



EBERRON

FAITHS OF EBERRON™



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Eberron holds as many faiths as it does secrets. In either case, exploration and study will reveal all in time . . .

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a natural outgrowth of the inquisitive mind. Long before they quested for great empires or built shining cities, intelligent beings asked about the origins of existence and their place in the world. The gods, in a sense, are born from these most basic questions—or the questions arose because of the gods.

This book discusses the major religious movements in Khorvaire, as well as some of the lesser but influential sects. It is largely drawn from a living document kept in the Department of Ecclesiastical Studies at the University of Wynarn in Fairhaven, Aundair. Many of the lengthier commentaries are the work of the esteemed provost Camarind Alst, who remained a vigorous scholar of faith until his death in the year 997 YK at the age of eighty-four. Shorter essays have been added over the years by students and independent researchers. Such notes vary widely in quality and reliability; the reader is forewarned not to draw conclusions hastily.

Faiths of Eberron also includes a number of adventure sites and sample NPCs that Dungeon Masters can use as a resource for encounters and adventures of all kinds.

DIVINE MAGIC IN EBERRON

The gods of Eberron do not actively involve themselves in the world as gods of other settings do. They are distant—if they exist at all. A *commune* spell contacts outsiders such as angels, not the gods themselves. Clerics gain their spells from their own faith, not from divine intervention.

But the people of Eberron know what is true as far as their faith is concerned. Never mind that one truth might completely contradict another. The gods' presence in the world is real, although seen in different ways. This book presents religious information through the eyes of believers, often stating as fact events that more properly belong in myth or legend.

Chapter One: The Sovereign Host provides an overview of the dominant religion in the civilized portions of Khorvaire.

Chapter Two: The Dark Six discusses the secret, darker worship of the exiled pantheon. In addition to describing the nature of worship and the faith's followers, this chapter studies some of the misconceptions about the "evil" Six.

Chapter Three: The Silver Flame examines Khorvaire's newest faith and its worshipers. Popular opinion sees the Silver Flame as a religion of pompous proselytizers, overzealous crusaders, and corrupt

priests. In truth, most worshipers are decent, faithful folk, just like their neighbors who follow the Host (or even the Six).

Chapter Four: The Blood of Vol delves into the mysteries of this cult, misunderstood not only by outsiders but often by its own faithful.

Chapter Five: Druid Sects offers more details on the nature worship practiced in the Eldeen Reaches and other parts of Khorvaire.

Chapter Six: Other Cults deals with the larger "non-mainstream" religions of Eberron, including the faith of the Aereni, the warforged, and the various deluded Cults of the Dragon Below. This chapter also notes variants within these minority religions.

Chapter Seven: The Trappings of Faith offers rules options for religious characters, both PCs and antagonists. New feats, spells, psionic powers, and magic items enhance the experience of religion in Eberron.

PORTFOLIOS

The descriptions of deities in this book include mention of each deity's portfolio, a concept that was introduced in the *Deities and Demigods* supplement.

A deity's portfolio encompasses certain aspects of existence over which the deity has dominion, power, and control. Deities are intimately involved in their portfolios, and they are often strongest in power when acting within the bounds of their portfolios.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Faiths of Eberron makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook* (PH), *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG), and *Monster Manual* (MM), as well as the *EBERRON Campaign Setting* (ECS). In addition, it contains references to creature descriptions and other material from several supplements. Although possession of any or all of these supplements will enhance your enjoyment of *Faiths of Eberron*, they are not strictly necessary.

NOTATION

At various points in this text, spells, feats, abilities, and other game mechanics are mentioned. When a game term appears in one of the three core rulebooks, no special notice is given. If the term appears in the *EBERRON Campaign Setting*, it is noted with an asterisk (*). If the feature is contained in this book, it is marked with a dagger (†). Domains and spells that appear in *Spell Compendium* are marked with a double dagger (‡).



As is the world, so are the gods.
As are the gods, so is the world."
A world shaped by civilization . . .



PARRILLO

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOVEREIGN HOST

Arguably the greatest of Eberron's major religions, the Sovereign Host pantheon claims the hearts and minds of an enormous proportion of Khorvaire's population, and even in the face of newer faiths, it continues to grow. The Sovereign Host does not boast the greatest military force, nor does it champion some driving goal to attract those seeking purpose. The Sovereign Host simply grows as it has always grown: through its innate bonds to the world itself, and a near infinite capacity to adapt.

DOCTRINE

The Sovereign Host encompasses nine gods—or fifteen, depending on one's point of view—who hold sway over every aspect of mortal life. Where the Silver Flame requires worshipers devoted to a specific principle, and the Blood of Vol demands loyalty to the blood within, the Sovereign Host simply *is*. Where mortal matters intersect the natural world, the gods are there. Where nature offers its hand to those who live off the land, either with a nurturing touch or a pounding fist, the gods are there. Worshipers need not seek out the gods of the Sovereign Host, for they are present in every aspect of life, and in every feature of Eberron.

THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY

The chief dogma espoused by the followers of the Host, or "Vassals" as they call themselves, has been named the Doctrine of Universal Sovereignty.

As is the world, so are the gods. As are the gods, so is the world.

Essentially, this means that nothing exists in this world outside the attention of the gods. While the gods are divine beings unto themselves, they are also a part of a larger reality. They are both independent and part of a greater whole, separate yet joined, in a way few mortal minds can fully comprehend. They do not simply oversee the aspects of reality over which they hold dominion; they are part of them, omnipresent. A blacksmith praying for Onatar's blessing on an undertaking is not seeking the attention of the god of the forge. The god is already there, present in every act of manual creation, every spark of the flame, every ring of the hammer. Rather, the smith prays to show faith, honoring and acknowledging the god's presence, hoping that Onatar will bestow his favor upon the smith's work and aid him in turning out a weapon or tool of exceptional quality.

As with Onatar and the smith, so too with the other deities and their own spheres of influence. Dol Dorn is

active in every battle; Arawai's voice is heard in the rustle of every stalk of wheat. This is what the Vassals mean by the Doctrine of Universal Sovereignty: The gods do not merely watch reality; they are present in every part of it.

The Doctrine of Universal Sovereignty illustrates perfectly the nature of gods in the world of Eberron. They do not walk the world or speak directly with their faithful. Aid or knowledge is given by an angel or some other outsider who represents the power of the divine. (And even these outsiders are themselves guided by nothing more than faith; an angel speaking for Aureon has no more spoken with her than the priest herself has.) The very power of faith causes cleric magic to manifest. Most clerics maintain that if the gods were not real, no amount of faith could change the world, but this is a matter of belief and theology, not verifiable fact. When asked by skeptics why the gods, if they truly exist, do not take a more direct hand in the affairs of Eberron, most Vassals reply that they do indeed. Every plant that grows, every ruler that rises to power, every sword raised in battle, every beast in the herd, every healer's touch—these are all signs of the gods working their will on the world, through the tools of the world itself.

It is possible to misinterpret the belief that gods and world are one as leaning more toward druidic religion than clerical. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Worship of the Host has grown alongside civilization, and the two are inextricably linked. Even a cursory examination of the gods' portfolios reveals a marked leaning toward elements of civilized life, rather than more primitive or savage aspects. Law, the hearth, artifice, honor: These are mortal constructs, not intrinsic elements of the natural world. Only Arawai and Balinor claim portfolios of a more natural bent, and even these—agriculture for one, beasts and the hunt for the other—are viewed through the lens of civilization. To Vassals, this indicates no disregard for nature but simply an acknowledgment that civilization is the intended state of the mortal races, and the inescapable way of the future. For most worshipers, civilization represents the extent of their world; it is hardly unreasonable that their gods should follow suit. Indeed, it is a measure of the Host's civilizing bias that the banished bear a contrary aspect. Most of the Dark Six represent forces of nature or "primitive thought," rather than concepts intrinsically tied to civilization.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE HOST

The bedrock notion of the gods as both separate from the world, and yet a part of it, leads to the second of the Host's

primary doctrines. Called the Doctrine of the Divine Host, it states:

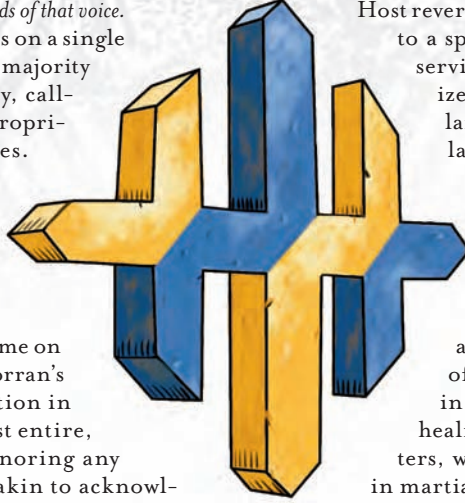
The Sovereign Host is one name, and speaks with one voice. The gods are the letters of that name, and the sounds of that voice.

Only a minority of Vassals focus on a single member of the Sovereign Host. The majority worship the pantheon in its entirety, calling upon whatever deity is most appropriate to their current circumstances. A Vassal might offer up paeans, or even burnt valuables, to Kol Korran when undertaking a mercantile endeavor. That same Vassal might, the very next day, participate in a consecration ceremony to Boldrei, to bless the new home on whose purchase he had asked Kol Korran's aid. The faithful see no contradiction in this; they revere the Sovereign Host entire, placing none above the others. Ignoring any one of the gods would be foolish, akin to acknowledging the existence of trees and clouds but not mountains.

Although primary, the Doctrine of the Divine Host is not absolute. That most Vassals worship the entire pantheon does not mean that they revere all the gods equally. Many of the faithful choose a patron or two to whom they feel a special bond. The aforementioned blacksmith reveres Dol Arrah and Kol Korran, but he likely has a special place in his heart for Onatar. This has little bearing on his everyday religious practices, except that he saves

the choicest sacrifices, and utters the longest and most heartfelt prayers, to his patron.

Similarly, while the priests of the Sovereign Host revere all the deities, many devote themselves to a specific deity. Such priests can perform services to any in the pantheon but specialize in the rites and duties of their particular patrons. This is especially common in large communities. A metropolis might have a temple dedicated to Boldrei, serving as a shelter for the homeless or a focal point for community activities, and another devoted to Dol Dorn, where Vassals receive combat training. These differences are reflected in the skills and domains of individual priests. A cleric serving in the former temple would be skilled in healing and knowledgeable about local matters, while one in the latter would be versed in martial skills.



The Celestial Crown, or the Octogram, has a variety of symbolic meanings

THE SCHISM

Everyone familiar with the scriptures of the Sovereign Host knows that they once formed a single pantheon with the Dark Six. The Host eventually banished the Six for their evil ways and constant schemes against the other gods. This sundering of the Host is called the Schism, the Divine Fall, or the Celestial Exile. Some theorists hold that the rape of Arawai by the Devourer triggered the Schism, but other legends suggest that this event took place long after the split.

The Doctrine In-Depth

It is perhaps not surprising that the so-called Doctrine of Universal Sovereignty is not truly all that universal. Oh, the Vassals indisputably believe that their gods are a part of every aspect of the world, and that nothing happens without their involvement. It's simply that the Vassals employ a rather flexible definition of what both 'world' and 'involvement' actually mean.

The beloved gods of the Host cannot be held responsible for horrors such as the daelkyr and the quori, for they are of other worlds, not born of Eberron.

Were this the extent of the Vassals' exceptions to the Doctrine, it might be reasonable enough. Many of them, however, extend this logic to all manner of things. Some maintain that any action taken by a follower of another deity is outside the purview of the Host, for these other gods do not acknowledge their place in the proper scheme of things. Some go farther still, claiming that those who refuse to acknowledge the Host have placed themselves 'outside their place in the proper scheme of things,' and thus outside the protection—and influence—of the gods. A very select few even hold that when the Sovereign Host expelled the Dark Six from their ranks, they removed those gods from the world itself. Thus, anything that falls under the dominion of the Dark Six is outside the influence of the Sovereign Host. As convenient an explanation for why the gods allow misfortune to befall their worshipers as ever has been heard!

It would be remiss of me to imply that all Vassals are this loose in their definitions. Many of them accept that not all of life will go their way, no matter how devout they are or how benevolent their gods might be. Enough of them take advantage of these liturgical loopholes, however, that one must question how heartfelt their faith can truly be.

Scholars among Vassals and various religious institutions debate what the Schism actually means. After all, the Dark Six are no less gods now than they were before their banishment. They still hold sway over many aspects of the world, and some Vassals still pray to them under certain circumstances. Clearly, the Sovereign Host lacked the means (or the desire) to strip the Six of their divinity.

The Schism, then, is more along the lines of a familial division, one branch disowning and disavowing the other. It represents the efforts of the Host to distance themselves, and their worshipers, from their darker counterparts. While scripture describes this as punishment, some scholars believe that the Host wished to remove the Dark Six's access to the population of Vassals, minimizing their ability to do further harm.

Scripture and scholars differ on what caused the conflict between the two factions of the original Host. Even the most ancient texts, whose doctrine reportedly predates the Schism, refer to the pantheon as Nine and Six and One. So even before the official split, the two groups were at least partly independent of each other. For centuries, Vassals assumed that this division was one of good against evil, which supports the currently accepted view.

Recent religious theory, however, suggests an alternative division, as well as another interpretation of the Schism itself. Of all the nine gods of the Sovereign Host, only two—Arawai and Balinor—hold dominion over natural aspects of the world. The others hold sway, partly or in whole, over elements of civilization and culture. Similarly, of the Dark Six, only two hold dominion over concepts native to civilization: The Mockery represents treachery and dishonor, while the Traveler is the lord of deception. The other four oversee aspects of the natural world or magic, completely independent of civilized practice. Some scholars and priests believe that the "Nine and Six" do not refer to the current division of the Host and the Dark Six, but rather nine gods of civilization and six gods of the wild.

Similarly, these theorists maintain, the Schism was not the result of good defeating evil, but rather the struggle between the civilized and the savage for the future of mortals. In this conflict, they maintain, Arawai and Balinor sided with the gods of civilization for the sake of mortals, while the Mockery and the Traveler sided with the gods of the wild due to their enmity with many of the civilized deities. On a symbolic level, then, the Sovereign Host will dominate the world, and hold greater power than do the Dark Six, for so long as civilization thrives. Should the mortal races ever fall back into barbarism, however—as some feared would happen during the Last War—the Dark Six might well rise to ascendancy.

