophistication and culture, it is still a dangerous spirit of unredeemable evil, and will not shirk away from violence and bloodlust if and when civility breaks down.

# SWORDSPIRIT

A curved blade hangs in the air, but the creature wielding it is invisible. Only the faint scuffle of unseen feet and soft hiss of its breath give away its presence.

**RAKSHASA SWORDSPIRIT** CR 2

NE Medium fiend XP 450

**Senses** average Perception 11

**Languages** Rakshasa

**BASE STATS**

**AC** 13

**hp** 27 (6d8)

**Speed** 30 ft, fly 30 ft.

**ABILITY SCORES**

**Str** 10 (+0), **Dex** 19 (+4), **Con** 10 (+0)

**Int** 12 (+1), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 11 (+0)

**TRAITS**

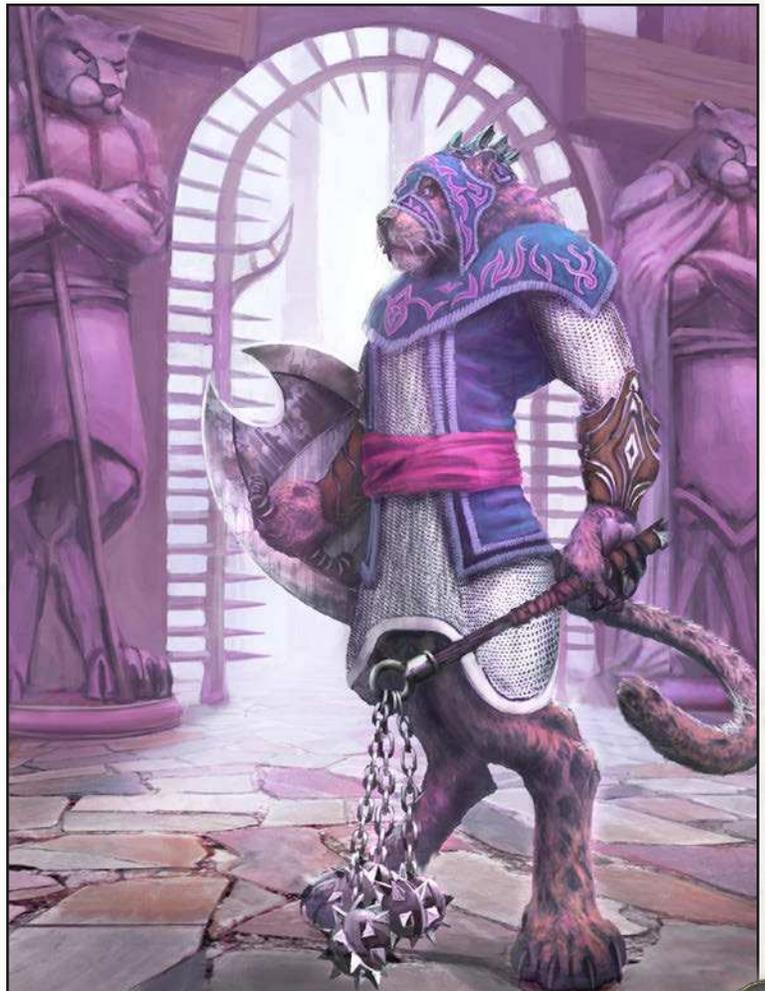
**Phantom Demon** The body of the swordspirit is invisible, though the weapon it wields is visible.

**Transfer Lifeforce** When a swordspirit is reduced to 0 hit points, the mystical energy binding the swordspirit breaks, but infuses the nearest ally with 15 temporary hit points.

**Equipment** Scimitar

**COMBAT ACTIONS**

**Floating Weapon** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d6+4 slashing damage.



## SERPENTMAN

In the Primordial Age, the serpentmen forged the empire of Nessk, and ruled the jungles and the eastern reaches of Thule. A mighty empire for tens of thousands of years, it is now but a distant memory. The serpentman cities and temples fell to ruin in the millennium preceding the Age of Atlantis, steadily reclaimed by the jungles and swamps of Thule. The remnants of this empire are but a shadow of their former greatness, but still remain a dangerous threat to those who might explore the lost jungles or plunder the vine-choked ruins.

Many of Thule's great human cities were built upon the ruins of ancient Nesskian fortresses and temples. Some serpentmen have found their way back into the tunnels and catacombs beneath those cities, scouring the ruins for relics of their ancient empire and slowly corrupting the humans in the cities above.

Serpentmen are revered and worshipped by Set cultists. Serpentmen that infiltrate human cities often conscript human supplicants and thralls, who are more than happy to collect supplies and sacrifices for the true chosen of Set.



## FANG GUARD

*This bipedal snake man has a lithe form that seems to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon. It carries a bow and a collection of fang-tipped arrows.*

**FANG GUARD** **CR 5**

NE Medium monstrosity (serpentman) XP 1,800

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Draconic

### BASE STATS

**AC** 15 (natural armor)

**hp** 91 (14d8+28)

**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 12 (+1), **Dex** 19 (+4), **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +7

**Immune** poison

**Slink in the Shadows** The fang guard can attempt to hide as a bonus action.

**Poisoned Arrow** As a bonus action, the fang guard can apply poison to a single arrow. A creature hit by the arrow must succeed on a Con save (DC 15) or take 3d6 poison damage and become poisoned until the end of its next turn. The poison remains potent for 1 minute.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The fang guard deals 4d6 extra damage with its sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Strike from the Shadows** The first time each turn the fang guard makes a ranged attack while hidden from its target, it deals an extra 3d6 damage on a hit. If the attack misses, the fang guard remains hidden.

**Equipment** Scimitar, composite longbow

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Scimitar** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+4 slashing damage.

**Composite Longbow** (ranged weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10+4 damage.

**Volley** If the fang guard does not move on its turn, it can make two composite longbow attacks.

Fang guards are warriors who defend the remaining strongholds and sacred sites of the serpent race. In battle, fang guards remain hidden, striking quickly with poisoned arrows and fading back into the safety of the shadows. They rely on their Stealth ability to stay hidden.

## NESSK CHAMPION

*This brawny reptilian creature has a humanlike build with enormous arms and shoulders. Its size is only exaggerated by the wide, cobra-like hood that extends from its neck.*

**NESSK CHAMPION** **CR 7**

NE Large monstrosity (serpentman) XP 2,900

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Draconic

### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**hp** 126 (12d10+60)

**Speed** 30 ft

## ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 21 (+5), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 20 (+5)  
**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

## TRAITS

**Saves** Str +8, Dex +5

**Skills** Intimidate +6, Perception +4

**Immune** poison

**Amazingly Keen Blade** The Nessk champion deals an additional 2d10 damage on attacks using its falchion in which the natural, unmodified d20 attack roll was an 18 or higher. On a critical hit, these dice are not doubled, and this damage becomes 20 extra damage instead.

**Overwhelming Blow** Any Large or smaller target that takes 20 or more damage from a single falchion attack is also knocked prone.

**Equipment** Large falchion

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Cleaving Strike** The champion makes a falchion attack against each enemy within reach.

**Multiattack** The champion makes a bite attack and a falchion attack, or a bite attack and two claw attacks.

**Falchion** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d10+7 slashing damage.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+5 piercing damage and 3d6 poison damage.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+3 slashing damage.

Unlike most serpentmen, who are lithe and slight of build, Nessk champions are bred for size and strength. They are the elite assault force of serpentman warbands. A swing from a champion's falchion can smash a stone column into rubble, or take the heads from a half-dozen soldiers in one stroke.

In battle, the champion throws itself into the thick of the fighting. It prefers to move up to as many enemies as possible, laying waste with its cleaving strike.

## NESSK CHARMER

*This snake-headed humanoid wears long robes concealing its form, and carries a long staff carved with snake heads at both ends.*

## NESSK CHARMER

CR 9

NE Medium monstrosity (serpentman)

XP 2,900

**Senses** average Perception 16

**Languages** Draconic

## BASE STATS

**AC** 19 (natural armor)

**hp** 102 (12d8+48)

**Speed** 30 ft

## ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 13 (+1), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 13 (+1)

**Int** 16 (+3), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 19 (+4)

## TRAITS

**Saves** Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +8

**Skills** Arcana +7, Deception +8, Insight +6, Perception +6

**Immune** poison

**Mesmerizing Gaze** As a bonus action, the Nessk charmer can gaze deeply into the eyes of a target within 30 feet that can see it. The target must make a Wis save (DC 16) or be charmed for 1 round.

**Confounding Glare** As a bonus action, the Nessk charmer bewilders a nearby enemy within 30 feet that can see it. The target makes a melee attack against itself or a creature within its reach unless it succeeds on a Wis save (DC 16).

**Spells** The charmer is a 10th-level caster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (DC 16, +8 to hit).

At will: *chill touch*, *message*

1st level (4): *charm person*, *color spray*, *disguise self*, *shield*

2nd level (3): *backbiter shield*\*, *detect thoughts*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3): *bestow curse*, *hypnotic pattern*, *slow*

4th level (3): *confusion*, *Evard's black tentacles*

5th level (2): *hold monster*, *snake swarm*\*

\*New spell, see Chapter 7

**Equipment** Staff (head shaped like a fanged snake)

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Snakestaff** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one or two targets. *Hit:* 1d8+3 piercing damage and 3d6 poison damage.

**Venomous Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+4 piercing damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 16) or take 4d6 poison damage and be poisoned for one minute.

The sorcerous charmer usually leads a group of serpentmen and human thralls. It uses magic to summon forth snakes, turn enemies' weapons against them, and mesmerize its foes.

## NESSKIAN SOUL VENOM

A hooded and cloaked serpentman is usually sufficiently disguised to infiltrate a human city, and many do, especially with the help of Set cultists where they are available. When they cannot move about openly, the serpentmen employ human servants to do their bidding. Some of these are willing supplicants, but others have been magically charmed to serve the snake people.

To create a thrall, a charmer or other powerful Nesskian mage can direct a special ritual that extends the range of control for the charmer's mesmerizing gaze and makes him dominated. During the ritual, the victim imbibes Nesskian soul venom, which affects his mind and makes him open to suggestion. The victim is mentally bound to a charmer, and after the initial ritual, the victim must simply be persuaded to drink a small amount of soul venom each day to extend the domination for an additional day.

Detecting the dominating effect requires a DC 20 Wisdom/Insight check, and preventing the victim from consuming more soul venom and waiting it out will also cure the affected person. The effect also ends if the victim's bound master is slain.

## SERVANTS OF R'LYEH

Like any Great Old One, Cthulhu has multiple cults across Thule devoted to him. Those cults generally don't know of each other and aren't using the same techniques to hasten Cthulhu's arrival. Indeed, it is by no means certain that Great Cthulhu is consciously aware of his servants (or indeed that Cthulhu is conscious of anything).

Servant cults are typically found near the sea, or any other large body of water. A squalid fishing-village or dilapidated harbor might be secretly overrun by Servants of R'lyeh. Most cultists are poor, ignorant, and wicked, gladly surrendering their souls and humanity for temporary prosperity as fishermen or sea-traders. Other cultists—dreamers, poets, sages—are unwittingly drawn into Cthulhu's worship when they dabble in dark visions.

What makes someone work toward the end of the world? Some servants of R'lyeh are nihilists, pure and simple, while others are utterly mad. Some, though, serve Cthulhu for whispered promises of powers, often in dreamy visions. Those bargains rarely end well for the mortal doing the bargaining.



## CHOSEN CULTIST

*This human wears a hooded robe and carries a dagger with a hilt shaped like a seashell. His expression is vacant, and his eyes unfocused.*

**CHOSEN CULTIST** CR 3

CN Medium humanoid (human) XP 700

**Senses** average Perception 10

**Languages** Low Atlantean

### BASE STATS

**AC** 12 (studded leather)

**hp** 39 (6d8+12)

**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 13 (+1), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 9 (-1), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 12 (+1)

### TRAITS

**Dark Designs** A target hit by the chosen cultist's melee attack is affected by dark designs and has tactical disadvantage on saves for 1 minute. A chosen cultist deals 2d6 extra damage to targets affected by dark designs.

**Equipment** Studded leather armor, dagger

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Dagger** (melee or ranged weapon) *Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+1 slashing damage.

**Shared Nightmare (Recharge 5+)** With a horrific scream, the cultist telepathically projects the nightmares that are in its mind. Each enemy within 20 feet takes 4d6 psychic damage and becomes frightened for 1d4 rounds unless it succeeds on a Wis save (DC 13).

This cultist is one step up from the throngs of insane chanters commonly found in a cultist sanctuary, but he isn't privy to the inner workings of Great Cthulhu's cult. Accordingly, the chosen cultist still has a tenuous grip on sanity. Most of these cultists still have cover identities and outside lives, so PCs can encounter them incognito in all walks of life.

In a battle, the chosen cultists serve as bodyguards and meat-shields for higher-ranking cultists and whatever horrors they've cooked up. They'll use *shared nightmare* as soon as they can get more than one PC into the area of effect, and they aren't shy about blasting each other with it (they're fanatics, after all). Because of their *dark designs* ability, they'll try to gang up on one PC if possible.

## CUSTOMIZING THE CHOSEN CULTIST

If you have an important NPC who's also secretly a cultist, here's a quick-and-dirty way to transform the NPC into a chosen cultist. First, give them a -2 penalty to Wisdom saves (because their sanity is hanging by a thread), then replace their primary melee attack with the kukri (same attack bonus and damage; just add the *dark design* effect). Third, give the NPC *shared nightmare* at -2 attack from the melee attack. It's not perfect, but it's fast enough to do on the fly at the table.

## CULT PRIEST

This cultist wears fine robes adorned with symbols and sigils of the entity he serves.

### CULT PRIEST CR 7

CN Medium humanoid (human) XP 2,900

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Low Atlantean, Kalayan, High Atlantean, Benthic

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (breastplate)

**hp** 76 (9d8+36)

**Speed** 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 12 (+1), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 19 (+4), **Cha** 14 (+2)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Wis +7, Cha +5

**Enthrall (Recharge 5+)** As a bonus action, the cult priest can temporarily dominate a humanoid creature. The target creature must make a Cha save (DC 15), or on its next turn the target acts as the cult priest desires.

**Spells** The cult priest is a 9th-level caster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (DC 15, +7 to hit).

At will: *friends, resistance*

1st level (4): *bane, bless, cure wounds, inflict wounds, shield of faith*

2nd level (3): *hold person, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3): *bestow curse, protection from energy, tongues*

4th level (3): *death ward, summon nightgaunt\**

5th level (1): *flame strike*

\*New spell, see Chapter 7

**Equipment** breastplate, morningstar

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Morningstar** (melee weapon) Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 164+2 slashing damage.

The cult priest is in charge of Great Cthulhu's machinations in a particular city or region, directing cultists, plotting sinister schemes, and enticing others to heed the call of Great Cthulhu. A seductive presence, the cult priest is an effective recruiter, comfortable in the halls of power. Some cult priests still have lives outside the cult, but most operate the cult full-time from the safety of a hidden shrine or other secret headquarters.

Most cult priests have some sort of personal magnetism working in their favor, whether it is conventional beauty or an otherwise commanding presence. In total control of the cult, they are worshiped almost as much as Great Cthulhu himself. All that kowtowing and genuflection makes most cult priests arrogant and even disdainful of the ordinary cultists. Only a few have the presence of mind to understand Cthulhu's dream-whisperings, after all. The rest are just cattle being led to the slaughter.

Most cult priests don't stay cult priests for long. Some are consumed by the very horrors they bring into the world, while others sacrifice themselves willingly in the cause of some world-damning evil, and others still undergo magical transformations into all manner of monsters. Great Cthulhu isn't known for his generous retirement programs.