POLITICAL COVER?

In the minds of some of those who disdain the Sovereign Host, the entire concept of the Schism is nothing other than a political ploy, played out on a priestly, or even divine, scale. The gods of the Dark Six weren't stripped of their divinity, these critics suggest. They were just "kicked out of the house," a symbolic gesture if ever there was one.

By an extension of this reasoning, then, the Sovereign Host holds no true grudge against the Dark Six, any more than a cliff holds a grudge against the seas or the winds that pound at it. Rather, the Schism was an attempt by Vassals to distance their patrons from the death and

Symbolism and Symbols

Nearly everyone recognizes the symbol of the Sovereign Host.

Although the Octogram is well known, its true meaning has long been the subject of scholarly debate. Why should a pantheon consisting of nine deities possess an eight-pointed representation?

A relatively recent theory states that the symbol represents the first eight deities—those who existed before the birth of Kol Korran, the only second-generation god outside the Dark Six. This, proponents maintain, is the source of Kol Korran's acquisitive nature; he seeks the recognition that he feels is rightfully his but has been denied him.

A much more obscure hypothesis, espoused by only the most eccentric theologians, is that the Octogram represents the eight "levels" of souls that make up the inhabitants of reality: angels, beasts, demons, departed souls, dragons (the original Three, not those currently in existence), fey, gods, and mortals. Completely alien races, such as the quori, do not appear on this list because they are not part of our reality.

The most widely accepted thought holds that the Octogram in fact represents the original pantheon—not only the current Sovereign Host, but the Dark Six as well. The fact that the symbol comes in two colors, with eight points, refers to sixteen actual entities. This theory is supported by ancient texts that refer to the original pantheon as "Nine and Six and One."

To what does the "One" refer? Again, many theories abound. Some maintain that it is Eberon itself. A few theorists believe this indicates the presence of some long-lost deity. Such a claim is patently ridiculous. The Dark Six were actively banished, yet they are hardly forgotten or impotent; to claim that a deity could have been "lost" from the Host is without merit.

The theory held in highest regard states that the "One" is the Sovereign Host as a whole. This is supported by the Doctrine of the Divine Host, as well as a few translations of the pantheon as "Nine and Six in One." This suggests that the pantheon can take actions without any debate or discussion among its members. It just does what needs to be done, as a single being. This would explain how the Dark Six could be "banished" from the pantheon; they simply ceased to be included in the actions of the Host itself.

Creation Myths

A question frequently heard, in my capacity as liturgical scholar, is "Where do Vassals believe the gods come from?"

This is a tricky proposition. This is a faith founded on the belief that the gods are an intrinsic part of the world. Yet the gods did not create the world; that was Eberron's doing. (Eberron might herself be the world, depending on how literally one interprets the ancient myths.) And nothing in mythology suggests that Eberron had either the desire or the capability to create gods.

How, then, did they come about?

The most widely accepted theory among scholarly circles states that the gods were indeed created by Eberron when she formed the world, but as—if you'll forgive my referring to the divine in a somewhat unflattering manner—accidental byproducts, not as a deliberate act. The creation of the world wrought numerous changes in the shape of reality itself, gathering and combining inconceivable amounts of mystical energy. This theory holds that the gods emerged from these energies alongside the world—that they are, quite literally, the children of creation.

A version of this theory pairs Eberron with Sierys. Its supporters note that Vassals of many disparate cultures have all depicted the Sovereigns as dragons. They claim that the Sovereigns were the true children of Eberron and Sierys: mighty dragons who ascended to divinity after the defeat of Khyber's vile fiends.

Another belief, widely considered heretical, states that the gods didn't exist until mortals did, that mortal belief in a higher power actually created the gods. I need not tell you what most Vassals think of people who espouse that concept.

Several theories hold that the gods actually predate the creation of the world. One such theory, relatively unpopular and slowly dying, claims that the gods hail from realities outside our own, much as do celestials or the daelkyr. The gods came through some planar rift to Eberron, possibly during the act of creation, and settled here. Few Vassals like this theory, as it implies that their patrons are, in a sense, alien.

A second pre-creation theory states that the gods existed in this reality along with the three Dragons, and that they took the world of Eberron under their care after it came into being. Some even suggest that the gods caused Eberron to create (become?) the world.

destruction caused by the Dark Six and the nastier forces of nature.

VASSAL MORALITY

Myth and holy scripture apply ethics and morality—alignment, in game terms—to each of the gods. In Eberron, faith alone powers the magic of clerics and adepts, and grants the faithful the strength to overcome the travails of everyday life. Still, many less devout or less well-educated individuals assume that the vast majority of a group of worshipers should match the general ethical leanings of their gods. After all, wouldn't a person naturally be drawn to a deity with a similar outlook on the world?

Certainly this idea holds some element of accuracy in certain faiths: The Church of the Silver Flame, for instance, boasts more than its allotment of corruption in the ranks, but the majority of its followers do indeed share the same general goals and moral leanings as the Flame is said to hold. Still, a worshiper need not follow a deity's creed—the Sovereign Host perfectly illustrates this larger truth about the nature of Eberron and the divine. Alignment has little to do with a Vassal's choice of whom to pray to; even the more focused Disciples consider many other factors when determining if their worldview matches up with their patron's. Arawai, god of agriculture, is considered to be a kind, benevolent power, yet evil people farm the land as well as good. Both the virtuous and the wicked alike seek Olladra's good fortune and blessing. Again, because the gods oversee every aspect of the world, it is their specific areas of influence that attract worshipers, rather than any nebulous and ill-defined sense of divine alignment. A Vassal would no more ignore one of the gods over matters of morality than he would ignore the rain or the crowds in the streets of a city for the same reason.

It is an open secret among Vassals across Khorvaire that a great many of them—possibly even a majority—carry this attitude to its logical conclusion. Specifically, despite the banishment of the Dark Six from the pantheon, many Vassals offer occasional prayers to the Sovereign Host's wicked brethren. These are usually prayers of supplication, not reverence or veneration, attempts to turn aside the wrath of the natural (or unnatural) forces over which these gods hold sway. Few of these Vassals would consider themselves worshipers of the Dark Six, or in any way disloyal to the Sovereign Host. They simply acknowledge that these darker aspects are part of the world, and it is wiser not to offend them.

SOULS AND THE AFTERLIFE

According to Vassal belief, just as the gods are present in all aspects of the world, they are present in all living things. The soul is a tiny fragment of the divine, the animating spark that allows life to exist. Unfortunately, as the years of mortality pass, the individual spark loses what makes it divine, preventing the soul from returning to the gods, or even remaining on Eberron indefinitely. The afterlife of Dolurrrh is not a place of punishment; it is a realm devoid of divinity, the one place where the Sovereign Host holds no sway.

Why worship, then, if it offers no alternative to the gray eternity of Dolurrrh? Simply put, Vassals believe in honoring and thanking the gods for the life they have, for an existence on Eberron—however short—that can be made

better. By honoring the Host, Vassals hope the gods will in turn grant them happiness in this life, if not the next.

Additionally, though it is rarely spoken of, many Vassals cling to a faint hope inspired by a few ancient myths and scriptures. According to this belief, mortals' worship enables the gods to spread to other realms, even as missionaries spread their word to other lands. These Vassals believe that in some distant future, the Sovereign Host might finally extend its presence to Dolurrrh, and the afterlife will change from a place of dull emptiness to a world of divine light.

SERVANTS OF THE SOVEREIGN HOST

Vassals are the most numerous worshipers in Khorvaire, and since they believe the gods are intrinsic to everyday life, a slightly larger proportion become priests than do members of other faiths. Only a very small percentage of those Vassals who call themselves priests are actually clerics, however. The majority of priests are simple men and women—possibly experts or nobles by class—who have devoted their lives to serving their religion and aiding others in leading a life of piety and reverence. Only the most devout of the devout have faith enough to work magic, and most of them do so only weakly. These are represented through the adept class. True clerics (or other divine casters, such as paladins or favored souls) embody the pinnacle of devotion, and are rare indeed.

The term priest conjures up images of a devout Vassal leading a congregation in prayer, or advising members of a community how best to deal with a crisis, or performing similar duties. This concept does not, however, reflect a universal truth. In fact, while the majority of priests of the Sovereign Host are leaders of the community or at least of the church, a substantial minority accept no such duties.

These unusual priests are often itinerant, refusing to stay long in any one place. Some seek to do their gods' bidding by spreading their worship, healing and tending to the flock, or—in the case of more adventuresome priests—hunting down and destroying enemies of the Sovereign Host and the natural world. Others seek only to be left alone to contemplate their faith, holy scripture, or the mysteries of the gods' interaction with nature. These wanderers have come to be known as evangelists, friars, and priests errant, the latter two terms borrowed from the Church of the Silver Flame. Vassal reaction to these itinerant priests depends on circumstances and the proclivities of the evangelist in question. Towns that lack much religious guidance of their own, or that are besieged by criminals, monsters, or misfortune, welcome a priest errant with joy and thanksgiving. On the other hand, those wanderers who seek to escape the duties of their station, who care little for helping others but only for meditating on their own beliefs, are viewed with scorn. A few Vassals respect their deeply held faith, but most see itinerant priests as having turned their backs on the people they are intended to guide.

An unusually high percentage (though still a minority) of wandering priests are true clerics. Whether this is a sign of divine favor, or simply a matter of survival—only clerics are capable of bringing miracles to those who

need them or of battling any great evils they might come across—is unclear. In any event, this has led some Vassals in distant communities to believe that *only* wandering priests have such powers, and thus they turn away from their local clergy.

COMING TO THE FAITH

In a religion that sees the gods' presence everywhere, is there any need to be a priest? Simply living is service to the gods, is it not? So what sort of person chooses to become a priest? The answers to that question are as varied as the priests themselves, but Vassals generally become priests of the Sovereign Host for one (or more) of five reasons.

Faith: It is self-evident, but worth mentioning nonetheless. Some Vassals feel so strongly about their religion that living an ordinary life is not sufficient. They must serve the gods as directly as possible, and they must share their faith with others. This is the most common motivation for becoming a priest of the Sovereign Host among citizens of large communities, such as cities and big villages.

Duty: Others step into the role of priest because *someone* has to do it. Perhaps they feel that people in their community are spiritually adrift or need someone to speak for them to the local government. These priests are often community leaders as much as religious ones.

Chosen of the Gods

A small movement is spreading through the priesthood, one that many experts either don't know about or dismiss. These people believe that priests who stumble into their role should not only be automatically recognized, but that they are actually superior to other priests. If someone fits the role so perfectly as to be pushed into it by the community, isn't that the best way to cement the people's faith in their priests? Isn't that a sign that the gods want that individual to speak for them?

This isn't the most popular idea among the more orthodox priesthood. Even priests who aren't power-hungry don't necessarily like sharing what they have with people who haven't "earned" their positions. Others are hesitant simply because the process has no safeguards to keep an evil but deceptive or charming individual from rising to an influential post. So far, the movement hasn't gotten very far, but it's only a matter of time before the higher-ups of the faith have to deal with it.



Sometimes the people themselves decide who is worthy of the title “priest”

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Security: Although it is less common now than it once was, a number of people still join the priesthood for financial security. Younger children, who stand to inherit little or nothing from their families, and people who seem unable to make a living at other pursuits, sometimes attempt to join the priesthood purely as a vocation.

Power: The priesthood of the Sovereign Host does not have as rigid a hierarchy as, say, the Church of the Silver Flame, but an internal power structure does exist. As the most widespread of the major religions, the Vassals have significant influence over a great many of Khorvaire’s nations, and even more over individual communities. It’s an unfortunate truth that certain priests of the Sovereign Host—just as with other religions—see not the gods’ glory burning like a beacon before them, but their own. Some honestly believe they can do more good in a position of power; others are interested only in their own advancement.

Accident: It seems odd, but many priests of the Sovereign Host obtain their position entirely by accident. The Host’s priesthood does not use intense training and ritual to identify the truly faithful as some faiths do. Becoming a priest requires little in the way of knowledge unavailable to the average layperson. Particularly in small communities, but occasionally in larger ones, certain individuals slowly gain a reputation for wisdom, or even holiness. Perhaps a person is a well-loved and devout community leader, or particularly faithful, or abnormally good at something, such as crafting or performing, so that it seems a blessing from the gods themselves. Vassals might decide that an abnormally skilled farmer has formed a bond with Arawai through his labors; a skilled

blacksmith has bonded with Onatar through her craft; or a potent warrior has somehow joined his strikes and steps with Dol Dorn. People come to such individuals for advice, or ask them to lead a prayer, and before they know it, they have stepped (or been pushed) into the role of priest. The formal priesthood of the Host doesn’t automatically recognize such “accidental” priests, but will do so after a bit of examination. Even without such official recognition, communities in which this occurs are generally distant from the larger cities and centers of political and religious power. Why should they care whether their priest is recognized by some distant bureaucrat who knows nothing about the person or the community?

BECOMING A PRIEST

It is possible to become a priest of the Sovereign Host with only a modicum of religious knowledge, and sometimes without even trying to do so. That said, anyone who seeks to rise within the priesthood, to gain the respect of his peers, or to truly able to guide and protect his congregation, requires formal training and education in ecclesiastical—and possibly mystical—matters.

A would-be priest in the earliest stages of training is called an acolyte, and she must place herself completely under the tutelage and care of a more experienced priest. This is done in one of three ways.

The preferred method is to attend a Sovereign Host seminary. Such seminaries can be found in almost every major city across Khorvaire (excluding such obvious exceptions as Flamekeep—the heart of the Silver Flame—and cities in nations that frown on the Host, such as Droaam). The Heirs of the Host Seminary in Wroat, Breland, and the Gods’ Grace Academy in Tanar Rath, Karrnath, are the most prestigious. Competition to enroll in these schools is fierce, despite the steep tuition and difficult courses. Priests who emerge from these seminaries are widely respected by most Vassals, although some faithful consider them aloof and superior. Priests who take the cloth through a seminary are far more likely to be granted their own congregation in a major city than others, and few of them spend much time traveling among border communities and small towns.

For those who cannot reach (or afford) a seminary, apprenticeship in an active temple is the next best thing. Although the Sovereign Host does not boast grand cathedrals on the scale of those built by the Silver Flame, or winding catacombs such as those in Aerenal, many of its temples and shrines are large and elaborate. Priests appoint acolytes to perform duties such as maintaining the altars, arranging appointments, and doing research. The best ensure that their acolytes gain substantial liturgical knowledge, as well as experience in conducting ceremonies; the worst treat their acolytes as bonded servants. An acolyte who has served in such a capacity for several years, who can prove knowledge of the liturgy, and who obtains a positive recommendation is ready to lead a congregation.

The final option, and the one given least credence by the more tradition-bound members of the priesthood, is to become an apprentice to a priest outside of a temple environment. The mentor might be a village preacher, a wandering evangelist, or some other priest who does not have a congregation of his own. Such priests are fully capable of teaching the basics of faith and scripture, but the acolyte does not gain experience in managing a

temple or a regular congregation. Furthermore, itinerant priests are held in suspicion by certain other members of the clergy, who assume—accurately or not—that they must be deficient in some way not to merit their own temples. Thus, acolytes who receive such outside training warrant close scrutiny if they ever attempt to settle in a Host-dominated area, and are often heavily tested, or even required to undergo additional training, before they are permitted to lead their own congregations.

The more organized among the priesthood subject candidates to various tests to determine their capabilities. These are tests in the truest sense of the word: written and oral questions that determine the individual's knowledge and ability. The trials includes intense questioning on religious doctrine and history, as well as dealing with social and moral crises. The testing can take weeks, with many days devoted to hypothetical scenarios that adjudge reaction to a given danger or disaster. This constitutes the final period of seminary training, so all priests trained in those establishments must pass these tests. Individually trained priests, however, might take office without ever being exposed to them.

HIERARCHY

The priesthood of the Sovereign Host does not have a single leader or group of leaders. It has no Voice of the Flame or Diet of Cardinals, as does the Silver Flame; it has no individual higher beings at its head, as do the Blood of Vol or the Radiant Cults. Instead, the priesthood is guided by a number of separate liturgical councils.

The precise means by which each council chooses its membership varies from region to region. In some,

priests can petition for entry, and if a seat is available and a majority of the standing membership approves, they are accepted. Elsewhere, a member in good standing must nominate an individual for inclusion. In other places, a priest must meet certain requirements—number of years of service, accomplishment of certain tasks, or passing much more stringent tests than those given to graduating seminary students—before being considered.

Whatever the case, each of these councils represents the greatest and most faithful priests in a given area. The regions overseen by the councils vary in size: the Host of Khorvaire oversees Passage and a large portion of Aundair; the Devout of the Celestial Crown manages only a large portion of the city of Sharn.

Councils wield substantial political and social power, which they use to enforce decisions and edicts that might otherwise go unheeded. They can threaten delinquent priests with ostracism, removal of their congregation, loss of status, and the like. On the other hand, they offer mediation of disputes, spiritual and even financial aid, further training and education, hand-picked acolytes, and political connections to secular government. This matters little in border towns, but in the major cities of Khorvaire, a priest of the Sovereign Host benefits greatly from maintaining good standing with the local council.

The kingdoms of Aundair, Breland, Karrnath, and Thrane boast multiple councils dedicated to the Sovereign Host. (Thrane, however, has only a few, since the nation is largely devoted to the Silver Flame.) Vassals dwell in other nations, of course, and some kingdoms worship combined pantheons comprising members of both the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six. These areas

Good Enough for the Backwoods

Those who worship the Sovereign Host do not form a monolithic entity in the way the faithful of the Church of the Silver Flame do. The Host priesthood includes large and politically powerful organizations, such as the Vassal Assembly or the Host of Khorvaire, but it does not operate exclusively under their mandate. Thus, pronouncements by the various ecclesiastic councils are considered strong suggestions rather than actual edicts. Such dictates are in force only so far as the more powerful priests and factions have the ability to enforce them.

The Host's largest organizations ensure that the acolyte of a wandering priest is not permitted to take up management of a temple in Sharn or Passage, Aundair. These are important congregations, where tradition and religious law demand a fully trained priest. That small border town over there, though? Where the same building serves triple duty as town hall, a shrine to the Sovereign Host, and hospital? The church hierarchy graciously allows any local priest to shepherd the congregation, regardless of training or experience.

This is hypocrisy of the worst order, of course. The power of the assemblies is social and political. It keeps the citizens of the more important cities happy, and shows that the priesthood values them highly. It also ensures that the leaders of such congregations hold attitudes and religious interpretations that mirror the leanings of the priesthood's current leaders.

It would be poor scholarship on my part to claim that this attitude is common to all members of the priesthood's governing bodies. Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude is shaped heavily by the priesthood's desire to keep itself politically powerful.

are not considered part of the church proper, however, and the liturgical councils have little contact, and no clout, with them. In the wake of the Last War, the surviving priests of the councils of Cyre have largely been assimilated into the hierarchies of neighboring realms, though a few have formed independent sects—often following unorthodox beliefs.

Any priest in good standing with the local council can attend a conclave and be heard; in this sense, a great many priests might be considered “members.” By a more strict interpretation, however, most councils average one sitting member for every twenty or thirty priests in their region. These councilors set policy, determine the content of lessons and tests at seminary, debate theology, and hand down new interpretations of religious text. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, they meet with their counterparts from other councils in a Grand Conclave once every ten years. These gatherings are often filled with heated liturgical debate as the members set the general course for the priesthood, and overall interpretations of holy texts, for the next decade.

Beyond these general distinctions—councilor, general member, or priest with little involvement in the council—the priesthood of the Sovereign Host acknowledges no innate difference in status. A priest is a priest, and no one holds authority over any other, unless in charge of a specific temple, seminary, or other establishment of the church. In this case, the governing individual is granted the honorary title of high priest, to whom the others of that temple must answer. This power is not absolute, however, and high priests who abuse their authority, or give underlings inappropriate orders, might have to answer to the local council.

Otherwise, the priesthood is like any other gathering. Its members establish a pecking order, even if informal. Graduates of seminary generally garner greater respect than those who learned their craft in temples, who in turn have higher status than students of itinerant priests. The word of an elder priest usually carries more weight than that of a younger, and priests from larger cities command more respect than those from smaller towns. None of this is official, and in fact it is discouraged by many councilors; nevertheless, such divisions continue to exist across much of Khorvaire.

DUTIES OF THE CLERGY

For the most part, priests are beholden only to the Vassals they shepherd, rather than to the church itself. (Obviously, members of the various councils are an exception to this rule.) The general attitude is that a priest has fulfilled the obligations of office by properly leading a congregation in prayer and ceremony, competently handling the problems of parishioners, and engaging in the expected rites and offerings. Specifics vary from community to community, but priests of the Sovereign Host generally perform a set list of duties.

Life Event Rituals: These include naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. Such rituals also encompass more faith-specific events, such as commemorating a Vassal’s devotion to a single goal or career (this can be anything from taking the cloth to graduating from apprenticeship and opening a shop).

Holy Day Rites: Worship of the Sovereign Host includes a number of specific holidays and regular rituals, all of which priests are expected to lead. These are listed in *The Calendar* on page 21.

Prayer Services: Every day of the week is devoted to at least one aspect of the Sovereign Host, and temples offer services every morning and evening for those who wish to attend.

Counseling the Faithful: Many Vassals turn to their priests in times of need or trouble, and those priests are expected to offer comfort and advice to the best of their ability. This is not limited to religious advice, though that is certainly the area in which they excel. Priests must be prepared to offer aid on such mundane issues as faltering relationships, financial matters, and anything else that might come up in day-to-day living.

Charitable Works and Community Improvement: As the gods work to aid the worthy among their followers, so too must their priests strive to improve the quality of life for their congregation, and to a lesser extent, all people in their community. This includes offering alms and food to the poor, helping maintain the cleanliness and safety of the neighborhood, and assisting with repairs to damage caused by disasters such as fire, flood, and invasion. Some priests pay only lip service to this duty, placing a shallow poor box in a temple or perhaps tossing a copper coin to a beggar now and then. Others

CLERICS AND PRIESTS

No formal distinction of rank exists between clerics, adepts, and priests of the Host. They might have different duties—a cleric is much more likely to pursue the church’s enemies or perform exorcisms—but all are equal in the hierarchy of the priesthood. This doesn’t suit some Vassals, however. Many believe that the ability to work miracles is a clear indication of divine favor, or at least of deeper faith. Surely those to whom the gods have granted powers should lead? Even more contentious are people who develop divine magics spontaneously and without training (such as the so-called favored souls) and those who gain reverence in extraordinary circumstances—the rare “saints.” A perfect example is

Saint Daca of Sharn, a gnome who has done little but sit atop a pillar and discuss matters of theology with passersby for over a century. She has advised so many Vassals and priests that, should she choose to step down from her pillar, she could take her pick of positions in the local clergy.

No clear distinction exists between people who feel that clerics should dominate the priesthood and people who don’t. Many clerics themselves argue that they should not be treated any differently, while a great many mundane priests and Vassals argue that they should. In fact, the numbers of clerics, adepts, priests, and Vassals on both sides of the issue are roughly equal.

throw themselves into the work with the same devotion they show other religious obligations, sharing their own income, offering the temple itself as shelter, or even living in poverty so they might give all to others.

Spreading the Word: The priesthood has rarely spread worship of the Sovereign Host through violence, but Vassals do proselytize. Because they believe their gods are present in every aspect of the world, they use almost any occasion—from a beautiful sunrise to a laughing child to a flock of birds—to enumerate the glories of the Sovereign Host. In fact, this has become something of a joke among non-Vassals of the western kingdoms. “Better to face the swords of an Emerald Claw soldier,” they say, “than the exhortations of a Vassal. At least you won’t get thrown in the stocks for stabbing the soldier.”

For the most part, this is an unfair stereotype. Many priests of the Host are happy to speak of the scriptures, to point out the wonder of the gods in every detail of the natural world, but only if invited. Others, however, do fulfill the cliché. They expound and pontificate at length, long past the point at which their audience has ceased to care (and have begun to cast their gods-granted eyes across the gods-blessed ground in search of a gods-sculpted heavy rock or other blunt instrument).

The wisest and most devout priests use opportunities created by their other duties to engage in this one. A pauper who receives her first meal of the week from the temple of Arawai is more likely to listen to what her priests have to say than is some fellow walking the street, minding his own business. When a priest rolls up his sleeves and works alongside the townsfolk to extinguish a blazing house, the citizenry is more kindly disposed to his sermons than if he simply berates them from the pulpit.

Protecting the Faithful: Priests are expected to stand between their parishioners and harm. True clerics can do this most effectively, but even nonspellcasters should be willing to endanger themselves to protect others. This intervention might be physical (such as stepping in front of a criminal or invading soldier) or spiritual (such as exorcising spirits, demons, or quori). Of all their duties, this last is most frequently disregarded.

Finally, though not a strict duty, priests of the Sovereign Host are expected to dress appropriately and recognizably. This renders them more readily available to their communities. Unlike some other faiths, the Sovereign Host does not have a specific cleric uniform. Rather, priests are required to dress in clean and formal attire, and to prominently display the Octogram. The Host’s symbol traditionally takes the form of a medallion or amulet worn on a chain around the neck, but could just as easily be a symbol on a tabard or a large bracelet. In order to tell the difference between priests and other Vassals who wish to display their faith, custom dictates that priests and temples display the Celestial Crown in its traditional orientation—single bar horizontal, with three smaller bars vertical—while other Vassals wear it with the single bar vertical, and the three intersecting bars horizontal.

When actually conducting rites or leading ceremonies, many priests don a robe, cloak, or shawl of office. These cloaks are traditionally gold with dark blue lining, or the reverse. A common practice in larger cities, this is rarely seen in small towns where the priests are much



Priests of the Sovereign Host have few duties as important as protecting the faithful

Escaping the Past

Notice the discussion of ecclesiastical punishment fails to address the situation of malfeasance by a high priest. Imagine the position of one who wishes to bring such a powerful personage to justice. Imagine the council of "peers" willing to sit in judgment of that person. Finally, imagine the faithful brave enough to carry out any punishment dictated. Faith might inspire some or all of those to persevere, but that's truly a rare event.

Even when it is practical, this system of defrocking is only truly effective at the local level. What of those priests who move to a new city or even nation, who find some way to remove the mark of shame upon them? What if they realize they are about to be charged, and flee town beforehand? The liturgical councils do not speak to each other frequently, and even when they do, they have far larger matters than exchanging "wanted" posters. Even if a council has the time to do so, how does it locate a lawbreaker in its territory—especially one hiding out in a small town with little church presence? Clerics might employ divinations to find truly heinous lawbreakers, but for the most part, the notion of an ex-priest going fugitive is met with a simple "Good riddance."

Dozens of stories exist of priests defrocked in one community who have gone on to preach in another, successfully hiding their past. In some tales, the priest resumes whatever criminal ways landed him in trouble the first time. In others, he uses his second chance to atone for his sins, and is well loved and revered until the day he dies. Some defrocked priests are eventually discovered and expelled from their new posts. Others are so loved by their people that the priesthood cannot get rid of them. Many are never discovered at all.

I also know of a few ex-priests of the Host who have gone on to become leaders in other faiths. This is an exceptionally rare occurrence, but simply off the top of my head, I can name two priests of the Dark Six, one of the Silver Flame, and one servant of Vol who were all former priests of the Sovereign Host.

less able to afford such an item (and everyone knows who they are, anyway).

FALLEN PRIESTS

Due to the lack of a single controlling hierarchy, a priest must commit a severe infraction before others take formal steps against him. The four principal causes of expulsion from the priesthood are as follows.

Major Violation of Religious Precepts or Failure to Perform One's Duties: Committing one of these violations even a single time might be grounds for defrocking.