## DEEP ONE HALFBREED

### DEEP ONE HALFBREED CR 3

NE Medium aberration XP 700

**Senses** average Perception 12

**Languages** Low Atlantean, Kalayan

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 16 (natural armor)

**hp** 60 (8d8+24)

**Speed** 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 16 (+3)

**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 10 (+0)

#### TRAITS

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Wis +5

**Amphibious** The deep one halfbreed can breathe both air and water.

**Equipment** shortsword

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Maddening Stab** (melee weapon) Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d6+3 piercing damage plus 2d6 psychic damage, and the target has tactical disadvantage when making Intelligence or Wisdom checks or saves for one round.

**Unsettling Whispers (Recharge 4+)** The halfbreed whispers unknowable truths to those nearby. Each enemy within 5 feet of the halfbreed must make an Int save (DC 15) or take 4d6 psychic damage and become incapacitated for 1 minute. The target may attempt a new save at the start of each of its turns to end the condition.

The Deep One halfbreed is a product of humans mating with the Deep Ones, the aquatic servants of Cthulhu and other undersea entities. A halfbreed is born human, but as it matures it slowly takes on more and more characteristics of the Deep Ones, until the transformation is complete and the creature migrates completely into the sea.

The cultists of Cthulhu idolize the Deep Ones as beings who are one step closer to their master. As such, they also revere the halfbreeds, who in their minds represent the transformation they themselves have always desired.

## THE SEVEN KNIVES

The Seven Knives thieves' guild is the most powerful guild in Quodeth, and influential in several nearby cities as well. Guild members rule the streets and even bend nobles and panjandrums to their will, controlling whole districts of the city as a shadow government. Among their many criminal activities are brutal protection rackets, extortion, thievery, smuggling, assassination, prostitution, and political bribery.

### SEVEN KNIVES THUG

*This ruffian wears a red hood over leather armor. She is armed with a short sword and a sling.*

Most Seven Knives thieves are simply street thugs with few skills other than the ability to gang up on outnumbered victims and intimidate the common citizens of the city. These footsoldiers are no match for the typical Thulean freebooter, but what makes them dangerous is that the Seven Knives command a virtual army of these street thugs, and the power and prestige of the guild stands behind them. A group of heroes might be able to humiliate a dozen street thugs without much trouble, but the Seven Knives won't permit such an act of defiance to go unpunished.



**SEVEN KNIVES THUG** CR 1/4  
NE Medium humanoid (human) XP 50

**Senses** average Perception 10  
**Languages** Low Atlantean, Kalay

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 13 (leather)  
**hp** 16 (3d8 + 3)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 12 (+1), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 11 (+0)  
**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 10 (+0)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Stealth +4

**Sapping Strike** When the Seven Knives thug hits a humanoid target with an attack, the target must succeed on a Con save (DC 12) or be momentarily disoriented, granting tactical advantage on the next attack against the target before the end of the thug's next turn.

**Equipment** leather armor, shortsword

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Shortsword** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 piercing damage.

## SEVEN KNIVES ENFORCER

*This ruffian wears a dark red cloak over leather armor and tall, buckled boots. He carries a short, bronze-studded club in one hand and a long dagger in the other.*

**SEVEN KNIVES ENFORCER** CR 1  
NE Medium humanoid (human) XP 200

**Senses** average Perception 10  
**Languages** Low Atlantean, Kalay

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 15 (studded leather)  
**hp** 27 (5d8+5)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 12 (+1)  
**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 11 (+0)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Intimidate +2, Stealth +5

**Evasion** The enforcer takes no damage instead of half damage when it succeeds on a Dex save against an effect that deals half damage on a successful save.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The enforcer deals 1d6 extra damage with its sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Equipment** Studded leather armor, light mace, serrated dagger

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The enforcer makes a light mace attack and a serrated dagger attack.

**Light Mace** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 bludgeoning damage.

**Serrated Dagger** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 piercing damage and the target takes an additional 1d4+2 damage at the end of its next turn unless it is magically healed or treated with a Wisdom/Medicine check (DC 15).

The next tier of Seven Knives agents are the enforcers. These skilled fighters are the thread that weaves the guild together. Each enforcer managed to climb out of the muck of daily existence in the poorest quarters of

Quodeth to become a trusted street-soldier of the Knives. Enforcers are not the simple thugs and killers that plague the streets of Quodeth; they see the bigger picture. Enforcers know when to inflict violence with purpose, and when to stay their hand. Even though enforcers do not hold leadership roles in the Seven Knives guild, guards, merchants, and other criminals treat them with respect.

## SEVEN KNIVES DARKBLADE

*Seven tiny dagger tattoos ring the left eye of this hooded woman. She wears tight-fitting leather armor and carries two wavy-bladed daggers.*

### SEVEN KNIVES DARKBLADE CR 3

NE Medium humanoid (human) XP 700

**Senses** average Perception 13

**Languages** Low Atlantean, Kalay

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 16 (studded leather)

**hp** 66 (12d8+12)

**Speed** 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 18 (+4), **Con** 13 (+1)

**Int** 12 (+1), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 11 (+0)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +6, Int +3

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Perception +3, Stealth +6

**Evasion** The darkblade takes no damage instead of half damage when it succeeds on a Dex save against an effect that deals half damage on a successful save.

**Poisoned Blades** The darkblade can use an action to apply poison to its blades. The first creature that is hit by a poisoned blade takes 4d6 poison damage and must make a Con save (DC 13) or become poisoned. At the end of the poisoned creature's turn, it can attempt a new save to overcome the poison. A darkblade typically applies poison before combat begins.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The darkblade deals 2d6 extra damage with his sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Equipment** studded leather armor, kukri

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The darkblade makes two kukri attacks, one with each hand.

**Kukri** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 slashing damage.

Above the Seven Knives enforcers are the darkblades, the primary spies and assassins of the guild. They are chosen from the ranks of the enforcers after they have proven themselves smart, stealthy, and ruthless enough to handle the guild's more delicate and lethal business. Darkblades are well known throughout Quodeth by the tattoos of seven blades ringing their right eye, and the pair of wavy-bladed daggers they wear on their belts. Though the tattoos make it difficult to hide among the people of Quodeth, Seven Knives darkblades are proud of their allegiance and often walk openly within Quodeth. While responsible for countless murders, darkblades are rarely arrested and, if so, never incarcerated or executed.

## THE FOURTH KNIFE

*This tall, strongly built man is surprisingly nimble for his size. He wears a suit of well-creased black leather armor, tall boots, and a hooded gray cloak laced with tiny razor-sharp blades. He carries a set of short ebony-tipped javelins in a quiver on his back, and a long-bladed serrated knife on his belt.*

### THE FOURTH KNIFE CR 5

NE Medium humanoid (human) XP 1,800

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Low Atlantean, Kalay

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (studded leather, cloak of protection)

**hp** 78 (12d8+24)

**Speed** 30 ft

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 18 (+4), **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 13 (+1)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Str +6, Dex +8, Con +7, Int +4, Wis +5, Cha +5; +3 bonus to saves against poison

**Skills** Deception +4, Intimidate +4, Perception +4, Stealth +7

**Evasion** The darkblade takes no damage instead of half damage when it succeeds on a Dex save against an effect that deals half damage on a successful save.

**Poisoned Blades** The darkblade can use an action to apply poison to its weapons. The first creature hit by a poisoned weapon takes 4d6 poison damage and must make a Con save (DC 13) or become poisoned. At the end of the poisoned creature's turn, it can attempt a new save to overcome the poison, but takes an additional 4d6 poison damage if that save is failed.

**Sneak Attack (1/turn)** The Fourth Knife deals 4d6 extra damage with his sneak attack, as per the rogue ability.

**Equipment** Studded leather armor, serrated dagger, 2 javelins, 6 doses of poison, *cloak of protection*

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The Fourth Knife makes three serrated dagger attacks, or two javelin attacks.

**Serrated Dagger** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+4 piercing damage and the target takes an additional 2d4+4 damage at the end of its next turn unless it is magically healed or treated with a Wisdom/Medicine check (DC 15).

**Javelin** (ranged weapon) *Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+4 piercing damage.

The leaders of the Seven Knives are, of course, the Seven Knives. Most keep their identities secret, and are in fact powerful nobles or wealthy merchants who hide behind a façade of respectability. That cannot be said for the Fourth Knife. There are few in the city of Quodeth who do not know of the master assassin of the Seven Knives. While other leaders of the Knives have dozens or even hundreds of followers, the Fourth Knife appears to work alone. If he has a network of spies, informants, and assistants; no one knows who they are, not even the members of the network itself. When grave threats to the guild appear—or when great insults have been flung into the guild's teeth—the Fourth Knife steps in to put matters to rights.

None can speak with certainty of the Fourth Knife's motivation. He seems to take great joy in cutting down the elite nobility and corrupt politicians of Quodeth. He is an agent of chaos in the city, a wildcard that no one can fully control—not even his fellow leaders in the Knives.

## WINGED APE

*This powerful ape-like beast resembles a lean, black-furred gorilla, but it has a huge pair of batlike wings and a gleam of evil intelligence in its eyes.*

Descended from some ancient sorcerer's ill-considered attempts to breed powerful, loyal servants and soldiers, winged apes are thankfully rare in the world. They are as strong as an ordinary gorilla but more lightly built, standing about 8 feet tall and weighing in at 400 pounds or so.

While a winged ape is physically formidable and more than capable of tearing a human warrior limb from limb with its powerful arms and sharp fangs, the most dangerous thing about it is the creature's intelligence. It is far more than a simple beast, and harbors a wicked, low cunning. It can learn to use weapons or wear light armor or clothing, although it only bothers to do so when some powerful master equips it appropriately. Worse yet, the typical winged ape is a cruel, vicious brute, filled with malice toward most other creatures and eager to set upon foes for the sheer joy of murder.



Winged apes live for centuries. In the wild, they are most often encountered among the overgrown ruins of sorcerer's towers or evil temples. The priests or mages who once dwelled there are long forgotten, but still their brutal servants linger, posing a threat to any who come too near. Other winged apes are found in the service of living sorcerers, acting as guards, errand-beasts, or assassins. However, winged apes make for surly and untrustworthy servants, and are likely to turn on their masters if not supplied with plentiful food and opportunities to rip smaller creatures to pieces.

### WINGED APE

CR 5

CE Large monstrosity

XP 1,800

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., average Perception 15

**Languages** Urgan

### BASE STATS

**AC** 14 (natural armor)

**hp** 95 (10d10+40)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 20 (+5), **Dex** 15 (+2), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 4 (-3), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 8 (-1)

### TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +5

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +5

**Immune** disease, exhaustion

**Resist** necrotic

**Regeneration** The winged ape regains 5 hp at the start of its turn, as long as it has at least 1 hp.

**Proficient** The winged ape is proficient with simple and martial weapons and light armor.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The winged ape makes two slam attacks and one bite attack.

**Slam** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+5 bludgeoning damage. If the winged ape hits the same target with both slam attacks, it gains tactical advantage on a bite attack against the same target on this turn.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+5 piercing damage.

## CREATURES OF ALCHEMY

Some winged apes are descended from the original monsters that escaped and bred with wild apes, but most of these creatures are made through an alchemical process that was devised by the original creator of the beasts. This process has been lost and found many times down through the centuries, but from time to time amoral sorcerers or wizards rediscover it and create their own powerful servants. Creating a winged ape requires knowledge of the process, alchemical reagents worth 5,000 gp, and a spellcaster of at least 9th level who is trained in Intelligence/Arcana. The winged ape requires three months of growth in a large vat before it is complete.

## EXTRATERRENES

Humans are far from the first form of intelligence to inhabit the Earth. Before mankind came the serpentmen and the rakshasas; before those dire races came stranger and more alien beings that colonized the primordial Earth from distant stars. Some ruled over the planet for millions of years and then died out in the great convulsions of ancient ages, leaving behind nothing more than mysterious ruins. Some retreated in the face of enemy races, or left of their own accord. Others linger in the desolate places of the Earth, a terrible threat to a young and primitive race such as man.

Extraterrene races that still maintain a presence in Thule and the nearby lands include the abominable mi-go, the fungi from Yuggoth; the voracious moon-beasts, blasphemous horrors from the realms of dream; the night-gaunts, blind servitors of terrible entities; shoggoths, huge and amorphous; and the star-things of Nheb, dimensional monstrosities that carry their victims out of the earthly sphere altogether to strangle them. These unearthly beings are not necessarily supernatural, but their alien origins mean that they are often armed with physical and mental powers that are completely beyond the comprehension of humans.

### DARK SERVANT OF CARCOSA

*This huge, gaunt creature is roughly bipedal and batlike, with taloned feet and vast, membranous wings. Rank black fur, gleaming chitin, and putrescent ebon flesh covers its body.*

Known in some circles as byakhee or star-steeds, the dark servants are creatures of the black spaces between the stars that can be summoned to the Earth through forbidden magic. They are native to the far-distant world of Carcosa, domain of Hastur the Unspeakable, and are most commonly encountered while serving as that terrible being's minions or messengers to the Earth. Dark servants also serve powerful cultists or magic-users as flying steeds.

Unlike many other extraterrenes, dark servants are rigidly bound by ancient pacts and serve their summoners obediently, provided the necessary rites are performed correctly. Even a small oversight can lead to catastrophe, because dark servants are very sensitive to their peculiar summoning rituals and always answer; they have been known to tear wizards limb from limb if some protective step is unfortunately omitted. However, under the proper conditions, dark servants can be compelled to undertake tasks or obligations lasting for centuries—for example, appearing to bear away a summoner many years after being commanded to come when called, or returning to a specific place one day each year to perform a service for centuries uncounted. This makes them very useful as guardians or protectors of ancient secrets.

#### DARK SERVANT OF CARCOSA CR 11

NE Huge aberration (extraterrene) XP 7,200

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., average Perception 12

**Languages** Mi-go (can't speak)

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 11 (natural armor)

**hp** 189 (18d12+72)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 23 (+6), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 19 (+4)

**Int** 6 (-2), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 11 (+0)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +5, Con +9, Wis +7

**Immune** disease, poison, frightened

**Resist** cold, necrotic

**Starflight** A dark servant can survive in the void of outer space. It flies through space at incredible speeds. Exact travel times vary, but a trip within a single solar system normally takes months, while a trip between stars takes many years.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiaction** The dark servant makes two talon attacks (if flying), or two wing attacks and one bite attack.

**Talon** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8+6 piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 18). If the dark servant hits the same target with both talon attacks, it gains a bonus action to use its rend attack.

**Wing** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+6 piercing damage.

**Rend** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one grappled target. *Hit:* 4d8+6 slashing damage.

### OTHER EXTRATERRENE RACES

At the GM's discretion, the extraterrene subtype applies to additional monster races that are known to have evolved in unearthly conditions or hail from alien worlds. Common monsters that might be considered extraterrene include: aboleth, carrion crawler, chuul, darkmantle, doppelganger, gibbering moulder, grick, intellect devourer, and xorn. Not all of these need to be a significant presence in Thule, but they are excellent choices for populating alien worlds on the far side of magical gates or providing PCs with unexpected (and unearthly) foes.

## GNOPH-KEH OF SEREX

*Long, rank white hair covers this thick-bodied creature. It has six apelike limbs with taloned hands, a bearlike muzzle with sharp teeth, and a sharp horn jutting from its forehead.*

The gnoph-keh are a race of predatory creatures that dwell in the polar wastes. They are sometimes referred to as the “white apes” of the ice, but in fact they are not apes at all. Instead, they are descended from the monstrous spawn of a long-vanished Great Old One that haunted the icy regions of the earth countless ages ago. Gnoph-keh cannot tolerate warm temperatures, and often retreat to the uttermost poles to hibernate away warm centuries. They are therefore recent arrivals in Thule, appearing only in the last couple of hundred years with the encroaching glaciers. Primitive tribes of the tundra often fall under their sway, seeking to placate the hateful monsters with human sacrifice.