- Offering devotion to powers the Sovereign Host considers evil (such as the Dragon Below).
- Extorting money or favors from worshipers in exchange for aiding them.
- Deliberately misleading worshipers in proper practices or the meaning of scripture.
- Using ecclesiastical position to influence policies of the secular government.

Repeated Minor Violations of Religious Precepts or Failures to Perform One's Duties: Committing one of these likely draws only a reprimand, assuming the local council hears of it at all. Repeated violation, however, could result in expulsion. Minor violations include the following.

- Refusing to perform duties (such as failing to give to charity or lead appropriate rites).
- Disrespecting fellow priests.
- Taking unfair advantage of the services of acolytes.
- Inappropriate displays or mockery of Sovereign Host holy symbols.

Major Civil Crimes: Serious crimes against the state or the citizenry might result in expulsion. These include murder, treason, rape, grand thefts, and the like.

Repeated Minor Civil Crimes: Minor offenses against civil authority are actions such as fraud, petty theft, inappropriate speech (in nations where that's a crime), and so on. In most cases, committing an act of this sort once won't get a priest defrocked, but repeated violations will. What separates a minor crime from a major one often has less to do with the law, and more to do with how important the victim of the crime is in local circles.

Procedures for defrocking a priest are simple enough on the surface, but surprisingly difficult to carry out. First, someone must bring a complaint to the liturgical council, or if the priest is part of a local hierarchy (such as the staff at a temple), to the high priest. Such complaints usually originate with other priests, but they can come from anyone. Priests are supposed to give equal weight to complaints no matter who lodged them, but in some communities, priority is given to complaints based on their source. Priority in descending order of importance: elder priests, government officials, important Vassals, younger priests, other Vassals, anyone else.

Once someone registers a complaint, the councilors or other priests must investigate its merit. This can range from questioning those involved, to a detailed investigation that resembles police work more than religious practice. If the suspect priest is found guilty of the charges, punishment depends largely on the nature of the violation and what resources are available.

In the case of a civil crime, the priesthood simply declares publicly that the guilty member has been defrocked, and leaves it to local authorities to handle charges and punishments. If the crime is religious, however, the situation becomes more difficult. The priesthood has neither the legal right nor the ability to imprison, exile, or execute its members. The church might attempt to impose fines, or use social pressure to drive a violator from the community, but this doesn't always work. Instead, the priesthood conducts a formal and very public rite, listing the individual's crimes, stripping badges of office, and marking the offender. This mark can be a literal brand, a tattoo, or even a mystical sigil such as a *mark of justice*. (This last is most effective, but also most uncommon.) For extremely serious violations, the ceremony might also involve flogging, though this is of questionable legality and occurs only rarely. The mark, and the very public knowledge of the violator's crimes and loss of status, are usually sufficient to prevent him or her from ever again functioning as, or claiming to be, a legitimate priest of the Host.

QUESTS

Only the most devout worshipers embark on quests in the name of their deity or pantheon. For the average Vassal, quests are adventures to read about, or to listen to during sermons, not to pursue. A very select few, however—mostly itinerant clerics, paladins, and the like—do indeed wander the world, seeking out deeds to perform for the glory of the Host and the betterment of their followers.

Unlike many other faiths, worship of the Sovereign Host has no driving goal behind it, and thus no specific purpose to shape its quests. Because the Sovereign Host is part and parcel of the world, quests in its name almost always revolve around worldly circumstances. A Vassal might quest for a magic item or powerful spellcaster to control the weather, and thus end a drought afflicting a Host-devoted town. She might seek out and thwart the schemes of priests of the Dark Six. She might set about finding land and constructing a shrine to the Host in an unenlightened area. On a more subtle level, she might seek out those who have lost faith in the Host, and attempt to show them the error of their ways and return them to the fold.

rites and rituals of the Sovereign Host

Vassals perform rituals to celebrate almost every aspect of life. From life and community events, such as weddings and coronations, to natural occurrences, such as changing seasons or the harvest, every feature of the world contains an element of the divine and is worthy of reverence.

Obviously, not all these ceremonies are long or complex—nobody would have time for anything else. Furthermore, Vassals do not practice all or even most of these rituals; even the most pious feel no obligation to observe all of them every day. For the most part, Host rituals are options, available for those who wish to give thanks for a particular event. Only the most holy festivals are sacred enough that Vassals frown on those who do not

participate, and even then, their disapproval is as much social as it is spiritual.

PRAYERS

The most minor form of ritual, prayer is a means to show appreciation for something important, wondrous, or beautiful. Specific instances of good fortune, successful endeavors, and similar benefits demand more appropriate acknowledgement, through minor rites. Prayers are offered in gratitude for agreeable weather, a beautiful vista, a pleasant visit with friends, and similar positive but mundane experiences. They also offer reverence and glory to the Host without focusing on any one aspect of the world. Many paeans and hymns fall into this category.

Prayers are purely verbal. Anything that involves gestures, accoutrements, or sacrifices is a minor rite. Host tradition states that prayers should be uttered in a normal tone of voice, or in song; whispering or mumbling is disrespectful. Most prayers, even those intended to thank a specific deity, begin by honoring the pantheon as a whole. Common openings include "Oh, generous Host, we thank you . . ." or "Sovereigns of Eberron, Kings and Queens of life, receive the gratitude of your humblest servants."

Only after addressing the pantheon as a whole does the Vassal go on to name a specific deity. For instance, a prayer regarding the beauty of the sunset might be addressed to Arawai. As usual, Disciples form an exception to this rule; they address all their worship to a chosen god.

Priests often lead their congregations in prayer, and some Vassals seek them out for aid in offering private prayers, but the participation of a priest is not necessary. According to doctrine, the Host will hear heartfelt prayers uttered by any Vassal, accompanied by a priest or not, inside a temple or out.

MINOR RITES

Minor rites are more involved than simple prayers but still not particularly complex. Although many Vassals seek out priests for aid, minor rituals do not require oversight. Rites involve prayer, but they are not limited to speaking or chanting. The most simple include hand gestures, often meant to emulate the Celestial Crown or the holy symbol of a specific deity. More elaborate minor rites use holy symbols, candles on an altar, specific garb or colors (whites, blacks, golds, and blues being the most common), and burnt sacrifices. Sacrifices to the Host almost never require blood, human or animal. Rather, the petitioner offers something of meaning to herself and to the gods she is petitioning. For instance, a Vassal seeking wealth might melt a few coins in honor of Kol Korran, in hope that the gift of valuables will earn her greater rewards in her next endeavor. A hunter might burn a freshly made arrow, offering up something valuable to both himself and Balinor. A warrior petitioning Dol Dorn's aid in battle might inflict a small wound on himself, shedding a few drops of his own blood, to show that he is unafraid of pain and injury, and that he will honor the war god with his actions.

Minor rites are appropriate when a Vassal seeks the favor of the gods. Before embarking on a journey, setting plow to field, entering battle, or making a wagon, the faithful petition the Host for success. These rites



A farmer sets aside a few stalks of wheat for sacrifice to Arawai, in hope of a greater harvest to come

also serve more general requests, such as good fortune or success in finding love, and prayers for aid, such as petitioning for the health of a sick relative.

Minor rites also give thanks for prior luck or success. In this regard they are much like prayers, but rites commemorate specific and personal events, rather than the more general aspects of life to which prayers are devoted. For instance, a Vassal might conduct a minor rite to Kol Korran after a successful day of sales, or to Olladra after surviving an assassination attempt, or to Boldrei when a beloved accepts a proposal of marriage.

Commonly, minor rites show gratitude for specific yet commonplace events such as meals. For instance, a Vassal might pour a libation of wine onto the ground before partaking of food, in thanks to the gods—Arawai and Olladra in particular—for their sustenance.

What is a Vassal to do if he needs help, but is not in a position to offer sacrifice or conduct a ritual? When menaced by thugs, or trapped in the bottom of a well, neither time nor materials for a rite exist, but such situations are when help is most needed. In these instances, it is acceptable to offer a simple prayer, but tradition demands the appropriate ritual at the first available opportunity, both to express gratitude and to make up for failing to properly frame the initial request.

The spells of clerics, adepts, and paladins are considered to be minor rites, albeit rites that only a select few individuals can properly perform. Even spells with nothing more than a verbal component are considered rites, not prayers, because of the advanced theological knowledge required to conduct them.

MAJOR RITES

The greatest ceremonies of the Sovereign Host commemorate both holy days and particular events. They involve paeans and prayers, specific designs and gestures, proper garb (or at least colors), candles, and sacrifices of the same style offered in minor rites, but on a larger scale, involving numerous people. Major rites technically require the participation of a recognized priest. Some particularly religious Vassals know enough of the liturgy to conduct the rites on their own—this happens most frequently in small communities that have no priest of their own, or in areas where worship of the Sovereign Host is discouraged or persecuted—but the larger councils often refuses to recognize the validity of such ceremonies.

Festivals are major rites that sanctify occasions and changes in the lives of the Vassals. A very brief description of the traditional ceremonies follows.

Birth: When celebrating a birth, the priest and the child's parents ceremonially march to the nearest altar (usually within a shrine or temple, but a personal altar will do). They travel through a crowd made up of friends, relatives, and other well-wishers, all of whom offer prayers and small items for sacrifice. At the altar, the priest beseeches the gods, individually and as a pantheon, to allow the child to grow up happy and healthy, and to pave for the child a path that will bring blessings on the community. The parents burn offerings as the priest prays. The ceremony as a whole, from the beginning of the march to the end of the prayers, lasts roughly an hour. Finally, the priest mixes the ashes of the burnt offerings with wine or holy water, and uses the mixture to draw the Octogram on the child's forehead or stomach.

Marriage: Marriage is one of the holiest sacraments of the Sovereign Host, though Vassals place no stigma on romantic relationships outside of marriage. Once two people are wed, however, they have committed to each other in the eyes of the world and the gods; as the Host are both nine and one, so have the couple become both two and one. Physical relations before marriage are no big deal, but adultery is an offense against the gods themselves, worthy of both scorn and ostracism from the community.

The wedding ceremony incorporates local traditions as well as religious mandates and thus varies widely from community to community. Some are somber affairs with much chanting; others are joyous, accompanied by dance and song. All Vassal weddings, however, contain certain activities. They require a priest to pray and conduct offerings for the couple's future happiness, for their health and the health of their children to come, and for the gods to make their family a beacon among Vassals. The couple must exchange tokens during these blessings. Rings are traditional, but some couples prefer bracelets, necklaces, or other items. The only requirement is that the tokens be worn or carried at all times. During the ceremony, the guests burn offerings in small ceramic vessels etched with the Celestial Crown or the symbol of a specific god on the bottom.

Death: Because Vassals do not believe in any afterlife other than eternity in Dolurrah, Sovereign Host funerals are truly somber. A funeral involves a procession, similar

to that of the birth ritual. In this instance, however, the priest walks in the fore, followed by bearers carrying the deceased on a plank or in a coffin, depending on local custom. Prayers and rites offer thanks for the life of the deceased, the lives he touched, and the good he did. They only request that the survivors' suffering be eased swiftly and that the deceased escape the clutches of the Keeper. It is traditional to bury a sacrifice with the deceased, in hope that the item will distract the greedy Keeper and allow the soul to slip past to Dolurrrh. For a peasant this might be a single copper coin, but the wealthy are buried with fine jewels or other treasures—a possible lure for grave robbers or even adventurers, seeking the treasures of an ancient king.

Coronations: Although the practice is not as common as it once was, some rulers seek the blessings of the Sovereign Host when ascending the throne. Traditionally, a high priest or other luminary of the church conducts such rites as a matter of respect, but any recognized priest can officiate.

As with weddings, the details of a coronation ceremony vary from culture to culture. However, all such rites have two features in common. First, they require sacrifices by both nobles and commoners; only the combined goodwill of the rulers and the ruled inspires the gods to look favorably upon a new liege. Second, the priest places the crown (or other symbol of office) upon the new titleholder and then briefly holds the Octogram above the crown. This indicates that while the new ruler stands above mortals, the gods stand yet higher. Custom demands that the Celestial Crown used in this ceremony be an actual icon, but a few priests have used drawings of the holy symbol when no other course was open to them.

THE CALENDAR

Worship of the Sovereign Host predates the formation of the great kingdom of Galifar. Thus, while all Vassals use the standard Galifar calendar in day-to-day life, they measure days of religious significance on the far older Sovereign Book of Seasons (or simply the Sovereign calendar).

The original Vassals divided the year into three seasons, rather than four. Yearbirth, the first season, was devoted to planting crops and growing things, and was associated by some people with the dragon Siberys. Yeargrowth, the second season, was devoted to the raising and reaping of crops and the fullest bloom of the world,

and was sometimes associated with Eberron. Finally, Yeardeath was the period when the world was cold and few things grow; its association was with Khyber. In terms of modern seasons, Yearbirth roughly corresponds to spring and a portion of summer; Yeargrowth to portions of summer and autumn; and Yeardeath to portions of autumn and winter.

Each season was divided into seven "weeks" (the original term is lost) of sixteen days each. The Sovereign calendar does not recognize the concept of months, treating the phases of the moons as separate from the timekeeping of the world itself. Each day of the week was devoted to one of the fifteen gods of the original Sovereign Host, with an additional day at the end of the week devoted to the pantheon as a single unit. In the modern era, the names of the days formerly devoted to the Dark Six now commemorate no deity at all. They have been renamed after the Five Kingdoms and Galifar itself, to show solidarity between the Sovereign Host and the sovereigns of humanity. The new year on the Sovereign calendar corresponds with the first day of the month of Therendor on the Galifar calendar.

The weeks do not carry any names of their own. To indicate a specific day, someone using the Sovereign calendar adds a numeric value to the day in question. For instance, saying "Yearbirth Thrunday the fourth" or "fourth Thrunday of Yearbirth" indicates Thrunday during the fourth week of the Yearbirth season.