Gnoph-keh seem to move from glacier to glacier through some unknown magic involving ice portals or wind-walking. They have now colonized several of Thule’s glaciated regions. A number of gnoph-keh haunt the Serex Glacier, and the Temple of the White Ape is a sacred site to the creatures.



### GNOPH-KEH OF SEREX

CR 10

CE Large monstrosity (extraterrene)

XP 5,900

**Senses** tremorsense 60 ft., average Perception 15

**Languages** Giant, mi-go

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 13 (natural armor)

**hp** 133 (14d10+56)

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 20 (+5), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 15 (+2)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +5, Con +9, Wis +5

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +5

**Immune** cold, prone

**Spell-Like Abilities** A gnoph-keh can use the following spells as innate abilities. Its casting ability is Charisma (DC 14, +6 to hit).

3/day: *fog cloud*, *spike growth* (icy surface only)

1/day: *control weather* (duration 1 hour), *ice storm*

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The gnoph-keh makes four claw attacks and one gore attack.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d8+5 slashing damage.

**Gore** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d6+5 piercing damage and 2d10 cold damage. If the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 13) or be petrified into solid ice. On the first failed save, the creature is restrained. At the end of its next turn, it must repeat the save; on a success, the effect ends, but on a failure, it is petrified until freed by powerful magic.

## MI-GO, STARCROWN

*This bizarre being has a roughly humanoid shape, but its body appears to be partly crustacean and partly fungal, its head is a bulbous mass of feelers, and it has two fan-like wings sprouting from its back.*

Mi-go are a race of intelligent fungal creatures from the dark and fearsome world of Yuggoth. They come to the Earth to study terrestrial life, mine for valuable minerals that are hard to find on their homeworld, and especially to harvest magic in any form—usually, by searching out lost magical items or kidnapping creatures capable of using magic. In Thule, mi-go have most often been encountered in the foothills of the Starcrown Mountains, leading some to mistakenly believe the abominable creatures are native to the region.

Mi-go possess advanced science and weird, alien technology. They have been known to transplant the brains of experimental subjects into new bodies, transport instantaneously to distant planets, and build massive bases or fortifications by shaping huge masses of stone with strange devices. Why such advanced creatures are interested in earthly magic is unclear, but some sages guess that magic is a phenomenon unknown to the mi-go.

**Force Rod:** Many Starcrown mi-go are armed with a strange weapon known as a *force rod*. It resembles a two-foot rod of silver with a bell-shaped cup at one end, and fires powerful bolts of force. A typical mi-go *force rod* has 1d10+10 charges, and can only be used by mi-go (although a character with a good Intelligence/Arcana check may be able to make use of the device).

## MI-GO, STARCROWN CR 6

NE Medium plant (extraterrene) XP 2,300

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., average Perception 15

**Languages** Mi-go, Giant, High Atlantean

### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**hp** 85 (10d8+40)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 14 (+2), **Dex** 19 (+4), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 17 (+3), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 15 (+2)

### TRAITS

**Saves** Con +7, Wis +5

**Skills** Arcana +6, Deception +5, Perception +5, Stealth +7

**Immune** cold, disease

**Resist** bludgeoning, electricity, fire, piercing

**Horrible Appearance** Any non-extraterrene creature within 30 feet that is surprised or attacked by a mi-go must make a Wis save (DC 12) or be frightened until the end of the creature's next turn. On a successful save, the creature is immune to this ability for 1 hour.

**Sneak Attack** The mi-go deals an extra 3d6 damage when it hits a target and has tactical advantage on the attack roll or when the target is threatened by an ally of the mi-go.

**Starflight** A mi-go can survive in the void of outer space. It flies through space at incredible speeds. Exact travel times vary, but a trip within a single solar system normally takes months, while a trip between stars takes many years.

**Equipment** force rod

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The mi-go makes two claw attacks or two force rod attacks.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8+2 slashing damage.

**Force Rod** (ranged weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, range 60 ft./120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d10 force damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Str or Dex save (target's choice) or be knocked prone.

## MOON-BEAST OF KASHK

*Pallid and bloated, this toadlike creature is the size of a drafthorse. It has no eyes or ears; instead, its snout ends in a mass of squirming pink tentacles.*

Horrible man-eating abominations, moon-beasts come to Thule to buy great lots of slaves. They travel to and from the Earth in mysterious black galleys, making use of powerful magic to shift their vessels from the strange seas of their homeland to the waters around Thule. Ancient tomes name this weird lunar realm Kashk, although astrologers and sages disagree as to whether Kashk really exists on Earth's moon, or the moon of some parallel world.

For all their size and physical power, moon-beasts are somewhat cowardly. They prefer to trade for the slaves they need instead of raiding Thule's shores, usually working through well-paid intermediaries such as the Crimson Slavers of Marg. While it is true that moon-beasts devour many of the hapless human captives who fall into their clutches, many others are forced to toil in their mines or fields, and some are sacrificed in rituals of unspeakable horror. If the moon-beasts have a name for their race, it is not known to humans; they are mute and communicate only by conveying images and a sense of needs or wants with their telepathy.

## MOON-BEAST CR 8

CE Large aberration (extraterrene) XP 3,900

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind), average Perception 17

**Languages** telepathy 100 ft.

### BASE STATS

**AC** 16 (natural armor)

**hp** 126 (12d10+60)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 21 (+5), **Dex** 10 (+0), **Con** 20 (+5)

**Int** 15 (+2), **Wis** 18 (+4), **Cha** 17 (+3)

### TRAITS

**Saves** Con +7, Wis +7

**Skills** Arcana +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +7, Stealth +4

**Immune** cold, poison, blinded, disease, gaze attacks

**Resist** bludgeoning, thunder

**Amphibious** A moon-beast breathes air and water.

**Spell-Like Abilities** A moon-beast can use the following spells as innate abilities. Its casting ability is Charisma (DC 14, +6 to hit).

*At Will:* *detect thoughts*

*3/day:* *command* (5th level), *dispel magic*, *gaseous form*, *telekinesis*

*1/day:* *confusion*, *slow*

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The moon-beast makes two claw attacks.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+5 slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15).

**Slave Stupor** (melee spell) The moon-beast drains its victim's will by caressing it with its face-tentacles. *Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one grappled creature. *Hit:* The target is charmed by the moon-beast and incapacitated for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the target can attempt a Wis save (DC 14) to end the stupor. If the target fails three saves against the stupor, the condition lasts for 24 hours.

### COMBAT REACTIONS

**Slave Command** When an enemy attacks the moon-beast, it can use its reaction to compel one creature charmed by it within 60 feet to use its combat reaction to make a weapon attack against the triggering enemy, even if the charmed creature can't otherwise use a reaction.

## NIGHTGAUNT, KHOORI

*This lean humanoid creature has large bat-like wings, a pair of horns jutting from its head, and a long, snaky tail. Its body is covered in rubbery black hide, and it has no face.*

### NIGHTGAUNT, KHOORI CR 4

CN Medium monstrosity (extraterrene) XP 1,100

**Senses** blindsight 120 ft. (blind), average Perception 14

**Languages** Benthic (can't speak)

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 16 (natural armor)

**hp** 60 (8d8+24)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 16 (+3), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 16 (+3)

**Int** 5 (-3), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 7 (-2)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +5

**Immune** blinded, frightened, gaze attacks

**Resist** bludgeoning, cold

**Carry Off** A nightgaunt can fly at its normal speed while carrying a grappled creature of Medium size or smaller. Three nightgaunts grappling the same Large creature can fly at their normal speed.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The nightgaunt makes two claw attacks and one gore attack.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13).

**Gore** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d4+2 piercing damage.

**Horrible Grasp** (melee spell) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one grappled living creature. *Hit:* The target is incapacitated for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the target can attempt a Cha save (DC 11) to end the effect early.

Nightgaunts are horrible gargoyle-like creatures that often serve as guards or sentries for more intelligent creatures. They can be called and bound with various unspeakable rituals, and in fact seem to exist specifically to serve when called. Powerful wizards, evil priests, and alien beings are often protected by nightgaunt guards; in fact, many of these monsters infest the decadent city of Imystrahl, where they serve as the spies and soldiers of the cult of Nyarlathotep.

Nightgaunts never abandon their duties, and often remain on guard for centuries after their masters pass on and their treasures crumble into dust. More than a few crypts and ruins lost in Thule's wilderness are vigilantly guarded by nightgaunts summoned countless years ago, even though there is nothing left to protect. When not bound to another's service, nightgaunts seek out the deepest, darkest caverns they can find—they dislike daylight and avoid it when they can.

In Thule, nightgaunts have been most often encountered in and around the Vaults of Koor, the titanic cavern system beneath the Starcrown Mountains. Those wizards or priests who wish to command their services often venture there to summon flights of these rubbery monstrosities.

## SHOGGOTH

*A massive, iridescent heap of black protoplasm, this obscene creature forms eyes, pseudopods, and bubble-like extrusions as it pulses and moves. It mimics sounds nearby in a thin, piping myriad of voices.*

Long ago shoggoths were bred from the earliest protoplasm of earthly life to serve as the mindless slaves of a mysterious ancient race. In time they gained a degree of malign intelligence and rose against their masters, destroying their civilization and laying their vast stone cities to waste. Shoggoths linger still in the crumbling ruins of their long-dead creators; they eagerly pursue and devour any organic creature unlucky or foolish enough to venture within their grasp.

Shoggoths are naturally formless and plastic, easily able to shape their bodies to a variety of purposes. They are horrifically strong, and can crush or pull apart the toughest prey with ease—in fact, they are notorious for pulling the heads off their victims.

### SHOGGOTH CR 17

CE Gargantuan ooze (extraterrene) XP 18,000

**Senses** tremorsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., average Perception 23

**Languages** Benthic (can't speak, imitation only)

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 8 (none)

**hp** 280 (16d20+112)

**Speed** 40 ft., swim 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 29 (+9), **Dex** 6 (-2), **Con** 25 (+7)

**Int** 6 (-2), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 16 (+3)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Con +13, Wis +7

**Skills** Perception +13

**Immune** acid, poison, thunder, blinded, deafened, exhaustion, prone.

**Amorphous Body** A shoggoth can move through a space as small as 1 foot across without squeezing.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The shoggoth makes three pseudopod or crushing suction attacks in any combination.

**Pseudopod** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d8+9 bludgeoning damage, the target is grappled (escape DC 23). A target grappled by the shoggoth's pseudopod is restrained.

**Engulf** The shoggoth moves up to its speed, and can enter other creatures' spaces if they are Huge or smaller. Each creature whose space the shoggoth moves into must make a Dex save (DC 18); a creature grappled by the shoggoth automatically fails. On a success, the creature is pushed as far as the shoggoth moves, or out of its path to the side. On a failure, the shoggoth engulfs the creature and can keep moving.

An engulfed creature can't breathe. It is restrained and moves with the shoggoth. An engulfed creature can escape by using an action to make a Str check (DC 23), moving to a space adjacent to the shoggoth if it succeeds.

**Crushing Suction** A creature engulfed by the shoggoth takes 6d8+9 bludgeoning damage, or half damage if it makes a Con save (DC 23).

## STAR-THING OF NHEB

*Pallid and slimy, this hulking creature stands almost 10 feet tall. Its flesh is oddly translucent, as if it is not entirely solid in this plane of existence, and its arms each end in three powerful, coiling tentacles.*

### STAR-THING OF NHEB

**CR 9**

NE Large aberration (extraterrene)

XP 3,900

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., average Perception 16

**Languages** High Atlantean, Mi-Go (can't speak)

### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**hp** 133 (14d10+56)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 22 (+6), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 18 (+4)

**Int** 12 (+1), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 10 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Saves** Wis +6

**Skills** Athletics +10, Arcana +5, Perception +6, Stealth +4

**Immune** cold, poison, disease

**Spell-Like Abilities** A star-thing can use the following spells as innate abilities. Its casting ability is Wisdom (DC 14, +6 to hit).

 Constant: *mind blank*

 3/day: *blur*, *dispel magic*

 1/day: *hypnotic pattern*, *teleport*

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The star-thing makes two tentacle attacks, or makes one tentacle attack and one constriction attack.

**Tentacle** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 18). A target grappled by the star-thing's tentacle is restrained. The star-thing can't attack a different target with that tentacle (but it can constrict the target).

**Constriction** (melee weapon) *Attack:* automatic hit, one grappled target. *Hit:* 2d6+6 bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 16) or suffer an additional 3d6 necrotic damage. The target's maximum hit points are reduced by the same amount as the necrotic damage, and it dies if its maximum hit points are reduced to 0.

**Ethereal Shift** The star-thing shifts between the Material Plane and the Ethereal Plane. The star-thing can bring a creature it is grappling with it. If the grapple ends while the grappled creature is ethereal, the creature returns to the Material Plane.

Star-things are hideous, shambling monstrosities alien to this world. They generally reside in desolate mountain heights, preferring the cold temperatures and rarefied air of the highest peaks. While star-things appear to be huge, horrible alien beasts, they are actually quite intelligent. They have been known to lure invaders to their dooms by mesmerizing them with dancing auroras of eerie witch-lights. Star-things are especially tenacious foes, and often go to great lengths to hunt down enemies who manage to escape them.



Star-things are inscrutable and incommunicative, but are known to seek out deposits of rare minerals or places of ancient power. While star-things have little use for humans or other terrestrial beings of any sort, powerful (or fool-hardy) spellcasters or cultists have occasionally trafficked with the creatures by bribing them with the rare minerals they seek or the lost artifacts of their race. In the service of someone who knows how to bargain with it, a star-thing can be a peculiarly horrible and effective assassin.

## GREAT OLD ONES

Many strange and terrible survivals from the Earth's primordial ages lurk in Thule's deep valleys and black caverns, such as beastmen, serpentmen, or gigantic animals long since extinct elsewhere in the world. But beings older and more terrible than these terrestrial throwbacks also slumber in Thule's wild places—creatures and races that came to earth from distant worlds or bizarre dimensions. Monstrous races such as mi-go, moonbeasts, star-things, or shoggoths lurk in the lonely and desolate places of the world, along with *their* gods: Cthulhu, Hastur, Nyarlathotep, and others.

These Great Old Ones rarely take much interest in the human world, but when they do, it is invariably catastrophic for the humans involved. Not all of the Great Old Ones can be found on the Earth; many reside in remote places in time or space, and can only enter our world when the stars are right. Others are imprisoned or dormant for eons at a time.

## DHUOTH, GIVER OF EYES

*Treelike in shape, this horrible creature stands fifty feet tall. It moves slowly on thick, powerful tentacles sprouting from the base of its trunk like rubbery roots, while its upper portion consists of hundreds of thin, whipping tendrils around a deformed braincase. Dark, globular eyes hang like evil fruit from its upper tendrils.*

For untold eons the being known as Dhuoth has roamed the multiverse. While its terrestrial form is a gigantic, rubbery horror of lashing tentacles and gore-dark eyes, this is only one aspect of its existence. Dhuoth is actually a disease, a cloud of spores that drifts from world to world, and its massive physical form is a body it builds for itself when it infects a new world. Countless thousands of years ago, it rooted itself in a remote valley of Thule and began to poison and infect everything around it.

Dhuoth's most peculiar and horrible power is the ability to infect terrestrial life with its own eyelike spores. These dark globules are the size of apples, and are filled with acidic fluid. On contact with flesh, the globules meld themselves into their host, rapidly infecting him or her. These eye-spores establish a horrible rapport between Dhuoth and its victims, allowing the star-spore to control their actions and see through their eyes—or more properly, *its* eyes, which are now growing in its victims' bodies and sprouting like crimson boils in their skin.

In combat, Dhuoth simply crushes and batters all but the most powerful foes with its overwhelming size and strength. It flings eye-spores from its hundreds of writhing tendrils at any uninfected creature within range, or simply implants spores in any target momentarily grabbed and immobilized by its large tentacles. Dhuoth also commands powerful abilities of telekinesis and spatial manipulation. While Dhuoth is a formidable opponent for mere humans, it is actually somewhat cowardly. In the face of a serious challenge, it would most likely disincorporate into a spore cloud and flee into the depths of space, seeking a more suitable world for conquest.

### DHUOTH, GIVER OF EYES CR 24

CE Gargantuan plant (extraterrene) XP 62,000

**Senses** true sight 120 ft., average Perception 30

**Languages** telepathy 300 ft.

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 20 (natural armor)

**hp** 390 (20d20 + 180)

**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 26 (+8), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 28 (+9)

**Int** 19 (+4), **Wis** 22 (+6), **Cha** 21 (+5)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Str +15, Con +16, Wis +13, Cha +12, tactical advantage on saves against spells and magical effects.

**Skills** Arcana +11, Insight +13, Intimidation +12, Perception +20

**Immune** acid, electricity

**Resist** nonmagical weapons

**Epic Resilience (3/day)** If Dhuoth fails a save, it can choose to succeed instead.

**Magic Attacks** Dhuoth's natural weapons are treated as magical.

## PLAGUE OF EYES

Living creatures that come into contact with Dhuoth's spores may contract a unique disease called plague of eyes. Large, dark boils form all over the victim's body, and over the course of a few hours become ruby-red alien eyeballs embedded in the flesh.

The victim suffers disadvantage on Wisdom saves until the disease is cured. Each day, the target must make a new Con save (DC 15) or advance one stage on the following progression. *Plague of eyes* can only be cured by a *heal* spell or similarly powerful restorative magic.

**Stage 1 (initial infection):** The victim begins each encounter incapacitated. At the beginning of each of its turns, it can attempt a Con save (DC 15) to end the effect.

**Stage 2:** As above. The victim gains darkvision and tactical advantage on Wisdom/Perception checks involving sight. The victim becomes mindlessly ferocious, gaining tactical advantage on melee attacks, but attack rolls against the victim also have tactical advantage.

**Stage 3:** As stage 1 and 2. In addition, the victim cannot be charmed (except by Dhuoth) or frightened, and has tactical disadvantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma checks.

**Stage 4:** Humanoid victims become plague nomads (see below). Nonhumanoids are permanently affected by Stage 3.

**Immortality** Dhuoth is ageless and can exist indefinitely.

The only way to permanently destroy Dhuoth is to expose it to a light effect of 8th level or higher while it is at 0 hp or less in its spore form.

**Spell-Like Abilities** Dhuoth can cast the following spells as innate abilities. Its casting ability is Charisma (DC 20, +12 to hit).

Constant: *mind blank*

At Will: *clairvoyance* (see from any creature infected with plague of eyes), *telekinesis*

3/day: *banishment*, *maze*, *reverse gravity*

1/day: *gate*, *prismatic sphere*

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** Dhuoth makes three tentacle, flung spore, or constrict attacks, in any combination.

**Tentacle** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4d8+8 bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 23). A grappled creature is restrained. Dhuoth has numerous tentacles and can grapple many creatures at the same time.

**Constriction** (melee weapon) *Attack*: automatic hit, one grappled target. *Hit*: 4d8+8 bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 15) or contract *plague of eyes*.

**Flung Spore** (ranged weapon) *Attack*: +7 to hit, range 60 ft./120 ft., one target *Hit*: 2d8 acid damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 15) or contract *plague of eyes*.

**Spore Form** As an action (or automatically when reduced to 0 hp) Dhuoth discorporates into a gargantuan cloud of orange spores. In this form it cannot attack, cannot be grappled or restrained, and has a fly speed of 60 ft. It is vulnerable to radiant damage and spells or effects that create light, taking 1d6 radiant damage per spell level from exposure. Dhuoth can survive in space and travel at great speeds in this form, but it cannot resume its normal form until it lands on a planet (falling as a foul orange rain) and grows a new body from local resources, a process that requires 2d20 months.

## SPECIAL REACTIONS

Dhuoth can use 3 special reactions each round from the options below. Special reactions are used at the end of another creature's turn, and only one special reaction can be used at a time. Dhuoth regains expended special reactions at the end of its turn.

**Tentacle Lash** Dhuoth makes one tentacle attack.

**Plague Command** Dhuoth targets one creature infected by *plague of eyes* within 120 feet. That creature must make a Wis save (DC 20) or be dominated by Dhuoth for 1 hour, as per *dominate monster*. Dhuoth need not concentrate to maintain this effect on an infected creature.

**Quick Cast** (uses 2 special reactions) Dhuoth uses a spell-like ability.

## PLAGUE NOMAD

CR 4

CE Medium humanoid (extraterrene)

XP 1,100

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; average Perception 15

**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean

## BASE STATS

**AC** 11 (none)

**hp** 75 (10d8+30)

**Speed** 30 ft.

## ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 17 (+3), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 17 (+3)

**Int** 6 (-2), **Wis** 9 (-1), **Cha** 8 (-1)

## TRAITS

**Skills** Perception +5

**Immune** charmed, frightened

**Brutal** A plague nomad deals one extra die of damage with melee weapons (included below).



**Mad** A plague nomad begins an encounter incapacitated until the end of its first turn. It gains tactical advantage on all melee weapon attacks, and all attacks against it gain tactical advantage.

**Disease** Any humanoid hit by a plague nomad's melee attack must make one Con save at the end of the encounter (DC 14) or contract *plague of eyes*.

**Equipment** club

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The plague nomad attacks three times with its club.

**Club** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2d6+3 bludgeoning damage.

Dhuoth commonly infects hundreds of creatures at once, ranging from small wild animals to unfortunate nomads or explorers who blunder into its territory. A few years ago, a luckless barbarian tribe wandered into Dhuoth's valley. Scores of the tribesfolk were infected at once, giving rise to the terrible scourge currently known as the "plague nomads." Most Great Old Ones are unconcerned with humankind, but Dhuoth has a cruel and calculating curiosity about the world's higher species, and observes events throughout Thule from its infected minions.



## LORTHNU'UN OF THE GOLDEN CHALICE

*This huge horror resembles a bloated yellow-orange worm covered in thick chitin. At its upper end sits a powerful, scaly torso with enormous taloned arms. Three horned, reptilian heads leer and snap a good twenty-five feet above the ground. A damp, cloying musk fills the air around the creature.*

Hideous and hungry, Lorthnu'un tunnels and gnaws in the deep places of the earth. Like other Great Old Ones occasionally found on the Earth, it came from a distant, alien world millions of years ago. It is a creature of such malice and hunger that it devoured all life on the planet of its origin and set out to find new worlds to feed on. Having come close to starving itself to death on the world of its birth, Lorthnu'un now moves from planet to planet through dimensional magic, careful not to overhunt any one world. Its labyrinthine tunnels beneath Thule link to similar vast mazes beneath other planets.

Lorthnu'un's hunger is terrible and specific. It does not consume other creatures for simple sustenance; instead,

it eats to learn and evolve, incorporating new traits and knowledge from its prey. To some extent this is involuntary, so Lorthnu'un learned long ago to be careful about what it devours. Spreading its progeny across the stars or seeking worlds to rule mean nothing to Lorthnu'un; it is concerned only with shaping its own physical nature.

Unlike other Great Old Ones who sometimes pass millennia in dormant states, Lorthnu'un never sleeps. It is, however, frequently absent from the Earth, sometimes for decades at a time as it shifts to other worlds to feed. When present in Thule, it continuously expands the windings and turnings of its tunnels to establish gates to new worlds. This often causes earthquakes and volcanic activity in the lands above. Lorthnu'un's titanic burrows extend for hundreds of miles beneath the Zinandar Mountains and parts of the Inner Sea (especially the volcanic island of Yezeghar).

Primitive creatures such as cyclopes, troglodytes, and the worst sort of human tribes worship its strength and seek its favor, but Lorthnu'un values servants only in their ability to bring it new things to ingest. In recent periods of activity, Lorthnu'un has developed a taste for young human women. What vital force or trait it is absorbing from this feeding habit is not clear.

The Lord of the Golden Chalice is a terrible adversary in battle, eager to consume anything that dares to stand against it. It seeks to kill or incapacitate an enemy with a dangerous or unusual power early in combat, so that it can consume that foe and turn its abilities against the victim's former allies.

### LORTHNU'UN

CR 22

CE Huge aberration (extraterrene) XP 30,000

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 120 ft., average Perception 19

**Languages** telepathy 300 ft., Benthic, Mi-Go

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 18 (natural armor)

**hp** 348 (24d12 + 192)

**Speed** 50 ft., burrow 30 ft.

**Immune** fire, poison

**Resist** cold, nonmagical weapons

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 28 (+9), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 26 (+8)

**Int** 15 (+2), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 23 (+6)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Str +16, Con +15, Wis +9, Cha +13, tactical advantage on saves against spells and magical effects.

**Skills** Perception +9

**Epic Resilience (3/day)** If Lorthnu'un fails a save, it can choose to succeed instead.

**Magic Attacks** Lorthnu'un's natural weapons are treated as magical.

**Multiple Heads** Lorthnu'un has tactical advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and saves against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

**Spell-Like Abilities** Lorthnu'un can cast the following spells as innate abilities. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (DC 21, +13 to hit).

At Will: *blight, darkness, dispel magic, fear*

3/day: *cloudkill, confusion, earthquake, wall of stone*

1/day: *antimagical field, gate*

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** Lorthnu'un makes two claw attacks and one rending bite attack.

**Claw** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d10+7 bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 21). If the target is already grappled by that claw, Lorthnu'un gains tactical advantage on its claw attack. Lorthnu'un has two claws and can grapple one target in each.

**Rending Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8 + 7 piercing damage, and Lorthnu'un can attack with rending bite again (maximum of three hits per action). If the target is a living creature of Large size or smaller and this attack reduces it to 0 hit points, Lorthnu'un gains a bonus action to use its consume attack (below).

**Consume** (melee weapon) *Attack:* Automatic hit, reach 5 ft., one dead or unconscious creature. The target is consumed and its body destroyed; a fleshy semblance of the victim appears on Lorthnu'un's body. When Lorthnu'un consumes a creature, it can spend two Hit Dice to regain lost hit points, it gains one immunity or resistance of the consumed creature, and it gains the ability to use one of the consumed creature's attacks or spells (its choice) as an action. The stolen abilities are lost after one hour, or when Lorthnu'un consumes a new victim.

## SPECIAL REACTIONS

Lorthnu'un can use 3 special reactions each round from the options below. Special reactions are used at the end of another creature's turn, and only one special reaction can be used at a time. Lorthnu'un regains expended special reactions at the end of its turn.

**Claw Bash** Lorthnu'un makes one claw attack.

**Consumed Power** Lorthnu'un uses the attack or spell of the creature it has recently consumed.

**Quick Cast** (uses 2 special reactions) Lorthnu'un uses a spell-like ability.

**Overrun** (uses 3 special reactions) Lorthnu'un moves up to half its speed. It can enter the spaces of Large or smaller creatures. When it enters a creature's space, that creature must make a DC 24 Dex save. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 10 feet back or to the side. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed save. On a failed save, Lorthnu'un enters the creature's space. The creature falls prone and takes 4d12+7 bludgeoning damage. If Lorthnu'un ends its movement still in the creature's space, the creature is pinned underneath Lorthnu'un and restrained (escape DC 24).

## SLAVE OF THE CHALICE

*A ragged, rotting robe covers this scaly humanoid's body. Its jaws are filled with needle-sharp teeth, and a weird greenish luminescence seems to cling to its body.*

Brutal and degenerate, the Slaves of the Chalice were once a tribe of troglodytes that found favor with Lorthnu'un. Long exposure to the Great Old One's foul manipulations of body and mind made the Slaves stronger and more fierce than most of their kind, and filled them with a toxic essence—a form of radioactivity, in fact—that poisons and eventually slays any creature that lingers too near.

No one knows how many Slaves there are, but small bands of the creatures haunt many of the caverns and tunnels burrowed by Lorthnu'un, raising grim altars to their terrible god. Like their master, they also seem mystically linked to the Golden Chalice. When the Chalice appears, it's never long before skulking figures in tattered robes begin to dog the finder's footsteps, looking for a chance to slay the discoverer and carry off their prize.

## SLAVE OF THE CHALICE

CR 6

CE Medium humanoid (troglodyte) XP 2,300

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; average Perception 11

**Languages** Draconic

## BASE STATS

**AC** 14 (natural armor)

**hp** 90 (12d8+36)

**Speed** 30 ft.

## ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 18 (+4), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 16 (+3)

**Int** 7 (-2), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 7 (-2)

## TRAITS

**Saves** Dex +4, Con +7, Wis +5

**Skills** Stealth +5

**Cave Chameleon** The Slave gains tactical advantage on Dexterity/Stealth checks to hide in cavern settings.

**Baleful Aura** Any non-Slave that starts its turn within 10 feet of the Slave must make a Con save (DC 15). On a failure, the creature takes 2d6 necrotic damage and is poisoned until the start of its next turn. A creature that saves three times against the baleful aura is immune to the effect for 1 hour.

**Baleful Disease** If a creature takes damage from the Slave's aura or bite, it must make a Con save at the end of the encounter (DC 15). On a failure, it contracts a lingering disease. The diseased creature heals damage at half the normal rate (including magical healing) and is poisoned until cured. Each day, it must make a Con save (DC 15) or lose 2d6 from its maximum hit points. The victim recovers if it succeeds on two daily saves, or can be cured by a *restoration* effect of 5th level or higher.

**Equipment** stone axe, robes

## COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The Slave attacks twice with its stone morningstar and once with its bite.

**Stone Morningstar** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8+4 piercing damage.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+4 piercing damage.

## THE GOLDEN CHALICE

Since its earliest appearance on Earth, Lorthnu'un has been associated with a strange artifact known as the Golden Chalice. This massive, misshapen golden goblet weighs almost seventy pounds and stands more than two feet high. A powerful spellcaster in possession of the Golden Chalice can perform a special ritual to summon Lorthnu'un and compel its service for a specific task, although Lorthnu'un usually slays its summoner and takes the Chalice when the task is complete.

## VILLAINS

From the beginning of time, a warrior's most deadly foe has always been an enemy warrior—and in Thule, cruel and depraved enemies are always close at hand.

### KELAUKLYTH THE SERPENTMANCER

*This young, tuft-bearded man has a sinuous build with unusually long arms, legs, and neck. His scalp is shaven, and he dresses in green sorcerer's robes.*

Kelauklyth is the master of the Tower of Black Flame. He is a ruthless young sorcerer who is obsessed with serpents; he uses snakes in his magic, eats snakes, doses himself with snake venoms to gain immunity, and has even mastered a unique *serpent fingers* spell (see Chapter 7). Completely amoral, he thinks nothing of making promises and breaking them, and can be counted on to do whatever he thinks is best for him at any given moment.

Kelauklyth has an unusual pet or companion he calls “the Kelauble.” He found the creature during his explorations of the Tower, and believes that it was perhaps conjured by one of the previous owners.



**KELAUKLYTH** CR 1  
CE Medium humanoid (human) XP 200

**Senses** average Perception 10

**Languages** Kalay, Draconic, Low Atlantean

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 12 (robes)

**hp** 22 (4d8+4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 10 (+0), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 13 (+1)

**Int** 11 (+0), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 17 (+3)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Con +3, Cha +5

**Skills** Arcana +2, Deception +5, Stealth +4

**Resist** poison

**Spells** Kelauklyth is a 4th-level caster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (save DC 13, +5 attack).

At Will: *acid splash*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*

1st level (4): *color spray*, *magic missile*, *serpent fingers*\*

2nd level (3): *blur*, *phantasmal force*

\* New spell; see Chapter 7

**Equipment** robes, dagger, *potion of healing*

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Dagger** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d4 slashing damage.