Day of the Celestial Week	Associated Deity	Favored Season
Aureday	Aureon	Yeargrowth
Karrnday	(Formerly the Fury)	Yeargrowth
Kolday	Kol Korran	Yearbirth
Baliday	Balinor	Yeargrowth
Thrunday	(Formerly the Mockery)	Yeardeath
Olladay	Olladra	Yearbirth
Galday	(Formerly the Shadow)	Yeardeath
Bolday	Boldrei	Yeargrowth
Brelday	(Formerly the Keeper)	Yeardeath
Onaday	Onatar	Yearbirth
Araday	Arawai	Yearbirth
D'arrday	Dol Arrah	Yeargrowth
Aunday	(Formerly the Traveler)	Yearbirth
Dornday	Dol Dorn	Yeardeath
Cyrday	(Formerly the Devourer)	Yeardeath
Hostday	The Sovereign Host	Yearbirth

OPTIONAL RULE: THE HOLIEST OF DAYS

It requires a bit more bookkeeping, but Dungeon Masters might wish to consider adding a bit of extra meaning to these holidays. Specifically, on a god's holy day during his or her favored season, any adept, cleric, or paladin of that god gains a +1 bonus to effective caster level on spells cast. Thus, a cleric of Dol Arrah gains this bonus on all seven D'arrdays during the Yeargrowth season. Clerics of the Sovereign Host as a whole gain this bonus on the Hostdays of Yearbirth.

Of course, this requires not only keeping track of dates on the Galifar Calendar, but also on the Sovereign calendar. A simpler, albeit less accurate, method is to determine the day randomly at the start of each adventure, and keep track only for the duration of that particular tale.

This benefit applies only to followers of the gods who still make up the Sovereign Host. The Dark Six have their own holy days (see page 43).

Each day of the week is devoted to one of the gods, who is honored by a festival. All priests of the Sovereign Host perform a minor rite to that god in either the morning or the evening, taking only a few moments. Priests specifically devoted to that deity, however, must perform a longer ritual on the appropriate day, requiring roughly an hour of time. They sacrifice items of meaning to that god, just as when petitioning for a favor. On the day devoted to the entire Host, all priests must perform an hour-long rite. They often conduct this rite in the temple, leading a congregation in prayer and worship.

The days do not merely honor the god in question, but also all aspects of the world over which he or she watches. For instance, every Araday honors not only Arawai, but also farmers and growing things, while the celebration of great victories is always held on the Dornday nearest its anniversary, rather than the true anniversary itself. Particularly religious Vassals dress appropriately for the god in question on any given festival day. For instance, they might dress in green and bronze on Araday, or in shades of red with metal accoutrements and jewelry on Onaday.

Additionally, each god has a special season during which their festivals are particularly important. They require roughly twice as long to perform; that is, 2 hours for those devoted to the god whose day it is, and perhaps 10 minutes for other supplicants.

In addition, deities of the Host have specific festival days, briefly described here, which use the Galifar Calendar for common reference (*Sharn: City of Towers* 30).

Sun's Blessing (15 Therendor): This festival to Dol Arrah is a day of peace when enemies set aside their differences.

Aureon's Crown (26 Dravago): A celebration of knowledge, this holiday features lectures and sermons. It has also become the secular date for graduation and commencement ceremonies.

Brightblade (12 Nymm): Dedicated to Dol Dorn, this festival is marked by gladiatorial and athletic contests.

The Hunt (4 Barrakas): This holiday in honor of Balinor features communal hunts of dangerous creatures.

Boldrei's Feast (9 Rhaan): This feast of community is an occasion for extravagant parties, and is also the traditional day for elections.

THE SOVEREIGN HOST IN EVERYDAY LIFE

As might be expected of a faith that proclaims the gods' presence in all aspects of the world, Vassals practice their religion throughout the day, regardless of activity. The precise degree of observance depends on the devotion of the individual: The average practitioner prays many times per day, and even conducts minor rites more than once.

For instance, on a typical morning, a Vassal might offer a brief prayer on awakening, simply to give thanks for the new day. If she has an important endeavor ahead of her, if it is the holy day of one of her patron gods, or if she happens to be unusually devout, the

morning observance might take the form of a minor rite. Prayers to start each meal are common, as are prayers or minor rites upon first embarking on the day's work. Particularly devoted Vassals might perform individual rites throughout the day when beginning specific tasks, but for most, a general request for good fortune at work suffices.

Come evening, Vassals give thanks for the events of the day; even if the day has gone poorly, tradition demands that they find something positive in it, as a reminder that nothing the gods have created is entirely bad. If this is a holy day, a Vassal traditionally performs longer rites in the evening (though she might have done so earlier in the day, if circumstances warranted). At bedtime, she might undertake a final minor rite requesting a peaceful sleep and the opportunity for a new day tomorrow.

This summary makes it seem as though Vassals spend an enormous portion of each day in prayer and ritual. This is not so. Each such activity rarely takes longer than a few minutes. Only truly important festivals, such as the evening rite on a god's holy day, last for even an hour. The average prayer of thanks might involve nothing more than a few sentences, reverently uttered, and even most minor rites take no longer than the time necessary to light the appropriate flames and burn the appropriate sacrifices. While zealous Vassals might indeed engage in hours of prayer, most spend less than half an hour per day in total doing so, excepting holidays. Despite their brief duration, because the observances are spread throughout the day, they remind the faithful of their daily interactions with the divine all around them and keep the gods in their thoughts.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SOVEREIGN HOST

Because Vassals consider their faith to be a universal religion, equally applicable to all who wish to embrace it, they do not seek out a specific type of person for proselytizing or conversion. All are welcome, so long as they acknowledge the divine in the world around them and accept the Sovereign Host as the highest gods (and even the latter is somewhat flexible).

Worship of the Sovereign Host appeals most to people who live relatively standard lives. This doesn't mean commoners only—a ruler's life can be average as easily as a farmer's. It's simply that the daily tasks are different. Rather, the Sovereign Host attracts individuals whose lives do not point them in a specific direction. Those who believe, or want to believe, that the world has a fixed purpose, that someone is in control (even if they do not always understand the will or the actions of this guiding power) are particularly drawn to the Sovereign Host.

The Host holds dominion over most aspects of civilized life, so anyone who lives in such a state is likely to at least acknowledge the faith. Matters such as alignment and even profession have only minimal bearing on this worship. A farmer reveres Arawai, whether he's neutral good or chaotic evil in his heart, because she provides his crops. Even if they do not worship her specifically, everyone benefits from Arawai's grace—who doesn't eat bread or potatoes, after

all?—and so the vast majority of people offer her at least some thanks.

In sum, the Sovereign Host is the religion of choice for most people of western Khorvaire who do not have active reason to select a different religion. Longstanding tradition and the ubiquitous and accepting nature of the faith make it easy to slip into, and simple to practice.

THE SOVEREIGN HOST AND GOVERNMENT

The priesthood of the Sovereign Host makes no overt attempts to control governments, but they are not without influence. At least three of the Five Nations are Host-dominant, leaving little doubt that their leaders too worship the Sovereign Host. Thus, even if the priesthood does not try to sway a ruler's decisions, her actions are unlikely to threaten the dominance of the faith and its priests.

On a local level, influence is far more overt. Mayors, town councils, governors, barons, even dukes might well belong to a congregation of Vassals and see the high priest as an authority figure. Most nobles have a religious advisor on staff to aid them in matters of faith and history. Influential religious officials can easily manipulate their advice and information for the benefit of the priesthood—or themselves. In many small communities, religious leaders are community leaders as well. The best do not take advantage of one to advance their position in the other, but more than a few ambitious priests see the title of reeve or mayor as just another stepping stone to power.

It is rare, but in some communities the priesthood of the Sovereign Host works in opposition to the secular government. This situation occurs most often in Thrane, where a minority beholden to the Host dwell in the midst of a theocracy of the Silver Flame. Vassals are sometimes persecuted in these areas, not necessarily by violent or overt means but through more subtle techniques such as price-gouging, shoddy goods, and poor service. Here as elsewhere, the Host's priesthood does not oppose local governments directly. Instead priests encourage Vassals to support one another, to convert others, to attain positions of authority so they can improve their companions' lives, and to protest mistreatment so that the government acts to quell it (if only to save face).

In some nations, worship of the Host—or certain members of the pantheon—is actively restricted. The monsters of Droaam do not hate the Host with the same passion they reserve for the Silver Flame, but they do react with hostility to overt displays of the faith within the small human and shifter populations. Although the goblinoids of Darguun have recently been introduced to the Host, the faith is taking hold very slowly. Some communities revere Balinor, Dol Arrah, and Dol Dorn but are still suspicious of the rest; others still worship the Shadow or the Mockery exclusively. In such areas, overt worship of the Sovereign Host, or “inappropriate” members of it, might result in persecution, imprisonment, conversion by the sword, or even execution.

In areas of oppression, the priesthood conducts Host ceremonies in secret, their shrines hidden in

the wild or inside unassuming structures. They preach active resistance against the government, but through subtle techniques rather than visible uprisings that would surely be crushed. Leaders and officers who persecute Vassals might wind up short on supplies, for instance, or the victims of “accidents” such as unexplained fires. Meanwhile, the Vassals carefully feel out those in power for any sympathetic to their cause, or possible candidates for conversion.

THE SOVEREIGN HOST AND OTHER FAITHS

In terms of overall influence, the Sovereign Host has little to fear from other faiths. Even with the modern growth of the Silver Flame and the schism that ejected the Dark Six, Vassals still make up a majority of the civilized population. The faith has even spread, albeit slowly and piecemeal, to the goblins of Darguun and the rural communities of the Eldeen Reaches. It maintains dominance, not through violence or intimidation, nor through promises of rewards in this world or the next, but through a much simpler process: integration.



The Vassals integrate the practices of other faiths into their own, believing that all are simply reflections of the Sovereign Host

Repeatedly throughout history, Vassals have come to a region, observed local religious practice—perhaps honoring spirits, now-unknown gods, or ancestors—and immediately set about incorporating that worship into the local practices of the Sovereign Host. For instance, Vassals' current funerary rites were adopted thousands of years ago from a culture that worshiped its ancestors, not unlike the elves of Aerenal. The intent of the original rite was to introduce the newly deceased to the spirits of the dead, who were said to linger in crowds. Adding sacrifices of thanks made the ritual fit into preexisting Vassal practices.

By assimilating local traditions and adjusting their meaning to match the precepts of the Sovereign Host, Vassals make conversion easier. Few religions explain everything about the world. The gods' presence in all things provides a perfect opening to proselytize. An isolated tribe might believe in its own gods or spirits, while inhabitants of another valley are governed by an entirely different set of divinities. Vassals take this opportunity to explain that the Sovereign Host encompasses all and that the spirits the tribesfolk venerate are real and worthy aspects of that Host.

Even members of major religions, such as the Silver Flame, have been swayed by this argument. After all, the Silver Flame does not claim to be the world's creator, or

even as old as creation. Therefore, it cannot be the only god, even if it is the most worthy of worship. A small but notable percentage of followers of the Silver Flame, Vol, and other religions worship the Sovereign Host in addition to their main patron, seeing the latter as simply a part (albeit an important or even dominant one) of the former.

Within several generations, those who practice the rites and rituals adopted by the Vassals become Vassals themselves, having lost track of the initial differences between the faiths. It should be noted that the process of assimilation does not represent any dishonesty on the part of the Vassals. (A few less scrupulous followers of the Host have taken advantage of this process for personal or political gain, but this is the exception, not the rule.) They use this method of proselytizing and conversion in the belief that they are welcoming lost cousins, and educating them on the true nature of the divine in the world. They do not see it as denigrating an existing faith, but incorporating and recognizing a new aspect to the omnipresence of the Sovereign Host.

Specific Attitudes

Given the wide range of Vassals across the many nations, communities, and social strata, it's difficult to summarize their attitudes toward members of other religions. The attitudes presented below are simply the most common, stereotypical ideas of the average Vassal. As many disagree with these notions as share them.

The Dark Six: Vile gods, worshiped by vile people. Of course, I might utter a prayer to the Devourer now and then, but that's just to keep his wrath far from me. I most certainly don't revere him the way these villains do!

The Silver Flame: They mean well, for certain. But their rigid worldview and intolerance leave them open to corruption, and make even the best of them difficult to deal with. If they would just acknowledge that the Silver Flame is a pale reflection of Dol Arrah, they would be happier and better off.

Druid Sects: They're so close, but they fail to grasp the essence of the world. Worship of the natural world is worship of the Sovereign Host—they simply haven't yet come to that realization.

The Blood of Vol: Delusional zealots who have placed their faith in false promises of immortality and vile perversions of the natural order. Some are truly evil, most merely misled, but all should be shown the error of their ways.

Other Sects: It's astounding to me that anyone could place their faith in lesser beings, such as fallen angels or demon lords or dragons, when the gods so clearly stand above them. I am comforted only by the fact that the Sovereign Host brought most of these entities into being, so such worship still honors them, if only indirectly.

THE SOVEREIGN HOST IN THE LAST WAR

The priesthood of the Sovereign Host took no unified stance during the Last War. For the most part, Vassals and even priests fought alongside their compatriots against enemies among the Five Nations. Whether one's foes were fellow Vassals or not was meaningless; only their nationality mattered.

Part of the Family

A few Vassals go so far as to believe that every other religion in existence is simply a different view of the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six. Vol? A corruption of the Keeper. The Silver Flame? A particularly stringent and unforgiving conglomeration of Dol Arrah and Dol Dom. The druid sects? They draw their power from gods such as Arawai, Balinor, and the Devourer.

You might expect these Vassals, called Sovereigners, to be the most fervent proselytizers, eager to bring everyone into the fold of the Host, but in fact the opposite is true. According to their doctrine, the Vassals don't need to convert others, because ultimately, everyone already worships the Host. Members of other faiths find this attitude offensive in the extreme, and hold the faction up as the worst kind of Vassal arrogance. It takes real hubris to tell someone, "Your god is actually just a misconception of my god."

Hubris in a priesthood! Shocking, isn't it?

For most of the war, the liturgical councils continued to meet. They avoided issues of the war, for they knew that bringing up such matters could only cause dissension. Instead, they continued to focus on issues of the faith, interpreting scripture, determining the effect of the war on religious practice, and similar concerns. As far as the war itself was concerned, all agreed to go back and tell their congregations to avoid damaging temples or shrines to the Sovereign Host, even in the midst of enemy territory.