### THE KELAUBLE

*Bulbous and maggot-like, this small, bat-winged creature has a long tail with a bony sickle at the end. A ring of golden eyes peer from its blunt head.*

**THE KELAUBLE** CR 1  
CN Small aberration XP 200

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., average Perception 13

**Languages** Low Atlantean (can't speak)

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (natural armor)

**hp** 22 (4d6+8)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 10 (+0), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 3 (-4), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 7 (-2)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +5

**Immune** poison

**Foul Ichor** A creature that hits the Kelauble with a melee attack must make a Dex save (DC 12) or be splashed by its ichor. A splashed creature takes 1d4 acid damage and is poisoned until the end of its next turn.

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** The Kelauble makes a tail lash attack and a bite attack.

**Tail Lash** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d4+3 slashing damage.

**Bite** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d4 piercing damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 12) or be poisoned for 1 minute. A poisoned creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns.

## MADOR KHEB, PRIEST OF SET

Lean and shaven-headed, this sallow-faced man has a cruel cast to his features. He is attired in dark robes emblazoned with the symbol of Set.

### MADOR KHEB CR 2

LE Medium humanoid (human) XP 450

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Dhari, Draconic, Low Atlantean

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 14 (breastplate)

**hp** 32 (5d8+10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 10 (+0), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 13 (+1), **Wis** 18 (+4), **Cha** 13 (+1)

#### TRAITS

**Saves** Wis +6, Cha +3

**Skills** Medicine +6, Religion +3, Persuasion +3, Stealth +2

**Resist** poison

**Divine Channeling** Mador Kheb can use divine channeling to turn undead or charm reptiles once per encounter.

**Spells** Mador Kheb is a 5th-level caster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (save DC 14, +6 attack).

At Will: *guidance, mending, resistance*

1st level (4): *bless, command, cure wounds*

2nd level (3): *blindness/deafness, hold person*

3rd level (2): *bestow curse, dispel magic*

**Equipment** breastplate, spiked mace, 3 doses of poison

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Spiked Mace** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d6 bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a living creature, it must make a Con save (DC 14) or take 2d4 poison damage.

Greedy and grasping, Mador Kheb is a priest who generally interprets the greater glory of Set to mean his own self-interest. He is a well-educated and urbane man with a cynical, condescending manner, and delights in wounding rivals with sharp words. He is usually accompanied by a small number of fanatically loyal temple guards, warriors who have been brainwashed to follow the orders of Set's priests without question.

Mador Kheb and his guards are featured in the Cavern of Golden Tears adventure in Chapter 5, but are fairly representative examples of Set's followers in any of Thule's corrupt cities.

## TEMPLE GUARD OF SET

Warriors sworn to serve Set with no regard for their own lives, temple guards are masters of stealth, ambush, and poison. Set's followers scorn the idea of a fair fight, and seek to defeat their enemies through assassination and terror. Nothing is more difficult to stop than a swarm of assassins who don't care whether they live or die.



### TEMPLE GUARD OF SET CR 1/4

LE Medium humanoid (human) XP 50

**Senses** average Perception 14

**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean

#### BASE STATS

**AC** 13 (leather cuirass)

**hp** 16 (3d8+3)

**Speed** 30 ft.

#### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 13 (+1), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 13 (+1)

**Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 11 (+0), **Cha** 8 (-1)

#### TRAITS

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +3

**Poison Use** The temple guard can use an action to apply poison to a weapon. The poison remains potent for 1 minute. Any creature hit by a poisoned weapon must make a Con save (DC 10) or take 1d4 poison damage.

**Equipment** leather cuirass, khopesh, shortbow, 2 doses of poison

#### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Khopesh** (melee weapon) *Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2d4+1 slashing damage.

**Shortbow** (ranged weapon) *Attack*: +3 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1d6 piercing damage.

## NEPHYS

*Slender and beautiful, this dark-haired sorceress dresses in revealing black robes.*

A powerful half-elf necromancer and sorcerer of Quodeth, Nephys spends her days studying the artifacts and writings of the Great Old Ones in a constant search for immortality. Her name is whispered throughout the streets, since many citizens suspect that supernatural forces at her command are responsible for many mysterious disappearances in the city.

As a young woman of a forest tribe, Nephys watched disease eat away her parents and siblings yet leave her be. Wandering in the woods armed only with the witchcraft taught to her by her mother, Nephys met a man, ebony-skinned and slender, that was not a man. The strange being showed her visions that would drive most mortals insane: Dead planets scarred with the ruins of ancient cities, landscapes crawling with the living dead, the immeasurable spaces between matter and time. He nurtured within her an obsession that would drive the rest of her life, the quest for immortality. Then, before he vanished again, he told her his name; Nyarlathotep.

Over a century has passed since that encounter, during which Nephys continued her obsessive study of life,

undeath, and immortality. For decades, she has hunted the lost relics of her dark god and ancient lore describing the rituals of reanimation. Her growing abilities as a necromancer brought her wealth and power, and she now resides in an isolated tower in hills east of Quodeth. Nephys is reclusive, keeping only a few carefully chosen servants, but she is known to hire explorers and adventurers to hunt down ancient relics and artifacts tied to the Great Old Ones.

Nephys rarely seeks direct confrontation, but she is far from defenseless. Her powers allow her to draw the life energies out of her foes or assault her enemies with visions of impossible worlds beneath the surface of reality. Some say Nephys is protected by two invisible specters she commands through a bracelet of swirling gold, though none have survived a confrontation with her to find out.

### NEPHYS

CR 8

LE Medium humanoid (half-elf)

XP 8,400

**Senses** average Perception 11

**Languages** Low Atlantean, High Atlantean, Draconic, Elven

### BASE STATS

**AC** 17 (*mage armor, ring of protection*)

**hp** 76 (9d8+36)

**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 10 (+0), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 21 (+5), **Wis** 11 (+1), **Cha** 15 (+2)

### TRAITS

**Saves** Int +9, Wis +9, Cha +6

**Skills** Arcana +9, Insight +5, Intimidation +6

**Resist** nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, slashing damage

**Reality Tear (3/day)** As a bonus action, Nephys can target a creature within 100 feet, which must succeed on a Wis save (DC 16) or be removed from existence until the end of its next turn. While removed from existence, the creature takes no damage, but can take no actions.

**Spells** Nephys is a 10th-level caster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (DC 16, +8 to hit).

At will: *chill touch, prestidigitation*

1st level (4): *charm person, mage armor, shield*

2nd level (3): *invisibility, phantasmal force, suggestion*

3rd level (3): *dispel magic, vampiric touch*

4th level (3): *confusion, stoneskin*

5th level (2): *insect plague*

**Equipment** dagger, ring of protection

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** Nephys can make a touch of Nyarlathotep attack against each of two targets.

**Dagger** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+2 piercing damage.

**Touch of Nyarlathotep** (melee spell) *Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d8+5 necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a Con save (DC 16) or take 2d8 necrotic damage at the end of its next turn. This damage is repeated each turn until the target succeeds a save.

**Whispers of the Old Ones (1/day)** All creatures within a 5-foot burst must make a Wis save (DC 16) or take 4d6+6 psychic damage and become dominated (as per the dominate person spell). The target can end the domination by succeeding a new saving throw or taking 15 psychic damage at the end of its turn. Nephys regains the use of this power if she hits with two touch of Nyarlathotep attacks in the same turn.



## RUUK NATH

*This massive human must be over eight feet tall. He has elaborate tattoos on his arms and legs, as well as on his face and the top of his bald head. He is unarmed, but he still looks plenty dangerous.*

**RUUK NATH** **CR 7**

CN Medium humanoid (human) XP 2,900

**Senses** average Perception 10

**Languages** Dhari, Low Atlantean (barely)

### BASE STATS

**AC** 15 (natural armor)

**hp** 157 (15d8+90)

**Speed** 30 ft

### ABILITY SCORES

**Str** 22 (+6), **Dex** 17 (+3), **Con** 22 (+6)

**Int** 9 (-1), **Wis** 11 (+0), **Cha** 10 (+0)

### TRAITS

**Saves** Str +9, Con +9

**Skills** Athletics +9, Intimidation +5

**Rune-Scripted Limbs** Ruuk Nath has elaborate runes tattooed over most of his body. Imbued with sorcery, these tattoos increase the base damage of his unarmed strike and cause his fists to deal magic damage; grant him swiftness which increases his Dexterity score; and thicken his skin, granting him natural armor.

**Triumphant Frenzy** Ruuk Nath gains 2d10 temporary hit points and a cumulative +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls every time he reduces a foe to 0 hit points. The bonus ends after Ruuk has been rendered unconscious, or when he has been out of combat for 1 minute.

**Crazed Attack** When Ruuk hits an enemy with an attack, he can deal 1d6 damage to himself to increase that attack's damage by +1d10.

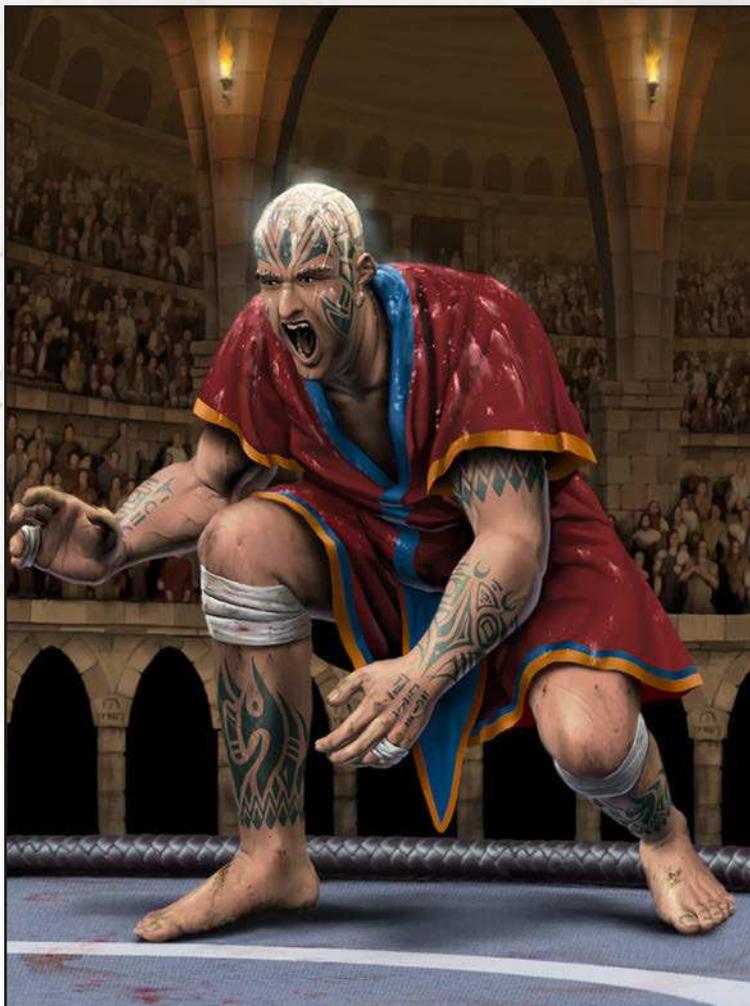
**Grappler** Ruuk Nath has tactical advantage with melee attack rolls against any target he is grappling.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

**Multiattack** Ruuk Nath attacks three times with Ruuk's fist or foot, and can replace any of those attacks with a grapple attempt.

**Ruuk's Fist or Foot** (melee weapon) *Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10+6 bludgeoning damage.

Ruuk Nath is the feared champion of many pit battles. He is so formidable that he rarely fights a single combatant. Instead he is pitted against teams of gladiators or terrible jungle predators. He uses his bulk to toss his opponents around and knock them senseless, breaking limbs and smashing bone with his mighty punches.



To those who see him fight, Ruuk Nath is simply a champion pit fighter. However, there is a dark story behind this brutal champion's fame. From early boyhood, when he first began to exhibit signs of his extraordinary size and strength, Ruuk Nath has been steeped in violence and murder. He was bought by a nobleman who secretly belonged to the Servants of R'Lyeh, and trained to be an unthinking weapon. As a boy, he was given small children and frail old slaves to strangle. As a youth, he murdered weak or injured slaves and warriors. After every death, he was rewarded with dark rituals, infusing him with even greater size and strength. As a grown man, Ruuk Nath is a devoted slave of the Great Old Ones, and lives now only to demonstrate his might by ending the lives of others.

As you might expect, Ruuk Nath is a straightforward combatant. If two targets are available, he uses his fists, and if one target is standing there, he head-butts it. Ruuk Nath fights a bit like a pro wrestler, albeit one who isn't pulling any punches.



## 7: MAGIC AND SPELLS

*Magic has shaped the continent of Thule for ages. In the dim ages of prehistory, the serpentmen were the first known race to master the arcane arts. After them came the rakshasas, living embodiments of sorcery, who spread their influence across Thule in the Age of Myth. And of course the great Empire of Atlantis embraced all magic that could further its own ends, raising great temples and seeking advancement in arcane study. Those great empires are gone, reduced to ruins and legends, but their magic remains. Most of it has been lost—buried beneath the advancing glaciers, swallowed in the swamps and jungles, or entombed in lost vaults. But heroes and villains alike seek these forgotten secrets, because while magic is not prevalent in the Age of Man, it has lost nothing of its old power.*

**M**agic may not be commonplace in Thule, but that does not mean the primeval continent is a magic-poor setting. Individuals and small, secretive organizations wield arcane or divine powers every bit as impressive as those found in more conventional fantasy worlds. Every city in Thule is home to a handful of arcane scholars or reclusive wizards who routinely work magic for their own mysterious purposes, and each major temple harbors an elect group of priestly initiates who safeguard the secrets of divine magic. Even the most primitive barbarian tribes have their shamans and their druids, individuals who command the power of the spirits of nature. The chief difference between magic in Thule and magic in other settings is that these spellcasters are exceedingly rare; a city of a hundred thousand warriors might be home to two or three wizards and perhaps a dozen clerics with spellcasting ability.

Player characters (and the villains they often face) are exceptions to this rule. Nothing restricts a player from creating any spellcasting character permitted by the GM. But this scarcity does mean that the average Thulean tribesman or city commoner only sees magic a handful of times in his life, and he knows very little about what magic may or may not be able to do. More than few charlatans roam the marketplaces of Thule, taking advantage of this ignorance by selling powerless baubles as charms against evil or misfortune.

While most humans are ignorant of magic, not everyone in Thule is so unenlightened. Nonhuman cultures are much more familiar with arcane matters and spellcasting than humans. Among the heroic races, elves are quite familiar with arcane magic, even if few powerful elven mages are left in the world today. Atlanteans, while mostly human, are heirs to both the scientific and the occult knowledge gathered by the greatest empire of the last three thousand years. More monstrous beings such as serpentmen, geniekind, or rakshasas likewise know a great deal about magic, and make use of it for many purposes. Finally, the various extraterrestrial races that linger in Thule wield formidable occult powers, and can perform feats beyond all but the most knowledgeable human spellcasters.

The scholarship of the nonhuman races and the advances of ancient Atlantis have bestowed upon Thule a legacy of strange spells and marvelous artifacts. None of these Thulean magics are truly commonplace—in fact, some are unique, existing in only one lost tome or hidden in a single forgotten temple in the entire world. But destiny has a way of bringing great heroes and unique treasures together.

## Bard Spells

<b>3rd Level</b>
Bloodlust Cloud
<b>5th Level</b>
Snake Swarm

## Cleric Spells

<b>3rd Level</b>
Group Telepathy
<b>4th Level</b>
Summon Nightgaunt
<b>5th Level</b>
Summon Mi-Go
<b>6th Level</b>
Summon Moon-Beast
<b>7th Level</b>
Visions of Madness
<b>8th Level</b>
Summon Star-Thing

## Druid Spells

<b>5th Level</b>
Snake Swarm

## Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

<b>1st Level</b>
Serpent Fingers
<b>2nd Level</b>
Backbiter Curse
<b>3rd Level</b>
Animate Blades
Bloodlust Cloud
Group Telepathy
<b>4th Level</b>
Defy Death
Draining Mist
Summon Nightgaunt
<b>5th Level</b>
Snake Swarm
Summon Mi-Go
<b>6th Level</b>
Summon Moon-Beast
<b>7th Level</b>
Pnakotic Word
Visions of Madness
<b>8th Level</b>
Summon Star-Thing

## New Magic Items

Item Name	Rarity
<b>Specific Weapons</b>	
Stalking Bow	Rare
Atlantean Battle Trident	Rare
Spear of Asura	Very Rare
Blade of Unending Rage	Legendary
<b>Rings</b>	
Ring of Eldritch Power +1	Rare
Ring of Eldritch Power +2	Very Rare
Ring of Eldritch Power +3	Legendary
<b>Wondrous Items</b>	
Spiderpot	Common
Orb of Regret	Uncommon
Raylauncher	Uncommon
Rope of Rescue	Uncommon
Dragon's Teeth, Lesser	Rare
Mead of the Stars	Rare
Ossified Orb of Duoth, Lesser	Rare
Ossified Orb of Duoth	Very Rare
Ossified Orb of Duoth, Greater	Very Rare
Fish-Eyed Helm	Very Rare
Dragon's Teeth, Greater	Very Rare
<b>Lesser Artifacts</b>	
Elder Sign	—
Eye of the Dragon	—

## SPELLS OF THULE

Spells in Thule are commonly linked to a particular heritage or tradition, such as the arcane lore of the serpentmen (and later elves and Atlanteans), the theurgy of cultists, or the sorcery of the rakshasas. Even commonly used spells like *magic missile* or *fireball* have their origins in a prior age. Spellcasters in Thule often attach their names to spells they favor or are notorious for employing, so it is not unusual to see a spell such as *serpent fingers* referred to as *Kelauklyth's serpent fingers* in various tomes.

A character's or NPC's spells can be associated with any of these traditions, as appropriate. Below are three magical traditions of Thule, and the spells that belong to them.

### SERPENT MAGIC

The sorcerers of the serpentman empire of Nessk twisted magic into the image of their progenitor, Set, the way that they were, themselves, twisted reflections of the Great Serpent. As the empire fell to ruin, many of these sorcerous secrets were lost. Centuries later only fragments of that knowledge remain, preserved by the few remaining serpentmen and in the secret rituals of Set's priesthood. Now, human cultists of Set have also begun to uncover some of these mysteries, and delight in the possibilities that these serpent-summoning powers present.

#### SERPENT FINGERS

1st-level transmutation

**Casting Time** 1 action

**Components** V, S

**Range** self

**Duration** 1 minute (D)

You transform the fingers of both of your hands into writhing nests of venomous serpents. Each of your digits divides and lengthens into anywhere from one to three snakes, each extending one to two feet from your hand. Your ability to cast spells with somatic components is unimpeded, and you can use your serpent fingers to grasp and wield objects (although fine motor control such as delicate writing or lockpicking is not possible).

Your serpent fingers give you natural bite attacks using your hands. You can use your spellcasting ability instead of Strength for the bite attack rolls, and you deal 1 point of piercing damage when you hit. Any creature you bite with your serpents must make a Constitution save or become poisoned until the end of its next turn and take an additional 1d6 poison damage. If both your hands are free, you can use a bonus action to attack with your other hand, as if you are fighting two-handed (If you hit the same creature twice in the same round, it only becomes poisoned once.)

**At Higher Levels.** When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the poison damage taken by creature that fails its Constitution save increases by 2 for each slot above 1st.

#### BACKBITER SHIELD

2nd-level enchantment

**Casting Time** 1 combat reaction, which you take when you are hit by a melee weapon attack

**Components** V

**Range** 5 feet

**Duration** Instantaneous

The weapon of the enemy that had the temerity to attack you turns upon its wielder. This spell causes a creature that hit you with a melee attack to repeat the attack against itself. This attack uses the same attack roll bonus, including modifiers, as the attack against you, and deals the amount of damage dealt to you by the triggering attack.

#### SNAKE SWARM

5th-level conjuration

**Casting Time** 1 action

**Components** V, S, M (a severed snake head)

**Range** 30 feet

**Duration** concentration, up to 1 minute

You summon a mass of vipers or constrictors that fills a 10-foot square area. (You may summon the swarm so that it shares the area of other creatures.) The swarm has 30 hit points and AC 14. You can direct the swarm with a bonus action to move up to 20 feet; the swarm otherwise remains where you it was summoned. The snakes are either venomous vipers or entangling constrictors (your choice when you cast the spell). When the swarm is first cast, and as an action once on each of your turns thereafter, the swarm attacks each creature in its area. Use your spellcasting ability to make a melee attack against each target in the swarm, the effect of which depends upon the type of swarm you summon.

**Vipers:** Any creature in a swarm of vipers is poisoned until it ends its turn outside the swarm. When you hit with a swarm attack, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage and must make a Constitution save or also take 4d6 poison damage (or half as much poison damage on a successful save).

**Constrictors:** Any creature in a swarm of constrictors moves at half speed until it ends its turn outside the swarm. When you hit with a swarm attack, the target takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage and is restrained until the end of its next turn.

## STAR THEURGY

Ancient horrors stir in the desolate places of Thule, and in their dreams they reach out to human minds. Even the brightest and most steadfast of these minds can be corrupted through the promise of power, but those who already wield a modicum of magic are especially tempted. Over the centuries, many of the powerful sorcerers and priests of Thule have learned strange new secrets in their dreams. Some of these individuals manage to record their findings on scrolls, walls, or graven tablets before madness overtakes them. These dream-messages then sit, abandoned and alone, until they find a new mind to enter.

### GROUP TELEPATHY

3rd-level divination

**Casting Time** 1 action

**Components** S, M (a small seashell)

**Range** 50 feet

**Duration** Concentration

You and up to three creatures of your choice within range gain the ability to communicate telepathically over limited distance for a short time. The targeted creatures can communicate regardless of language with any creature within 50 feet. Affected creatures also take a -2 penalty to saving throws against enchantment, charm, or other mind-affecting effects, and have tactical disadvantage against the attacks and abilities of extraterrene creatures.

### SUMMON NIGHTGAUNT

4th-level conjuration

**Casting Time** 1 action

**Components** V, S

**Range** 30 feet

**Duration** concentration, up to 1 minute

You summon a gargoyle-like creature from another dimension. A nightgaunt appears in an unoccupied space within range. The nightgaunt acts after you on your turn. It follows your direction as long as you are able to provide it.

If you voluntarily end your concentration on this spell, the nightgaunt is dismissed and fades away. If, however, your concentration is broken, the nightgaunt remains for 1d4 more rounds and attacks the nearest creature on its turn, preferring you over other targets.

Nightgaunt statistics can be found in Chapter 6.

## EXTRATERRENE CALLING

Extraterrene creatures might also be called through the use of a *planar ally* spell, typically by a cleric that worships a Great Old One. On behalf of the Elder God it serves, the creature called requires a payment for its services. The payment depends on the nature of the Great Old One, and may involve personal sacrifice, living sacrifice, or some other action or service that you provide that aligns with the entity's goals and can be completed within an agreed upon timeframe. The bargaining takes at least 1 round, so any actions by the creature begin in the round after it arrives.

### SUMMON MI-GO

5th-level conjuration

**Casting Time** 1 action

**Components** V, S

**Range** 30 feet

**Duration** concentration, up to 1 hour

You summon a bizarre winged creature from another dimension. A mi-go appears in an unoccupied space within range. The mi-go acts after you on your turn. It follows your direction as long as you are able to provide it.

If you voluntarily end your concentration on this spell, the mi-go is dismissed and fades away. If, however, your concentration is broken, the mi-go remains for 1d4 more rounds and attacks the nearest creature on its turn. If no creature is within reach, it moves its speed to be adjacent to you.

Mi-go statistics can be found in Chapter 6.

### SUMMON MOON-BEAST

6th-level conjuration

**Casting Time** 1 action

**Components** V, S

**Range** 30 feet

**Duration** concentration, up to 4 hours

You summon a massive, bloated, toadlike creature with no visible eyes or ears or mouth, just a mass of tentacles where its snout should be. A moon-beast appears in an unoccupied space within range. The moon-beast acts after you on your turn. It follows your direction as long as you are able to provide it.

If you voluntarily end your concentration on this spell, the moon-beast is dismissed and fades away. If, however, your concentration is broken, the moon-beast attacks the nearest creature on its turn, preferring you over other targets, and if no creature is within reach, it moves its speed to be adjacent to you. On each of its turns when not controlled, there is 50% chance that it fades back to the unimaginable horror from whence it came.

Moon-beast statistics can be found in Chapter 6 and the attacks and abilities of extraterrene creatures.

**PNAKOTIC WORD**

7th-level enchantment

**Casting Time** 1 action**Components** V**Duration** Instantaneous

Your utterance of impossible syllables confounds the minds of all enemies within 20 feet of you. Each such enemy with fewer than 100 hit points is affected by *confusion*, as the spell. At the end of its turn, an affected creature can attempt a Wis save to end the effect, but has tactical disadvantage on the saving throw if another affected creature is within 10 feet.

**VISIONS OF MADNESS**

7th-level divination

**Casting Time** 1 action**Components** V, S**Range** 120 feet**Area:** 20-ft.-radius spread**Duration** instantaneous

You create a shared vision in the minds of all creatures in a 20-foot radius sphere, showing them all of the horrific possibilities of what should not be. The mental anguish caused by *visions of madness* deals 8d8 points of psychic damage, and each target is incapacitated for 1 round. A successful Wisdom save halves the damage and negates the incapacitated condition.

If all targets of this spell successfully save, then you become incapacitated until the end of your next turn.

**SUMMON STAR-THING**

8th-level conjuration

**Casting Time** 1 action**Components** V, S**Range** 30 feet**Duration** concentration, up to 4 hours

You summon a hulking, 10-foot tall, tentacled biped. A star-thing appears in an unoccupied space within range. The star-thing acts after you on your turn. It follows your direction as long as you are able to provide it.

If you voluntarily end your concentration on this spell, the star-thing is dismissed and fades away. If, however, your concentration is broken, the star-thing remains for 1d4 more rounds and attacks the nearest creature on its turn, preferring you over other targets. If no creature is within reach, it moves its speed to be adjacent to you. After that time, the star-thing teleports away, to create mischief of its own while away from its home plane.

Star-thing statistics can be found in Chapter 6.

**JHI ANOOL  
SPIRIT MAGIC**

While the rakshasas may have been driven from the shores of Thule, their magic still remains. The last rakshasas to leave the continent were able to hold off their assailants long enough to put powerful wards upon vaults hiding treasures they were forced to leave behind. Vaults and catacombs beneath the ancient ruins of the rakshasa realm still hold these secrets and treasures, although many have disappeared under the ice.

The secrets of rakshasa magic come to human sages through the efforts of brave scholars or lucky adventurers who stumbled across the ancient vaults of Jhi Anool. These spells are usable by arcane spellcasters, and you use your primary spellcasting ability score to determine the ability modifier for these spells.

**ANIMATE BLADES**

3rd-level transmutation

**Casting Time** 1 action**Components** V, S**Range** 120 feet**Duration** concentration (up to 1 minute)

You animate a number of unattended objects, causing them to levitate in the air and strike at targets you designate of their own accord. Each object must weigh 10 pounds or less, and you can animate a number of objects equal to 2 + your spellcasting ability modifier.

When you cast the spell you can move each controlled object up to 50 feet and make one attack with it. You can concentrate multiple objects on one target or divide the objects among multiple targets.

Weapons you control strike with an attack bonus equal to your spellcasting ability plus your level bonus, and deal normal damage (for example, a dagger strikes for 1d4 piercing damage). Improvised weapons such as fist-sized stones, heavy branches, or even sturdy bottles deal 1d4 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage as appropriate. If you roll a natural 1 when attacking with a weapon or object in this manner, that object is “dropped” and you can no longer control it with this spell.

As a bonus action in subsequent turns, you can cause the animated objects to move and attack again.

The most common use of *animate blade* is to animate the daggers and swords of fallen warriors found on a battlefield or in a crypt; hence the name. However, the magic of the spell does not discriminate between blades, cudgels, rocks, or other potential weapons of the right size.

**At Higher Levels.** When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, increase the number of objects you animate by 2 for each slot level above 3rd.

**BLOODLUST CLOUD**

3rd-level enchantment

**Casting Time** 1 action**Components** V, S, M (a tiny vial of blood)**Range** 120 feet**Duration** concentration, up to 1 minute

A cloud of red vapors rises at your command in a 20-foot-radius sphere that spreads around corners.

The area within the cloud is heavily obscured, and also obscures darkvision beyond 5 feet. The cloud can be dispersed by a moderate wind.

Any creature below half its maximum hit points that ends its turn in the *bloodlust cloud* makes a melee attack against a random adjacent creature unless it makes a successful Wisdom save.

**DEFY DEATH**

School 4th-level necromancy

**Casting Time** 1 combat reaction, when you take damage that would reduce you to 0 hit points**Components** V, S**Range** self**Duration** 1 minute/level

You gain the ability to temporarily ignore terrible wounds and sustain your life through necromantic means. While this spell is in effect, you do not fall unconscious if you are at 0 hit points, and you do not need to make death saving throws at the start of your turn. You must still make a death saving throw if you take damage while at 0 hit points. You are not killed until you have accumulated 5 failures.

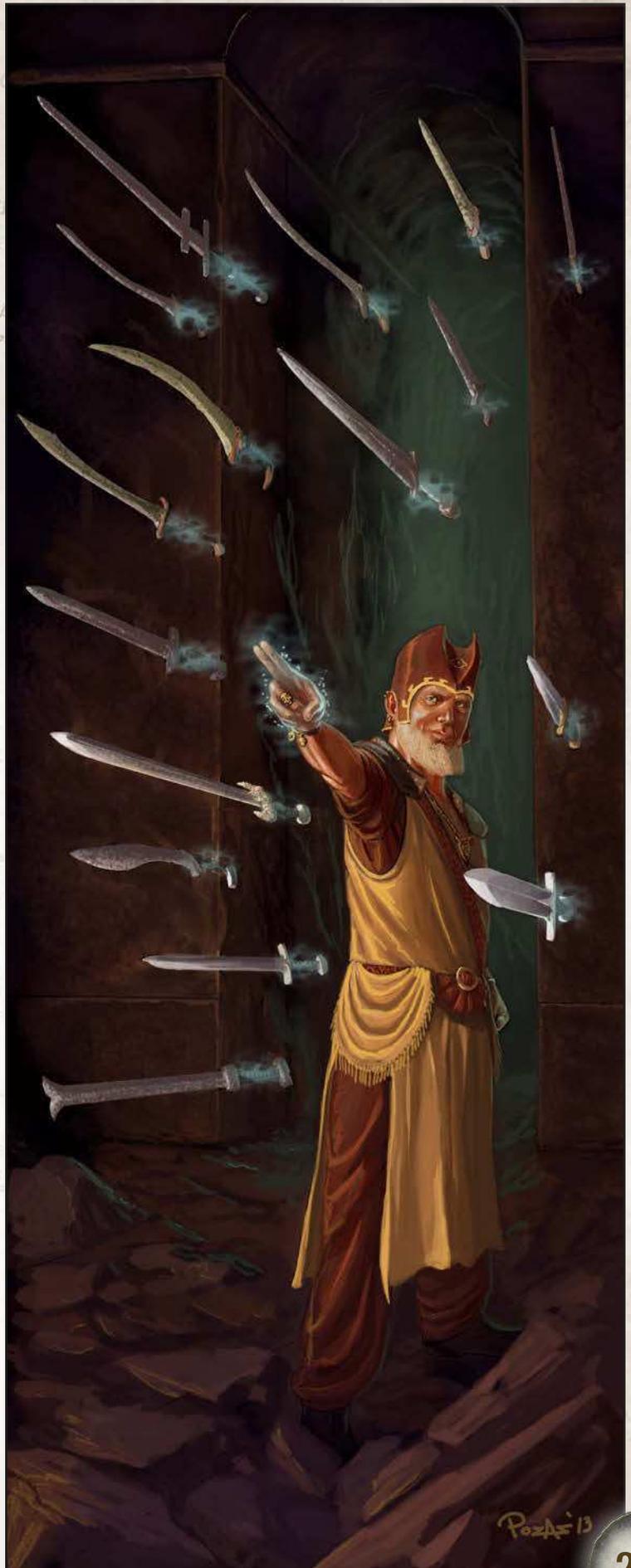
**DRAINING MIST**

4th-level necromancy

**Casting Time** 1 action**Components** V, S, M (a leech)**Range** Self (15-foot-radius sphere)**Duration** instantaneous

You surround yourself with a sinister red mist that drains the life from your foes and feeds it to you. Each target takes 4d8 necrotic damage unless it succeeds on a Constitution save. You gain temporary hit points equal to 5 times the number of targets that take damage from this spell (maximum 25 temporary hit points).