The effects of the Last War still linger among the followers of the Sovereign Host. Given the loss of friendly contact between nations during the war, the customs of individual communities became ever more insular. Weddings and birth rituals differ far more now from area to area than they did in the past. At present, only the most basic similarities exist. A common theme of Host services in the modern day is forgiveness and the reforging of bonds to counter national and regional hatred that still lingers.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE SOVEREIGN HOST

Temples to the Sovereign Host are traditionally made of stone, although wood suffices in poor or forested communities. They normally stand near other buildings or areas of significance, both to symbolize their importance and to make them easily accessible. Most have sloped roofs, but they rarely match the magnificent sweeps of Silver Church cathedrals.

Religious doctrine does not mandate the number of floors, but each must have nine doors or windows to the outside. (In large buildings, multiples of nine on each floor are acceptable.) At least one door or window must face in each cardinal direction.

Host temples are often adorned in shades of gold and deep blue; black is frowned on for normal use, though it can appear on specific somber occasions. The main chapel includes pews or individual chairs for congregants. The front of the room is a raised platform, with nine steps leading from the floor. The precise height of the platform, and the depth of the steps, is irrelevant. Atop this platform is an area for the priest to stand—often, but not always, behind a podium of some sort—and an altar to display holy or ceremonial items, and on which to make sacrifices. Some form of the Octogram hangs on the wall behind the priest facing the assembly.

The priesthood especially favors areas that produced Eberon dragonshards. It does not matter if the land contains any more shards; their prior presence alone creates a religious resonance with the Vassals. Because they believe the gods are present in all aspects of the world, and legend states that Eberon created (or became) the world, Vassals hold that Eberon has a closer link to the Host than the other two great Dragons. Although very few temples to the Host actually stand on sites of dragonshard discoveries, the priesthood makes every effort to erect new temples in or near such places.

Shrines honoring individual members of the Sovereign Host, rather than the pantheon as a whole, follow different rules. They are usually small structures, made of wood as often as stone. They generally lack a raised

platform, and might display the god's holy symbols. The altar is usually decorated with objects symbolizing the god's area of influence, such as grains for Arawai or tools for Onatar.

ORDERS AND MONASTERIES

The Sovereign Host does not have many knightly orders, or groups of priests who band together for a specific purpose. Those orders that do exist are based on geography and politics. Many such groups sprang up during the Last War to battle alongside their nation's military, but most have since faded away.

The only sizable exception to that rule is the Brotherhood of the Wall. This order is based primarily in Aundair, but has several fortresses in the Talenta Plains and Thrane, as well. Founded during the Last War to counter the undead armies of Karrnath, the order still holds vigil in case that nation should ever again try to field armies of the walking dead against its neighbors.

The majority of Vassal monasteries are not martial orders but traditional friaries. These are small collections of buildings, fenced off from the local communities or built atop nearby hills. The priests and friars who dwell in these places tend gardens, herd sheep, and minister to the spiritual well-being of the nearby townsfolk. They believe that more effective worship can be found by removing the distractions of the everyday world, and thus choose to dwell slightly apart from society. Most are not spellcasters, though an occasional adept or cleric might join a monastery.

A typical monastery consists of a central building that doubles as both temple and meeting hall, and a number of outbuildings. These include living quarters (usually spartan cells) and kitchen and dining rooms. The storage areas and workrooms normally include herbalist stores, carpentry, and blacksmithing, although some monasteries instead rely on the local towns for such services.

THE MONASTERY OF THE UNYIELDING SHIELD

This old monastery was once occupied by the Brotherhood of the Wall. Overrun by Karrnathi undead during the Last War, it is now home to a number of undead of both the Karrnathi and "standard" varieties.

The outer walls of the monastery served as both primary defense and living space. They are made of heavy stones, carefully mortared together. The three gates are iron; the doors between rooms and allowing egress to the courtyard are heavy wood. The walls in the northwest corner have collapsed, exposing the library that was housed within. The south gate is shattered, as well.

The courtyard contains a large vegetable garden, now old and rotting. It also features a guesthouse and the ruins of a second guesthouse, a combination smithy and tannery, stables, and the chapel itself. In the center is a fenced-off practice area, where the monks and soldiers honed their skills. Part of this fence has collapsed. Finally, two large pits open up into tunnels below. These pits are the result of undead soldiers sapping away at the foundations during the attack.

MONASTERY OF THE UNYIELDING SHIELD

UNDERGROUND LEVEL

Key

1. Armory and Lair of General Raulz
2. Tomb
3. The Great Pit
4. Home of the High Priest
5. Brood Chambers

One square = 5 feet



As a martial order, the Brotherhood of the Wall recognizes the need for retreat and regrouping. The monks constructed the Monastery of the Unyielding Shield with escape tunnels and staging areas beneath the surface. These consisted of simple chambers, accessible by spiral stairs from the chapel, the smithy, the guest house, and the northeast watchtower. The warriors of the Sovereign Host could regroup beneath the chapel, where additional weapons were stored, or retreat through the passage north, eventually surfacing some 600 feet beyond the walls.

Karrnath's spies learned of these tunnels and sent undead soldiers as sappers to attack the monastery from below. For months, the tireless undead dug until their tunnels intersected the Brotherhood's escape passages at multiple points. They collapsed the northern tunnel, ensuring no escape was possible. Their digging weakened the earth above, causing pits to open up within the monastery itself, and through these the undead attacked, slaughtering all within.

In the years since, the undead that remained have expanded the tunnels farther, forming the beginnings of what could eventually turn into a veritable warren of catacombs.

1. Armory and Lair of General Raulz. General Raulz, a Karrnathi skeleton and necromancer (cleric 9 [Blood of Vol]), abandoned the forces of Karrnath and remained behind with his soldiers, taking the monastery for his own.

2. Tomb. Raulz and his minions store the bodies of travelers whom they slay in this chamber, until he has the opportunity to animate them.

3. The Great Pit. The undead keep living prisoners here, so that Raulz can learn of current events before slaughtering them.

4. Home of the High Priest. The former high priest of the monastery has become a spectre. It lairs here, wailing in eternal torment and hatred of the living.

5. Brood Chambers. There are four areas keyed to this entry. Each contains a troop of Karrnathi skeletons and zombies (twelve to fourteen creatures, mix varies).

VARIANT SECTS

The priesthood rarely concerns itself about variant sects within the ranks of the Vassals. Given the widespread nature of the faith, and the many cultural and national differences in practice, one could say that the entire religion is little more than variant sects.

Several movements do qualify as "variants," espousing far more than interpretive differences.

Disciples: A minority of Vassals select a single deity as the focus of their faith, devoting little if any worship to the rest of the pantheon. Such people often refer to themselves as Disciples, though other Vassals use less complimentary labels. They do not disdain the other gods; they simply feel their own lives and activities fall within the purview of one deity. Other Vassals consider them misguided, but the Disciples see themselves as the most devout of all. They direct all their prayers to their patron, assuming that even if they must ask for something normally outside that god's area of influence, their faith and fealty will earn them divine favor.

Most Disciples pursue careers that focus heavily on one aspect of life, to the exclusion of almost all else. A career soldier might take Dol Dorn as her sole patron if she truly believes life is nothing but brutal combat. A young farmer who has never once left the family homestead might see no reason to revere any god but Arawai.

Disciples rarely feel comfortable worshipping at a temple devoted to the Sovereign Host in its entirety, but they might do so on holy days if no other option presents itself. They feel as though they must choose between remaining silent during much of the ceremony, and possibly offending one of the gods (or, more likely, their servants), or participating even in those portions devoted to other gods, and thus possibly offending their patron. Thus, where possible, Disciples prefer to pray and celebrate in shrines specially consecrated to individual deities. Such shrines exist across most of the nations of Khorvaire, although they are less common than more general temples. Many of these were not originally built by Disciples, but by other Vassals who wished to honor a lone god under specific circumstances. For instance, if a famine suddenly ended, local farmers might build a shrine to Arawai out of gratitude. Still, such shrines suffice for the needs of Disciples.

Most Vassals believe it foolish to worship a single member of the pantheon to the exclusion of all others. By living in the world, one must acknowledge the various aspects of that world. Vassals look with either pity or derision on Disciples, even while secretly admiring their

dedication. Some subtly persecute Disciples as corruptors of the faith, but most simply try to open their eyes to the larger truth.

Hierocrats: Some subjects believe that one deity of the Host is predominant over the others. Unlike Vassals who worship all the gods, or Disciples who select individual patrons of greater personal importance, these "hierocrats" believe that not all gods of the Sovereign Host are equal. For example, the Blades of Dol Dorn is a warrior cult that maintains that civilization grows only through conquest and battle. The group known as the Scions of the Forge consists entirely of warforged who believe in Onatar as their creator, with the other gods his servants: He created them to create the mortal races who, with Onatar's inspiration, eventually created the warforged.

The orthodox priesthood considers the hierocrat sects more dangerous than the Disciples. The latter simply ignore some of the pantheon—insulting, perhaps, but not dangerous. Hierocrats, however, have a blatantly different view and seek to spread it to others. Through dedication, personal sacrifice, and focused action, their heresy continues to grow.

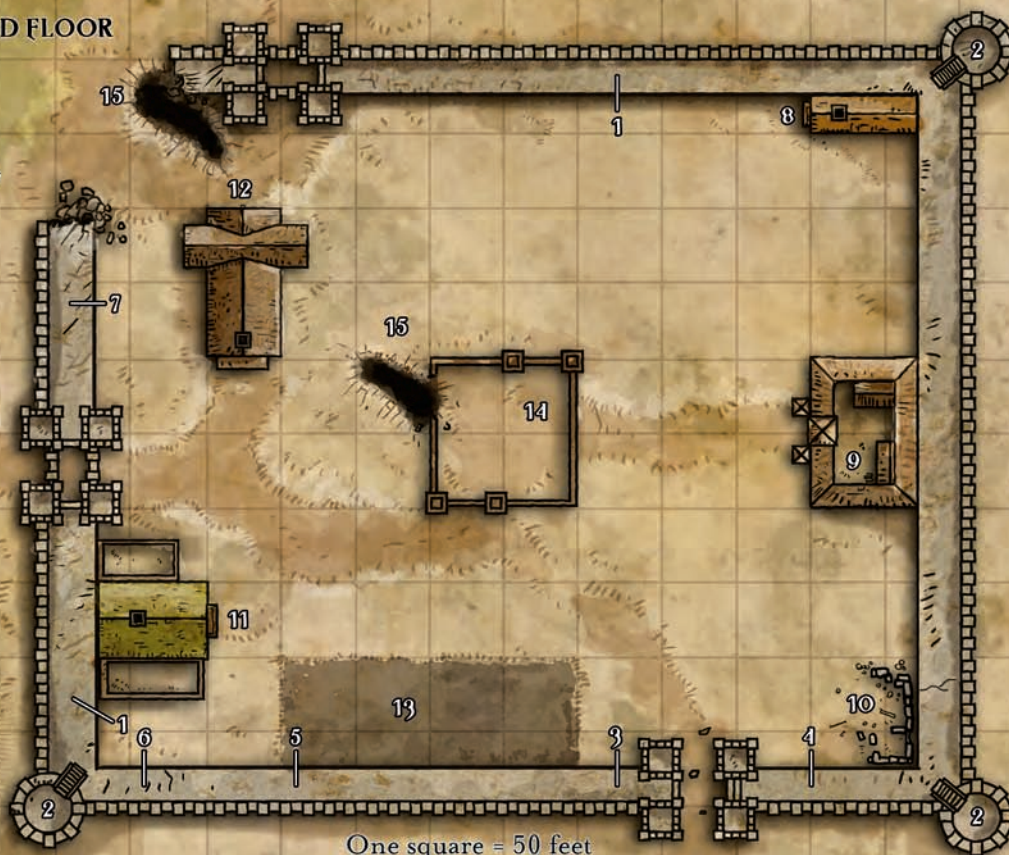
Proxy Cults: As previously discussed, Vassals believe that many people who follow nondivine beings, such as members of Radiant Cults, are worshipping proxies of the Sovereign Host. Oddly enough, a very small number of those cultists believe the same thing. Some individuals who worship fallen angels, or the great Dragons, believe that they are venerating emissaries of the Sovereign Host. They maintain

MONASTERY OF THE UNYIELDING SHIELD

GROUND FLOOR

Key

1. Inhabitants' bunks
2. Watchtower and armory
3. Kitchen
4. Bakery
5. Refectory
6. Storage
7. Library
8. Guesthouse
9. Smithy/tannery
10. Guesthouse ruins
11. Stables
12. Desecrated chapel
13. Rotted garden
14. Practice yard
15. Pit



that mortal minds can never comprehend, or rightfully honor, true divinity, so instead they worship lesser beings who speak for the gods. Most Vassals try to convince these proxy cultists of the error of their ways, but they do not view them as dangerous or heretical—simply misguided.

Lesser Pantheons: The combined gods of the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six represent nearly all facets of life and the world, civilized and wild. Certain cultures that revere different aspects of the world form “lesser pantheons” of gods chosen from both the Dark Six and the Sovereign Host. The Three is a secret society in the Rekkenmark Academy, whose members swear allegiance to Dol Arrah, Dol Dorn, and the Mockery—a difficult concept for most, but one its followers reconcile as part of the changing face of war. A sect known as the Restful Watch ties the worship of Aureon to the Keeper, claiming that the Keeper seeks only to preserve great souls for the future. One of the largest examples of these cults is located in the city of Rhukaan Draal in Darguun, where many of the goblinoids worship Balinor, Dol Arrah, Dol Dorn, the Mockery, and the Shadow, all in equal measure. Although the councils of the Five Nations are willing to overlook sects that focus purely on a combination of Sovereigns (such as the Mror predilection for Onatar, Dol Dorn, and Kol Korran above all others), to associate members of the Host with the Dark Six suggests that the two pantheons are equal and that divisions between them are purely of mortal creation. This strikes at the heart of Vassals’ belief. Even those willing to offer the occasional supplication to one of the Six consider those gods to be evil and separate from the Host, and to believe otherwise is to make an enemy of the liturgical councils of the Five Nations.