**At Higher Levels.** When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 and the temporary hit points increase by 1 per target for each slot above 4th.





## MAGIC ITEM HISTORIES

As your characters forge their own tales and destiny in Thule, they will undoubtedly cross paths with legendary weapons, and other (possibly) magic items of rumor or myth. While magic items are rare in the overall context of Primeval Thule, PCs have a habit of encountering them with alarming frequency. The continent has seen many magic-wielding forces rise and fall over millennia, and artifacts of those ages are hidden throughout the remnants and ruins of fallen civilizations.

In some cases, the power of legend is more significant than any magic at play, and an item property that might be considered magical in other campaign settings can be presented as a non-magical variant that uses the same game mechanics. For example, a “simple” +1 longsword is more than likely a non-magical masterwork blade of exceptional quality, possibly of dwarven or ancient Atlantean make. Even a *vorpalsword* doesn’t need to have supernatural qualities to function as a beheading weapon.

The story of an item is in many ways just as important as the property or power it might provide. In Thule, a powerful item has a heritage, whether it is a

link to a barbarian tribe, past civilization, or source of magical power. Provided below are additional details about the sources of exceptional items, categorized by theme. A GM can use these backstories (or create new ones) when introducing magic items into the game to add context to these unusual discoveries, or a player could draw upon these ideas to create his or her own legends.

## ATLANTEAN ITEMS

For almost two thousand years, Atlantis was a beacon of human technology and philosophy. While colonies and conquests upon Thule extended the reach of the empire, the city of Atlantis was a center for science and arcane study. The city also boasted great temples devoted to Asura, Mithra, Nergal, and Tiamat, along with some of humankind’s most powerful priests, even if the populace at large was not fervently religious. Much knowledge was lost beneath the waves when the city was destroyed, and human civilization has yet to climb back to its peak.

The relics of Old Atlantis are perhaps the most common superior and magic items found among the larger cities of Thule. Many such items were brought to Thule during the settlement and exploration of the continent, and even more traveled across the sea with the last refugees fleeing Atlantis’s destruction. The secrets of steelmaking did not survive Atlantis’s fall, and Atlantean steel survives only in the blades and armor rescued from the city’s destruction.

Atlantean weapons and armor are usually heirlooms, passed down over generations. They are usually adorned with aquatic symbols such as fish scales, shells, or wave motifs. Holy symbols for the Nine, particularly Asura, are commonly Atlantean in origin, as are wands of arcane spells, the preferred accessory of Atlantean wizards.

Thematic ideas for Atlantean items include:

- A house symbol from old Atlantis denoting the item’s bearer as a member or agent of a noble house.
- A flag or banner that has the properties of a wondrous item and is activated by planting the banner in the ground.
- Armor that does not penalize swimming or moving on board ships at sea.
- An item whose powers can only be activated by one of Atlantean descent.

## BARBARIAN ITEMS

The barbarian tribes of Thule are quite varied. Each tribe has its own traditions, whether they are nomads of the Long Shadow, jungle savages of Dhar Mesh, or the almost-civilized Ammurans. Nearly every barbarian tribe boasts a legend involving a weapon wielded by a great warrior or chieftain of the past. Primal spirits and forces throughout Thule sometimes

manifest in what might otherwise be mundane items, and still others are bound into sacred relics by animist practitioners. While distrustful of most magic, many clans nevertheless pay great respect to the shamans and druids among them. As a result, primal magic is not out of place among the tribes of Thule.

Most weapons and armor can be of barbaric origin, as can any item that has a primal or primitive feel. Such items range from crude constructions made of animal bones or wooden clubs set with spikes to the fine craftsmanship of the Ammur metalsmiths, who craft massive greatswords and axes from copper or bronze. Totems and gnarled staffs for spellcasters fit the primal themes of the savage tribes, and other primitive trinkets might be imbued with primal magic. Many barbaric items might not be magical at all, and are instead harvested from the beasts and plants available to the barbarians.

Barbarian-themed item concepts include:

- The blade of a mighty warrior who was seemingly invincible so long as he held the weapon, but who met his downfall when he was disarmed in combat.
- A frozen hammer, its head carved of unmelting ice taken from the heart of a glacier.
- A dagger crafted from a fang of a mighty saber-tooth cat defeated in single combat when a savage warrior stabbed the great cat in the heart, *using its own fang*.
- Arrows tipped with mystical thorns from a sinister thicket guarded by treants.
- Bolts or darts made from the proboscises of giant mosquitoes.
- Hide or leather armor of a legendary werewolf hunter, made from the skins of his prey.
- A sword quenched in the blood of skalds that sings their songs when swung.
- A blade of a lost barbarian chieftain, constructed with a stag head or other notable feature.
- Shrunk heads that provide knowledge, insight, or divinatory benefits. Out loud.

## DWARVEN ITEMS

The dwarves of Thule jealously guard their handiwork, and haven't been in Thule long enough to leave buried legacies throughout the mountains. As a result, dwarven relics and items are very rare outside the realms of the dwarves. Dwarven steel is renowned for its strength, but it is only occasionally traded to non-dwarves.

Dwarven weapons are typically well-suited to their stature and fighting in their mountain tunnels. Larger weapons like longswords or most of the two-handed weapons are exceedingly rare among hoards of dwarven work. Like most dwarves, the dwarves of Thule craft weapons they also use as tools, such as axes and hammers.

Almost all dwarven relics found outside dwarven kingdoms are arms and armor, or finely wrought jewelry. Every dwarven item is marked with the rune of its creator, and it is rumored that dwarven smiths keep a ledger of the items that have been sold or lost, and can quickly determine who truly is the rightful owner of a dwarven-made item.

Dwarven themes include:

- Instead of burning with tongues of flame, dwarven weapons with flaming or fire properties glow internally with the trapped heat of the Zinandar volcanoes, a heat that is released when the weapon strikes.
- A metal item inscribed or cast with the Mark of the Council, or the rune of a missing Master, would be useful in getting past guards at the Iron Gate into Kal-Zinan, if only to question the bearer about how such an item was obtained.
- A dwarven shield made from a single reptile scale.
- Braug's Doom, the name given to the weapon that slew the last of the cyclopes kings to rule in what is now the dwarven homeland. It was lost in a raid on a trade caravan years later.

## ELVEN ITEMS

Once proud and dominant, the elven empires have fallen to decadence, corruption, or indifference. At their height, the elves rivaled the serpentmen in their mastery of arcane magic, and powerful relics of the past may still be hidden among forgotten caches of elven treasures.

Elven relics are overtly arcane magic items, and frequently make use of divination and abjuration magic. Orbs and crystal balls are usually of elven design, and tomes of magical research and spells were likely penned by elven wizards in a bygone age. The elves of the current age craft few items, and those they do create typically serve to remember the past or forget the future.

Here are some examples of elven themes:

- A weapon from a great war of the past when the elves battled the rakshasas or the serpentmen. The weapon might glow in the presence of such creatures or have additional powers specific to defeating them, or each night relive a battle from the past.
- Poisons or items that incapacitate enemies can be described as concoctions or devices the hedonistic elves use for pleasure.
- A magic orb or crystal ball that also records events in its vicinity, and sends them as dreams to other elves.
- One of the scattered Jewels of Sersidyen, relics lost before the city was sacked by Atlantians. Together, the Jewels provided a protective ward for the city, and maybe they can do so again.
- A headsman's axe (or other large blade) that remembers the story of each person it has killed.

## EXTRATERRENE OR CULTIST ITEMS

Thule's history harbors dark and terrible beings, inhuman monstrosities that left behind strange and perilous artifacts. Sometimes preserved by cults that worship the elder gods, and sometimes rediscovered when brought back to the Earth by a meteor falling from the sky, extraterrene artifacts can be blamed for any number of inexplicable events. For the seasoned adventurer, these mysterious artifacts are all too real.

There is enough overlap between the treasures preserved by cultists and the devices used by alien entities that they deserve to be discussed together. An extraterrene item might be built from materials not found on Earth. Another item may be the physical manifestation of a magical pact with a supernatural entity such as a Great Old One. Extradimensional spaces are typically extraterrene in origin, as are items that provide teleportation. Finally, many devices that rely on necromantic magic fall into this category, since necromancy is not practiced by "civilized" folk and is shunned by most barbarian tribes.

Some concepts for extraterrene item themes include:

- Armor forged with dark metal smelted from the shards of a fallen meteor.
- Weapons crafted from blackstone, the razor-sharp shards of obsidian-like rock found in the impact craters of meteors.
- A whip made from the tentacle of some deep beast.
- An item that provides teleportation, but the traveler gets a glimpse of a terrible, inhuman dimension for a brief moment when he teleports.
- An extradimensional space that howls or whispers or chants every time it is opened; more often than not, the opening takes the form of a mouth.
- A magic item that must be grafted to the flesh of the character, or a ring that when first worn severs the finger and covers the stump with a metal cap.
- An item that slowly drives its owner insane with whispers and dreams until some great evil is defeated.
- A dagger that weeps the blood of 1,000 sacrifices.

## RAKSHASA ITEMS

The rakshasas were powerful practitioners of sorcery. They used their innate magic to lay waste to their enemies, bind demons and secure other fiends' service, or unleash such creatures against their enemies. They left behind many sorcerous items when they were forced from Thule during the Age of Myth. Some of these treasures are still hidden and protected in ancient vaults, but others were almost too easy to find, as if the rakshasas meant for them to be looted by their conquerors. Some sages believe that the magic of these relics is channeled directly from the rakshasas, at a cost of indebting the wielder to those evil fiends. It is a price that a few are willing to pay for power.

Magic items that use illusion and conjuration are most likely products of rakshasa sorcery, as are magic daggers and rods of power. Items that bind spirits or trap souls are also in the domain of rakshasa magic. Rakshasa weapons have a strange twist to their hilts and handles, since they are designed for the reversed grip of a rakshasa's backwards hand.

Here are some rakshasa item themes:

- A weapon that was granted the power to defeat an unkillable warlord, but now that warlord's soul is trapped inside it.
- An item that is attuned to a hidden vault in the ruined temple-city of Agda Jand. It is both a compass and a key.
- Enchanted boots that leave cat paw-print treads, in addition to their normal effect.
- A magic staff or other spell-producing item that makes pictograms and runes in the air when it does magic, telling a story of the fall and eventual return of the rakshasas.
- A human-like skull with a third eye socket in the middle of its forehead, which functions as a wand or staff or divine focus.

## SERPENTMAN ITEMS

The first practitioners of arcane magic in Thule were the serpentmen, who began weaving spells tens of thousands of years before humans or elves came to Thule. Bound by tradition and ceremony, serpentmen never refined their arcane knowledge to the extent that the Atlanteans and elves did in a later age, but the magic they did wield was well-practiced and powerful. Many of the spells and rituals still practiced today by the scattered mages and wizards of Thule were first scribed on scrolls by the snake people. Though the great empire of Nessk is a fading memory, forgotten temples and catacombs may yet hold treasures of that ancient time.

Serpentman magic is strongest in the realm of charms, enchantments, and transmutations. It is a mix of arcane magic and invocations to Set, the Great Serpent, with snakes and poisons as common motifs. Magic items that can focus energy or empower spellcasters are usually relics of Nessk.

Sample serpentmen item concepts include:

- The Serpent's Heart, a magnificent emerald jewel the size of a human fist that has the properties of a wondrous item. Each time it is used, a little bit more of the wearer's skin becomes scaly and reptilian.
- A magic staff or wand shaped like a large snake. In addition to its properties, it can be used as a weapon that deals poison damage as the snake head animates and bites.
- Broad, curved swords, such as falchions or khopeshes adorned with sigils and snake designs of ancient Nessk.
- Eggs from a snake magically altered to infuse its eggs with magical power. The eggs work as consumable items such as potions, elixirs, or grenades.

## MAGIC ITEMS AND ARTIFACTS

The following items are presented in alphabetical order under category. Some items cannot be used until the character attunes himself or herself to its enchantment. This requires the character to spend at least one hour handling or interacting with the item.

### WEAPONS

Thule is a warlike land, and weapons of different kinds are among the most common items to possess unusual traits or powers.

#### ATLANTEAN BATTLE TRIDENT

These bronze tridents, adorned with reliefs carved in the shape of sea serpents, were often found in the hands of elite guards and commanders. The weapon's power is generated by an Atlantean crystal embedded in the haft; if this is removed, it retains its enhancement bonus and becomes a +1 *magic trident* with no other special abilities.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Weapon (trident), rare*

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this trident. This trident has 6 charges and regains 1d6 charges each day. It also regains 1d4 charges whenever you roll a natural 20 on an attack using the trident.

When you hit an enemy, you can expend one charge to deal an extra 2d6 lightning damage. You can also use an action to expend 1 to 5 charges to blast a *lightning bolt* as per the spell, except that the damage is 2d6 lightning damage per charge expended and the saving throw is DC 15.

#### RAGING WEAPON

Nimothan legends speak of a band of berserkers that fought a years-long battle against strange alien creatures deep in the ice tunnels near Rime. These tireless warriors fought through day and night, focusing their will and anger to keep fighting, even while they slept. When the battle was over, they returned to their camp victorious, told their tale, and then dropped dead. This is one of their weapons.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Weapon (any sword or axe), legendary*

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. Any time you fell a foe by reducing an enemy to 0 hp, you can make an immediate melee attack as a bonus action.

In addition while you wield this weapon, whenever you would be incapacitated (including if you are stunned or paralyzed), you continue to maintain your grip on it and on your turn can still make a single melee attack with this weapon against an adjacent enemy.

#### SPEAR OF ASURA

The Atlantean Temple of Asura's greatest relic was stolen by Lemurian thieves prior to the destruction of Atlantis. Lesser copies of the legendary spear existed in the Asuran temples of Thule, but only the true *spear of Asura* can bring light where there is darkness. The ornate tip of the spear reflects beams of sunlight, even when no sunlight is present.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Weapon (any spear), very rare*

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this spear. If you hit an undead creature, it takes an extra 1d6 radiant damage. As a bonus action, you can command the spear to shed bright light in a 60-foot radius. The light remains until you command it to end, or until you no longer wield the spear.

Once each day, when you hit a creature with an attack using this spear, you can call upon the spear's magic to blind the target unless it makes a DC 16 Wisdom save. A target blinded by this effect can attempt a new saving throw to end the blindness at the end of any turn in which it does not make an attack.