THE GODS OF THE SOVEREIGN HOST

Each of the gods of the Sovereign Host is presented below, along with information pertaining specifically to that deity (a sidebar details cleric information on the pantheon as a whole). Information on cleric training or shrines covers only those areas in which worship of an individual god differs from worship of the pantheon as a whole. In all other aspects, the material presented previously in this chapter applies to the individual gods as well.

As with all aspects of faith in Eberron, this information represents traditional understanding of scripture, not divine truth as handed down by the gods themselves. Many Vassals hold interpretations that differ slightly from those presented here. For instance, Dol Dorn is said only to support those who fight for just or good causes, but one person’s invader is another’s liberator, and both sides of a battle might boast priests and clerics of the war god.

Each god’s entry lists two separate holy symbols. The first is a symbol unique to that god, while the second is a variant of the Octogram that replaces the traditional deep blue and gold with colors associated with that deity.

ARAWAI

“The Sovereign of Life and Love,” Neutral Good

Most Vassals think of Arawai as the deity of fertility, crops, abundance, and plant-life in general. While accurate as far as it goes, this is a limited understanding of Arawai’s place in the pantheon.

More properly, she holds dominion over the natural world as viewed through the lens of civilization. A follower of the Host lost in the forest, or wandering unknown valleys, is most likely to call upon Arawai for aid.

Portfolio: Fertility, crops, abundance, plants, the wilderness, birth.

Domains: Creation†, Good, Life*, Plant, Weather*.

Priest Training: Arawai’s priests are knowledgeable about farming or natural lore, as well as religious issues. Most were farmers, woodcutters, or herbalists before becoming priests.

Quests: Arawai’s servants embark on quests to end famine, rescue those lost in the wilderness, or protect forests and farmland from ravagers.

Prayers and Rites: Sacrifices to Arawai offer grains and other consumable plants and produce. Vassals request good harvests and live, healthy

births from Arawai, as well as guidance in the wild.

Shrines: Shrines to Arawai are usually built of wood, rather than stone, and roofed with leafy branches atop a latticed framework. They are often adorned with stalks of grain or growing vines.

Favored Weapon: Morningstar.

Holy Symbol: A stalk of wheat, or the Octogram in bronze and green, representing grains and plant life.



Arawai

AUREON

“The Sovereign of Law and Lore,” Lawful Neutral

Aureon is lord of all knowledge, and the scribe of laws without which civilization could not exist. He is also the god of magic as a tool of mortals (as opposed

THE SOVEREIGN HOST

Neutral Good

The identity of the Host as a group rather than individual gods allows worshipers to treat it as a single divine entity.

Portfolio: Civilization, craft, growth, plenty, community, justice.

Domains: Any domain associated with one of the individual pantheon members.

Favored Weapon: Longsword.

to the Shadow, who represents magic in its uncontrolled, primal state). He is the patron of teachers and scholars, judges and sages, lawyers and wizards. While scripture does not place any of the gods above the others, myth has it that Aureon often directs the actions of the Host—not due to any authority he might wield, but because the others trust his judgment and ability to foresee consequences.

Portfolio: Law, knowledge, learning, logic, magic.

Domains: Force†, Knowledge, Law, Magic, Mind†, Oracle†, Spell†.

Priest Training: Aureon's priests must be educated or at least knowledgeable, capable of rational thought, and able to place the needs of the law above their own emotions. Many serve as magistrates or government officials, and a significant number have some arcane skill.

Quests: Aureon encourages his followers to seek out lost lore, to make new discoveries, and to hunt down lawbreakers and dangerous creatures of wild magic.

Prayers and Rites: Aureon's rites are formal, with specific methods of offering thanks or requesting favors. Sacrifices can be almost anything, so long as they have value to the petitioner and represent a willingness to place material acquisition below the desire for understanding. Oaths to tell the truth, such as before a magistrate, are often taken in Aureon's name.

Shrines: Shrines to Aureon are normally stone and contain many carvings that support the acquisition of knowledge, such as historical murals. All contain a library of some sort, even if the community can manage no more than a table strewn with a handful of books or parchments.

Favored Weapon: Quarterstaff.

Holy Symbol: An open tome, or the Octogram in shades of black and white, representing both ink on paper and the sharp division between knowledge and ignorance.

BALINOR

"The Sovereign of Horn and Hunt," Neutral

The lord of beasts is one of the most violent of the Sovereign Host. He is neither cruel nor bloodthirsty, but simply represents the cycle of life, the eternal hunt of predator and prey. He begrudges none the right to kill for survival, but holds great malice toward those who hunt



Aureon

for sport or trophies. He is patron of rangers, hunters, and trappers, and is constant companion to his sister, Arawai. The two of them together represent all aspects of the wild that can be tamed—to an extent, at least—by civilization.

Portfolio: Animals, the hunt.

Domains: Air, Animal, Celerity†, Earth, Retribution†.

Priest Training: Like Arawai's priests, servants of Balinor must have at least some knowledge of the wild, and many were hunters or trappers before taking the cloth.

Quests: Quests in Balinor's name involve great hunts, either to provide food for a community or to slay a creature terrorizing an area.

Prayers and Rites: Sacrifices to Balinor consist of animal flesh, which must come from a creature slain for food, fur, or tools; killing an animal only for sacrifice is an insult to the sovereign of the hunt. Tradition holds that the better the cut of meat, the more Balinor is inclined to hear the request.

Shrines: Balinor's shrines are constructed of wood, often covered in furs or greenery to better blend into the background. A temple is rarely found within a town, although it might be only a few minutes' walk away.

Favored Weapon: Battleaxe.

Holy Symbol: A silhouetted pair of antlers, or the Octogram in brown and red, representing the flesh, blood, and fur of beasts.



Balinor

BOLDREI

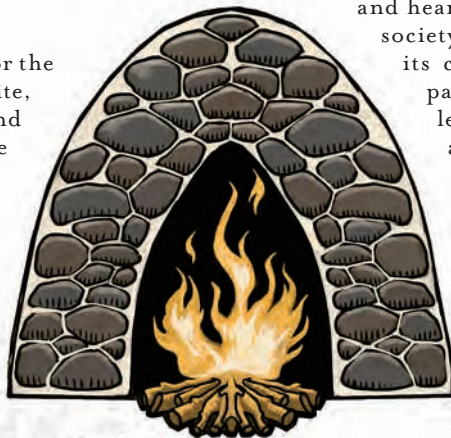
"The Sovereign of Hall and Hearth," Lawful Good

If civilization is the house of the mortal races, and Aureon's laws are the foundation, Boldrei is the walls and roof. The god of community, home, and hearth, she is everything positive about society itself: its support and protection, its comforts and customs. She is the patron of civil servants and community leaders, and the protector of villages against the savage wild. She is wife to Aureon, and the two together stand at the core of Vassal faith, for it is they who form the centerpiece of daily life.

Portfolio: Hearth, community, marriage, government.

Domains: Community*, Family†, Good, Law, Protection.

Priest Training: Boldrei's priests devote some time to serving their communities in nonreligious capacities. Some might be civil servants, others defenders of a town's borders.



Boldrei

Quests: Boldrei's followers do not often quest far from home but rather root out hazards to the community. On the rare occasions they travel into the wild, they usually do so to found or aid a new community.

Prayers and Rites: Boldrei is invoked in prayers and rites celebrating marriages, coronations, and other civil ceremonies. Sacrifices usually consist of items representing the comforts of home, such as feather-down or foods cooked over the hearth.

Shrines: Boldrei's shrines appear very homey and might even be mistaken for cottages. They are adorned and furnished for comfort, to remind worshipers that she is the patron of the home.

Favored Weapon: Spear.

Holy Symbol: A fire in a stone hearth, or the Octogram in orange and gray, representing fire and stone.

DOL ARRAH

"The Sovereign of Sun and Sacrifice," Lawful Good

Dol Arrah is the light, not only of the sun, but of the best aspects of the mortal soul. She is the god of honor, forthrightness, and self-sacrifice. Many Vassals see her as no less vital to civilization than Aureon and Boldrei, and they believe that when the mortal races accept this truth, the world will become much brighter. Dol Arrah is the patron of paladins, diplomats, all who seek justice, and warriors who fight with wisdom and honor as much as with weapons. To a lesser extent, she is also the patron of explorers, who bring the light of knowledge to dark places, and to all who revere the sun. She aids Arawai by lighting her way during the growing season.

Portfolio: Honor, sacrifice, light, the sun, diplomacy.

Domains: Glory†, Good, Law, Sun, War.

Priest Training: Dol Arrah's priests must have the highest integrity. Many were warriors, diplomats, or law officers before becoming priests. In all cases, they are people of sterling reputation.

Quests: Dol Arrah's priests quest to bring peace to warring factions, to expose deceptions, to aid soldiers fighting for justice, and to defend the helpless against invaders.

Prayers and Rites: Dol Arrah does not require specific items for sacrifice, so long as they have true meaning to the petitioner.

Shrines: Dol Arrah's shrines have large east-facing windows, to let in the light of the dawn. They are normally stone and are easily defensible, though not as fortresslike as those of her brother Dol Dorn.

Favored Weapon: Halberd.

Holy Symbol: A rising sun, or the Octogram in bright yellow-gold and white, representing light and purity.

DOL DORN

"The Sovereign of Strength and Steel," Chaotic Good

Dol Dorn is the most martial of the Sovereign Host. He is the patron of all who fight for a living—among them soldiers, gladiators, and athletes. He leads the Sovereign Host in battle, and legend holds that he forced the Dark Six from the Host's ranks. Dol Dorn despises those who shed blood in the name of cruelty or greed, or who glory in mindless violence. He always stands by the soldier who fights for duty or homeland and favors games, sport, and honorable competition. Although he does not bless an unjust cause, he protects warriors forced into battle by a bloodthirsty ruler.

Portfolio: War, athleticism, competition.

Domains: Chaos, Competition†, Good, Liberation†, Strength, War.

Priest Training: Most of Dol Dorn's priests are soldiers or athletes. Only a very few are incapable of holding their own in combat or competition.

Quests: Priests of Dol Dorn quest to prove their athletic or martial prowess, seeking out champions and besting them (though they are expected to do so in the service of some greater purpose). They often seek lopsided battles, striving to turn the tide in the favor of the underdogs.

Prayers and Rites: Sacrifices to Dol Dorn often require petitioners to shed their own blood, proving their willingness to endure pain for what is right. Nearly all Vassals pray and sacrifice to Dol Dorn before going into battle or engaging in physical competition.

Shrines: Dol Dorn's temples are normally built of stone, resembling small fortresses more than religious edifices. Windows are narrow, and doors are thick and easily defensible. Even less-imposing shrines have surrounding fences or ditches and can serve as temporary fortifications.

Favored Weapon: Longsword.

Holy Symbol: A longsword crossed over a shield (or just the longsword, if the symbol is drawn on a shield), or the Octogram in red and silver, representing blood and steel.

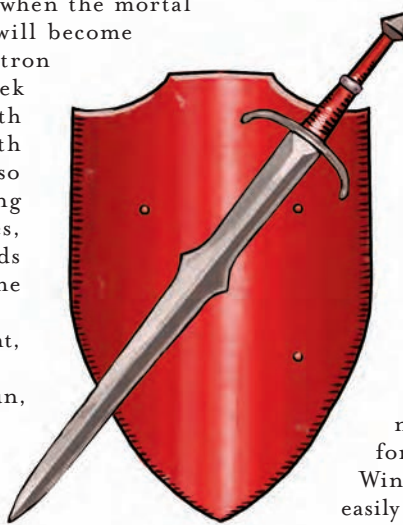
KOL KORRAN

"The Sovereign of World and Wealth," Neutral

Kol Korran is the god of trade, wealth, and commerce. He is the only second-generation member of the Sovereign Host, which is appropriate since wealth and trade appear only after the other elements of society fall into place. As the most avaricious of the Host, Kol



Dol Arrah



Dol Dorn

Korran is patron to merchants, traders, and all who seek wealth; in his darker aspect, he is also the patron of thieves and fences. He is loyal to the Host, but some legends ascribe to him a sense of resentment and a feeling that the other gods do not consider him an equal. This does not manifest as overt hostility, but rather as schemes to enrich himself at the expense of the others. Thus, fables sometimes portray Kol Korran—despite his usually serious demeanor—as the prankster of the gods.

Portfolio: Wealth, money, trade, commerce, theft.

Domains: Charm*, Commerce*, Pact†, Trade†, Travel, Wealth†.

Priest Training: Most of Kol Korran's priests have a head for numbers and commerce, and many were merchants or shopkeepers before taking the oaths. All are expected to learn something of business so they can counsel entrepreneurs who seek advice.

Quests: Quests in Kol Korran's name include opening up new trade routes, or discovering and retrieving items of great worth.

Prayers and Rites: Most rites to Kol Korran require the supplicant to melt money or similar valuables, sacrificing a small amount of wealth in exchange for earning far greater.

Shrines: Kol Korran's temples might be of stone or wood, but they always use the best available materials. The most opulent are decorated in tapestries and silks of gold and silver. Those in the poorest communities sport the greatest riches that can be spared, and are painted to appear as though they contain more than they do.

Favored Weapon: Heavy mace.

Holy Symbol: A nine-sided gold coin stamped with the Octogram, or the Octogram in gold and silver, representing the wealth of precious metals.



Kol Korran

OLLADRA

"The Sovereign of Feast and Fortune," Neutral Good

The god of good fortune and plenty, Olladra is the most popular of the Host when things are going well, and one of the most reviled when they are not. She is the patron of gamblers, entertainers, and rogues, or anyone seeking good fortune. She is kind but fickle, and even her most faithful cannot honestly say what inspires her to grant her blessings to one person and not another.

Portfolio: Good fortune, feast, plenty.

Domains: Feast*, Good, Healing, Luck, Pride†.

Priest Training: Priests of Olladra require no specific skills or training beyond what all priests of the Host must possess. If someone can inspire others to accept him as a priest, clearly the god of fortune has already smiled upon him.

Quests: Olladra's priests willingly assume great risks to prove their belief that luck will see them through. (Of course, Olladra's luck seems to aid the prepared more often than those who trust blindly.)