#### STALKING BOW

The hunter Lokks of the Muur-Gha tribe in the Ghan peninsula stalked the jungles with his panther companion Umla always by his side. One day, in battle with a beastman tribe, Umla fell to the magic of a cursemaker, but the bond between cat and hunter is strong, and sometimes transcends death. Lokks swore that Umla was always with him after that day, her spirit guiding his bow.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Weapon (shortbow or longbow), rare*

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this bow, and the bow's normal range is doubled. Whenever you hit a target with this bow, you gain tactical advantage during the next attack you make against that target before the end of your next turn. However, this advantage is lost if you take damage.



## RINGS

### RING OF ELDRITCH POWER

Rings such as this are prized possessions for any arcane spellcaster, and when one finds a powerful wielder, a strong mystical bond can form, keeping them from being apart for long. This ring is made from copper and is usually fashioned in the shape of a serpent swallowing its own tail.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Ring, rare, very rare (greater), or legendary (supreme)*

This ring stores latent power, which can be channeled when you cast a spell. The ring has 3 charges, and regains 1d4 expended charges each day (to a maximum of 3 charges). While wearing the ring, when you cast a spell you can use the power of the ring to increase either your caster level by one, or increase the effect of the spell as if you used a spell slot one level higher to cast the spell. Doing either expends one charge.

**Greater Ring of Eldritch Power.** A ring of greater eldritch power is a very rare item, has 6 charges (it regains 1d6 expended charges daily), and you can spend up to two charges each time you use the ring.

**Supreme Ring of Eldritch Power.** A ring of supreme eldritch power is a legendary item, has 8 charges (it regains 1d8 expended charges each day), and you can spend up to three charges each time you use the ring.

## WONDROUS ITEMS

### DRAGON'S TEETH

Centuries ago, Ghedrar the Necromancer conquered most of what is now Dhar Mesh and the western reaches of the Inner Sea. When he was finally defeated four hundred years later, his armies were destroyed, but there was no proof of his destruction. There are those who believe the Necromancer still lives, having extended his life by centuries through his magic. These cults bide their time and wait for the moment when the dead will rise to reclaim the world.

*Wondrous item, rare or very rare (greater dragon's teeth)*

These rune-carved ivory fangs are each about the size of a human thumb, and are usually found in a pouch containing 1d6+8 teeth. When cast from the pouch onto bare earth or sand as an action, each tooth grows into a human skeleton. The skeleton obeys your mental commands as if animated by an *animate dead* spell. You can command a number of dragon's teeth skeletons equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1), and can cast as many as five teeth in the same action. However, any attempt to create more skeletons than your Charisma modifier causes all such created skeletons to become autonomous and attack the nearest non-skeletal creature until few enough remain that you can regain control.

Skeletons created by the dragon's teeth crumble into bone shards after 24 hours; each skeleton has a 50% chance of leaving behind 1 dragon's tooth when it collapses back into the dust. Your GM has the statistics for skeletons. Each full moon, the pouch has a 50% chance of generating a new tooth, to a maximum of 14 teeth.

**Greater Dragon's Teeth.** Very rarely, a pouch might also contain 1d6+4 greater fangs in addition to the 1d6+8 lesser teeth, and functions like the *lesser dragon's teeth* with the following additions. When a greater fang is cast onto the ground, it becomes a monstrous skeleton, like that of a minotaur or troll. You can choose to cast lesser teeth, greater fangs, or a mix of both, from the pouch. When a monstrous skeleton is destroyed, it has a 50% chance of leaving behind 1 greater fang when it collapses back into the dust. Each full moon, the pouch regains one lesser tooth and has a 50% chance of generating a new greater fang, to a maximum of 14 lesser teeth and 10 greater fangs.

## FISH-EYED HELM

Atlantean explorers were certain that great power could be found beneath the waves. They created these helmets to facilitate underwater expeditions. Few are known to exist, though there are rumors of Cthulhu cultists bearing artifacts that match the general description.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, rare*

This polished bronze helm is decorated with inlaid mother-of-pearl, and the solid bronze faceplate offers no obvious visibility. While wearing this helm, you are able to see in all directions, can see clearly up to 50 feet underwater and in lightly obscured areas, and are immune to effects other than heavy obscurement that confer the blinded condition. You also gain the ability to breathe underwater.

However, while wearing this helm, you cannot avert your eyes from gaze attacks.

## MEAD OF THE STARS

Some cultists brew special concoctions to embark on travel to alien worlds and dimensions. The cultists of Yga-Ygo claim that their special mead allows them to travel with the mi-go to their homeworld, although none of them have any memory of the journey.

*Potion, rare*

This elixir alters your physiology so that you can ignore the cold dangers from extreme environments, and need not breathe. While under the mead's effects, you are immune to inhaled poisons and fumes, and can even survive in vacuum. The elixir's effects last for 24 hours.

If you drink a second elixir while under the effects of the first, the elixir's effects last for 1 year. However, you become adapted to such extremes that normal conditions are now dangerous for you. Any temperature above 50 degrees Fahrenheit constitutes extreme heat,

and may lead to exhaustion. One full week of exposure to normal conditions will cause the 1-year duration to end prematurely.

## ORB OF REGRET

Many elves met untimely ends in battle over the ages, resulting in the loss of memories and lore that had been accumulated over centuries. To ameliorate these losses, elven philosophers crafted small charms to capture and store a fallen elf's experiences. Many elven bodies are entombed with such devices; when concentrated upon, the orb reveals the last thought a creature had when it perished.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

When placed upon a recently deceased corpse (killed within the past 3 days), a faint image becomes permanently imbedded in the swirls inside this gold-framed glass orb. The image shows the now-deceased creature's last thought. Sometimes this is focused on the circumstances of death, and sometimes this is devoted to loved ones or regrets—the effect can be quite random. Each *orb of regret* is usable only once.

## OSSIFIED ORB OF DUOTH

A group of Nimothan raiders once battled a horde of grotesquely infected humans and brought trophies back to their camp, including weapons, scalps, and a giant disembodied eyeball. After hanging their trophies from the rafters of their longhouse, the barbarians began to have strange shared dreams in which the land became infected by a rotting disease. They sank into paranoia, and could not shake the feeling that they were always being watched. But one night a mysterious fire swept through the camp, destroying the longhouse and those sleeping within. The visions were gone, and the survivors moved eastward.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, very rare, or rare (lesser), or legendary (greater)*

This fist-sized eye appears carved from a single bone. While grasping the orb, you feel your mind bolstered, though faint whispers linger at the back of your mind. You can activate the *ossified orb of Duoth* while casting a spell to retain the spell slot that would otherwise be expended. The slot must be of a level no greater than the maximum level allowed by the orb. The orb typically allows up to a 4th level spell slot to be retained.

Using the orb's power causes you to take a -2 penalty on Wisdom and Charisma checks and saves until you rest. Once used, the orb cannot be used again until after the next dawn.

**Lesser Ossified Orb of Duoth.** A lesser orb allows you to retain a spell slot of up to 2nd level.

**Greater Ossified Orb of Duoth.** A greater orb allows you to retain a spell slot of up to 7th level.

## RAYLAUNCHER

Few of these ever existed, and the only ones created were prototypes for a new type of weapon under development by Atlantean scientists and wizards. Ray-launchers are surprisingly effective against star-things and other alien beasts, almost as if they were designed specifically to destroy such creatures.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

This strange contraption looks like a hand crossbow, but has no string or place to put ammunition. Instead, a red gemstone is set into the crossbar. You can use the *raylauncher* to shoot a single fiery ray at a target as an attack using either Dexterity or Intelligence, and you are considered proficient with the *raylauncher*. The attack deals 2d6 fire damage when it hits. Attacks against extraterrene creatures gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

After 1d10+15 uses, the gemstone burns out and must be replaced.

Yeah, this is a raygun, for those who want to inject a little sci-fi into their game. It's easy enough to provide additional ammunition via replacement gemstones. The damage type of the beam may change based on the color of the gem, and more powerful and harder to find gemstones might confer a magical bonus to the attack rolls or higher base damage.

## ROPE OF RESCUE

Atlantean explorers were no strangers to using magical tools to help with survivability. The art of animating ropes was one of the first secrets adapted by Atlantean wizards from the writings of ancient Nessk mages.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

This 100-foot long silk rope is strong and light. While you carry the rope, whenever you or an ally within 50 feet begins to fall a distance greater than 10 feet, the rope immediately lassoes the falling creature and anchors him in place, preventing falling damage.

## SPIDERPOT

Among the headhunters of Phoor are primitive alchemists known as Death Adders, who harvest the poisons from the snakes and spiders of the Dhar Mesh swamps for use by the Phoori hunters. Some of their inventions are quite simple, like this clay pot filled with poisonous vermin. Their use is simple: just throw it and wait for the screaming to stop.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, common*

This simple clay pot has a tightened lid, though scratching and scuttling noises come from inside it. When hurled against an enemy or a solid object, the pot breaks apart, and hundreds of tiny spiders burst outward creating a swarm of spiders.

## MINOR ARTIFACTS

### ELDER SIGN

No one knows who or what first created these humble tokens, but they have been found in ruins hundreds of centuries old. They are potent weapons against forces and beings not of this Earth.

*Wondrous item, minor artifact*

This small, star-shaped token is made of green soapstone and is about 2 inches in diameter. Anyone who carries an elder sign on their person gains powerful protection against alien creatures. First, the bearer gains tactical advantage against attacks and spells made by aberrations and extraterrene creatures. Second, the bearer is immune to any such creature's attempts to possess or exercise mental control over him or her.

An *elder sign* placed on the ground or by a doorway or portal functions as the center of an *antipathy* effect with a 20-ft. radius that affects aberrations and extraterrene creatures. Such creatures must make a DC 20 Wisdom save or become frightened by the sign.

An *elder sign* is destroyed if an aberration or extraterrene creature of CR 10 or more kills its bearer, or successfully forces itself into or through an area warded by the sign.

### EYE OF THE DRAGON

While the elven society crumbled, some elves still sought ways of staving off the decline of their race. One such elven wizard named Rumiol the Lesser hoped to create a crystal ball that would allow him to look into the future and see what the ultimate demise of his people would be, so that he could eliminate the threat before it completely wiped out the elven race. After decades of research, in the twilight of his years, Rumiol finally perfected his work. In his last days, he looked into the glass orb, hoping to discover what the true cause of the destruction of elven civilization, and all he saw were strange black flowers.

**Item Attunement:** Yes.

*Wondrous item, minor artifact*

This orb can be used as the focus for divination spells that require one, and can be used in place of material components for divination spells.

By peering into the glass globe for no less than 10 minutes, you can glimpse a vision of an alternate

future. At any one point during the next 24 hours, you can affect one d20 roll made by you or one of your allies by subtracting the natural roll from 20 to obtain the new result. The orb can provide only one glimpse of the future per day, and regains its power after a full day has passed since its last use.

Every time the eye is used to change fate, there is a 1% chance that the orb cracks and is ruined at the moment the power is used.

## DRUGS AND POISONS

Poisons	Rarity
Black Circle Poison	Uncommon
Black Milk	Uncommon
Thulean Dragon Venom	Rare

### BLACK CIRCLE POISON

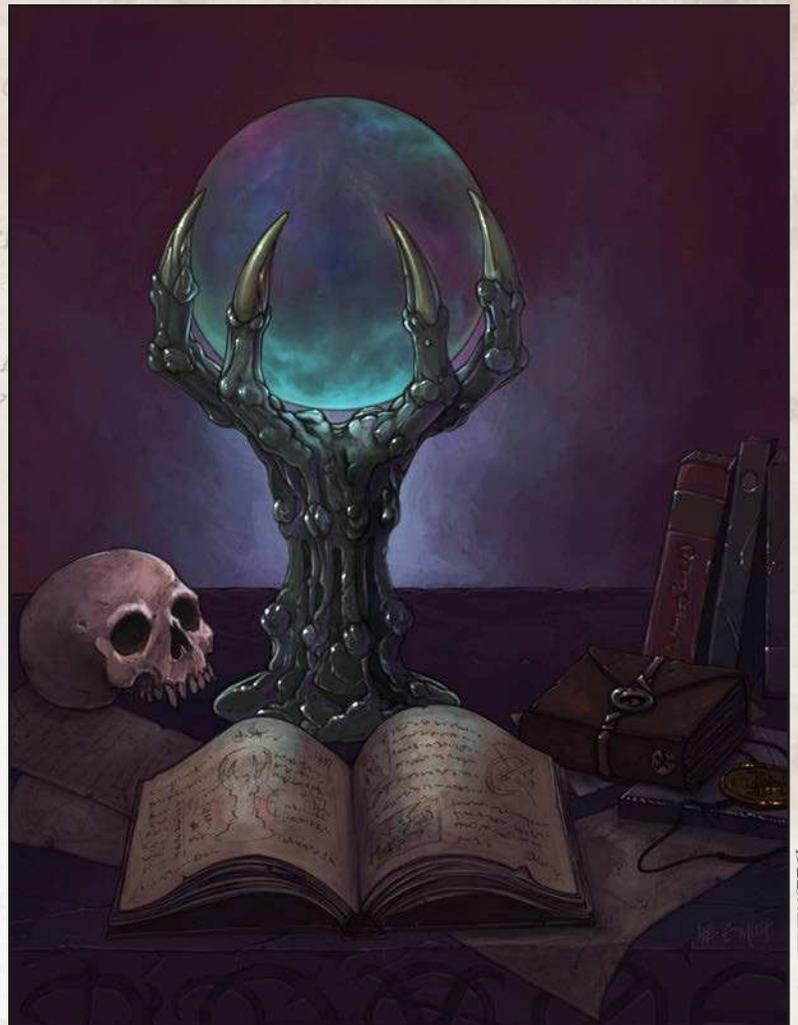
The agents of the Black Circle created a poison to deaden the senses of their enemies, all in the name of protecting secrecy. A dose of Black Circle poison can be purchased for 150 gp if one can find a seller.

**Black Circle Poison (Injury).** A creature subjected to this poison must make a DC 16 Constitution save or become unable to see any creature not within 5 feet of the victim. The creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns to end the effect.

### THE BLACK MILK

Cultivated from rare flowers that grow in the heart of the swamps and jungles of Thule, the black milk is a dream-inducing narcotic used in great quantities by the elves of Imystrahl to escape from the worries of the world. It is also employed by the thieves' guilds of Quodeth in criminal activities and in drug dens for the hedonistic rich. A dose of the black milk has a base cost of 200 gp.

**Black Milk (Ingested).** A creature that ingests the black milk must succeed a DC 15 Constitution save or become poisoned for  $1d6 \times 10$  minutes, and while poisoned the creature also reduces his Wisdom and Intelligence scores by 4. If the creature is already under the effects of one dose of black milk when the save is failed, then it also becomes incapacitated for the duration.



### THULEAN DRAGON VENOM

The deadliness of this poison is rivalled only by its scarcity, as few live to tell of an encounter with a Thulean dragon, let alone manage to extract its venom. A dangerous proposition, but doses of Thulean dragon venom can fetch up to 2,000 gp.

**Thulean Dragon Venom (Injury).** A creature subjected to this poison must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, becoming poisoned and taking 6d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half damage and not poisoned on a successful save. The effect is repeated once every round at the end of the creature's turn until it makes a successful save.

### TO BE, OR NOT TO BE, MAGIC

While there is quite a bit of ancient and dark magic hidden around Thule, the sword-and-sorcery genre is typically low magic in nature. When appropriate, GMs and players can describe "magic items" as mundane in nature. The *spiderpot* is a great example of an item that could be described as non-magical; all it takes is some Phoori tribesman to spend a couple of days collecting spiders and putting them all into a clay jar.

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