Olladra

Luck as We Know It

Many modern Vassals point to Olladra as proof that Arawai and Balinor are not the only two members of the Host with dominion over natural forces, rather than aspects of civilization. Luck is universal, neither a civilized nor a savage concept.

In fact, they are quite wrong. In most ancient societies, and in the vast majority of today's primitive cultures, luck does not exist as a concept. People might pray for good fortune, but their prayers are directed to the gods or spirits of the relevant aspect of the world. Fortune in trade is the province of gods of trade; success in games of chance comes from the gods of games or from household spirits. "Fortune" as an independent aspect of life is very much a modern, civilized concept. After all, it was not until mortals formed societies that life became easy enough—relatively speaking—for them to devote any thought to the notion of "good luck" applied to anything other than the necessities of survival.

Prayers and Rites: Olladra accepts any valuables but looks more favorably on sacrifices of items acquired through luck, such as gambling winnings or “found money.”

Shrines: Olladra’s shrines shine with riches second only to those of Kol Korran. The precise building materials and floor plans are unimportant.

Favored Weapon: Sickle.

Holy Symbol: A domino, or the Octogram in white and dark gray, representing both good fortune and bad. (The pattern on Olladra’s Octogram is reversed from the pattern on Aureon’s to avoid confusion, as the colors are very similar.)

ONATAR

“The Sovereign of Fire and Forge,” Neutral Good

Without Onatar, the civilized races could never have risen above the beasts to build communities and societies. He is the god of the forge, of craft and industry, and also of fire. He first inspired mortals to build tools and weapons, and then to improve on those already built. He is the patron of smiths, artisans, inventors, some who craft magic items, and even a small but growing number of warforged. He also receives prayers of those who venerate fire, which legend says he gave to mortals to survive the cold winters.

Portfolio: Crafts, weapons, tools, smithing, fire, innovation.

Domains: Artifice*, Creation‡, Fire, Good, Metal‡, Warforged‡.

Priest Training: Most of Onatar’s priests are also crafters of some sort. All are expected to learn a trade if they do not already have one, for Onatar preaches that everyone should contribute to society.

Quests: Priests of Onatar quests for new knowledge and techniques of building and crafting.

Prayers and Rites: Onatar prefers petitioners to make something, rather than sacrifice something, during their rites. Since this is not always practical, however, he accepts offerings of old tools and weapons that have served well.

Shrines: Shrines to Onatar are almost always stone, because they include working forges. They are sparsely adorned and contain many windows to allow smoke to escape.

Favored Weapon: Warhammer.

Holy Symbol: Crossed hammer and tongs, or the Octogram in red and orange, representing the different shades of fire.



PRESTIGE CLASSES

The new prestige class described below is most frequently found within, or even is unique to, the ranks of the Vassals. It represents the pinnacle of faith and devotion to the Host.

Other divine-themed prestige classes appropriate to worshipers of the Sovereign Host or its deities include the following, all found in *Complete Divine*: contemplative (Aureon), divine crusader, divine oracle (Aureon), hospitaler (Dol Arrah), pious templar, radiant servant of Pelor (Dol Arrah; change deity name), and warpriest (Dol Dorn).

SOVEREIGN SPEAKER

“To ignore even one of our divine Sovereigns is to ignore a part of the world before you. I serve all the Sovereigns with equal zeal, and thus does the world itself bend to my needs.”

—Sejra Whitebinder,
the Demon-Bane Priest

Although devotion to a single god enables some individuals to gain additional power, overriding faith in the entire Host grants others fantastic abilities. These are the sovereign speakers, considered to be the most faithful of the faithful. They represent only a small portion of Sovereign Host clerics, and it would be unfair to suggest that their belief is necessarily stronger than that of their colleagues. They do, however, possess a driving devotion matched by few others. Embrace their dedication, and you might reap the same rewards.

BECOMING A SOVEREIGN SPEAKER

Clerics make up the overwhelming majority of sovereign speakers; among the adventuring classes, only they possess the necessary prerequisites. Some adepts are sufficiently dedicated to become sovereign speakers and gain strong benefits for doing so. Other religious characters, such as paladins, can multiclass to become a sovereign speaker, but they lack the means to do so within their own class abilities. Wisdom remains a primary ability for spellcasting.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks.

Feat: Worldly Focus‡.

Sovereign Host, without favoring one god above the others, access to at least one cleric domain (Eberron adepts meet this requirement).

Class Features

As you advance in the sovereign speaker class, you gain greater ability to access the wide-ranging magic of the Host.

Weapon Proficiency: You gain proficiency with all the favored weapons of the deities of the Sovereign Host—the battleaxe, halberd, heavy mace, longsword, morningstar, quarterstaff, sickle, spear, and warhammer.

Spellcasting: At each level other than 1st and 6th, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also

TABLE 1–1: THE SOVEREIGN SPEAKER HIT DIE: D8

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Bonus domain	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Bonus domain	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Bonus domain, extra domain slot	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Bonus domain	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Bonus domain	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	Bonus domain, extra domain slot	—
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	Bonus domain	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
8th	+6	+2	+2	+6	Bonus domain	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
9th	+6	+3	+3	+6	Bonus domain, extra domain slot	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Heal, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (the planes), Profession, and Spellcraft.

gained a level in a divine spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming a sovereign speaker, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Bonus Domain: For every level you take in this class, you gain a bonus domain offered by one of the deities of the Sovereign Host. You cannot choose more than two domains offered by the same deity (for example, if you already have the Strength and War domains, you can't choose Good, since Dol Dorn offers all three). You also can't choose an alignment domain if your own alignment does not match it.

You gain the granted power of the chosen domain. If you have domain spell slots (as a cleric), you can prepare spells of the chosen domain in those slots as normal. If you instead add domain spells to your existing spell list (as an adept does), simply add the spells of the chosen domain to the appropriate class spell list.

Extra Domain Slot: At 3rd, 6th, and 9th level, you gain an extra domain spell slot, which can be filled by any domain spell of that level or lower. At 3rd level, you gain an extra 3rd-level domain spell slot. At 6th level, you gain an extra 5th-level domain spell slot. At 9th level, you gain an extra 7th-level domain spell slot.

PLAYING A SOVEREIGN SPEAKER

You firmly believe that the gods of the Host are present in all aspects of life, and you are dedicated to serving them the best you can. You might be a priest of a temple or a community, but most sovereign speakers travel the world, seeking out every aspect of the divine in Eberron. You are protective of other Vassals and feel a deep sorrow for those who do not see the glory of the Sovereign Host. You simply cannot understand how others could devote themselves to a single deity, or some other pantheon that fails to encompass the entirety of creation.

As a sovereign speaker, you are well respected within the priesthood. You might not be popular in a given area, if you've been in conflict there or if local priests are jealous of attention that they feel your deeds do not merit. For the most part, however, priests and Vassals admire those with the faith and divine favor inherent in your

abilities. You can expect a warm welcome and reasonable cooperation, if not overt aid in your endeavors.

Combat

Even at your earliest introduction to the class, you can be an effective combat caster if you have sufficient warning. Your ever-widening range of domain options (and extra domain spell slots) lets you "load up" on combat magic when you are aware of the need. Additionally, your choice of domain-granted powers can dramatically adjust (and improve) your combat prowess, from the reroll of the Luck domain to the magic item use of the Magic domain, from the *protective ward* of the Protection domain to the Weapon Focus of the War domain. At your highest levels, your broad range of domain spells means that, with proper preparation or wise selection, you can be ready for nearly any eventuality.

Advancement

Only the most dedicated clerics and adepts of the Host become sovereign speakers. You might stumble upon these abilities on your own, but more likely a local high priest or member of the liturgical council decides to mentor you, having seen in you some spark of potential.

Training as a sovereign speaker is rigorous, on a mental level if not a physical one. You must spend many hours a day in study, and entire months can go by in nothing but prayer and research. This curriculum slows down once you begin your own endeavors, be they preaching or adventuring, but even then it is assumed that you will continue to investigate the scriptures and learn new theological and philosophical ideas.

Once you're advancing in the class, Wisdom seems an obvious ability to focus on, since that is your primary spellcasting attribute. However, Charisma determines how well you interact with others. As a sovereign speaker, you are a leader and role model for other Vassals; your civil and religious duties practically demand a high Charisma. Thus, Charisma might even be a priority for a time, with Wisdom a secondary concern. Skills such as Diplomacy and Knowledge (religion) also aid you in your responsibilities. With your wealth of domain options, the Domain Spontaneity feat (see page 147) is particularly attractive to you.

Seek out items that enhance your Wisdom, your Charisma, and your spellcasting ability. You might

wish to focus on curative items in particular, allowing you to concentrate your own spells in other areas. Remember that if you can select Magic as a daily domain, you gain the ability to use magic items not normally usable by clerics.

Resources

As a sovereign speaker, you can expect simple assistance from other priests and Vassals. For example, should you arrive at a Host-worshipping village hungry and penniless, the local priest might put you up in the temple (or at least a neighboring hayloft) and offer a simple meal. More substantive aid, such as spells or magic items, are not so easily come by. Other priests can likely provide such things, but their respect for you only goes so far. Unless you are actively questing on their behalf, you'll need to pay like anyone else; even if you are on a quest, what few items you secure are usually loans, not gifts.

SOVEREIGN SPEAKERS IN THE WORLD

"Truly, they are the epitome of our faith. Would that I had half the dedication, or that I felt half so close to the Host, as they do."

—Rennik Mirr, priest of the Sovereign Host and former Lord Mayor of Wyr, Aundair



MC

*Sejra Whitebinder,
the Demon-Bane Priest*

It's easy to assume that priests devoted to an entire pantheon must be less focused than their monotheistic counterparts. (This is particularly true in other settings, where the unified aspect of pantheons is less important.) The sovereign speaker is living evidence of the contrary, lending a sense of weight to the faith even if none of the PCs actively pursue it. Additionally, it provides a means for players to differentiate their priests of the Host from other sorts of clerics without altering their characters' focus.

Daily Life

The average day for a sovereign speaker is filled with religious observance and prayer. The most observant of all Vassals, speakers participate in almost every festival and major rite. They offer prayers and perform minor rites frequently throughout the day, and wouldn't dream of embarking on even a simple endeavor without first sacrificing for its success. Even those who do not hold any true authority must answer questions and offer advice to other Vassals, who see them as most holy embodiments of faith.

Organization

Speakers in secular positions of power make excellent rulers. Rather than make worship and prayer the focus of their administration, such speakers prefer to lead others to the Host by example and not official decree. They understand that the gods are present in all things. Speakers perform rites for themselves and for all who wish to participate, but beyond that, most lead as best they can and do right by all their subjects.

Notables

Several of the greatest Vassal heroes and luminaries have been sovereign speakers, though they make up only a minority of the priesthood. Some of the best known to the current generation are Tobias Leviran d'Deneith, who abandoned a position of great authority in his house to follow a higher calling; the shifter Reyfus Tarn, who entered the faith as a ranger of Balinor before recognizing the glory of the Host as a whole; and Sejra Whitebinder, renowned for defeating the demon Ravan-Eth several months ago in the wilds of Breland.

NPC Reactions

Most Vassals are friendly, if not outright helpful, upon first meeting a sovereign speaker. These attitudes can vary based on circumstances and region, but for the most part, worshipers of the Host consider speakers to be the holiest of priests. A very small number of Host priests, envious of the speakers' status and abilities, might be unfriendly. Disciples are likely to be indifferent. While they still respect speakers, they have less attachment to them. Followers of other faiths react based on the interaction between the religions. For example, a worshiper of the Silver Flame is likely indifferent, while a follower of the Dark Six might well be unfriendly or hostile.

SOVEREIGN SPEAKER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge can research sovereign speakers to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful

skill check or bardic knowledge check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Sovereign speakers are particularly devoted worshippers of the Sovereign Host in its entirety.

DC 15: They can manipulate the world around them by calling on what they claim is the power of the divine inherent in everything. They're able to draw from a variety of cleric domains.

DC 20: The most powerful sovereign speakers are leaders of their churches and can freely access numerous of the Host's domains.

Because sovereign speakers are well known, Knowledge (local) and Gather Information checks can provide this same information in any nation or community where worship of the Host is the dominant religion.

SOVEREIGN SPEAKERS IN THE GAME

Sovereign speakers are rare enough that player characters are unlikely to have encountered any. Their ability to influence the world through divine intervention certainly sparks tales about saints and holy ones, though. Thus, it's easy to explain such tales as referring to sovereign speakers, even if the PCs did not realize this to be the case at the time.

PCs who are attracted to the sovereign speaker class should have no compunctions about continuing it through to the end. Its primary ability continues to improve, and it is useful in almost any sort of encounter. The DM should provide plenty of opportunities for the speaker to influence the outcome of encounters, and to portray the character's religious attitudes and responsibilities.

Adaptation

Although the sovereign speaker is formally the province of the Sovereign Host, it could easily be adapted to any faith that holds the god or gods to be omnipresent, and that offers a variety of domains. Since the speaker influences the world by calling on the universal presence of the divine, these are really the only requirements to be met.

Sample Encounter

Unless the PCs are actively working against the interests of the Sovereign Host, or are competing with the priesthood for the same prize, they're unlikely to encounter a sovereign speaker as an enemy. However, sovereign speakers are not above political ambitions or maneuvering, and a party might well find that a speaker is behind a series of impediments and misfortunes. Encounters with speakers should emphasize the religious aspect of their lives and abilities. Even the most selfish or power-hungry speaker believes she has a divine purpose.

EL 12: Sejra Whitebinder is a very active sovereign speaker. While she considers herself a priest first and a warrior second, she is devoted to protecting the faithful and the priesthood of the Sovereign Host. She might be encountered on a quest to rid an area of some great threat, or to recover a great treasure for the liturgical council, either of which could make her an ally or an enemy of the PCs.

SEJRA WHITEBINDER

CR 12

Female halfling cleric (Sovereign Host) 5/sovereign speaker 7
NG Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +3

Languages Common, Halfling, Irial

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 20

(+1 size, +8 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 57 (12 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +13 (+15 against fear)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk heavy mace +10/+5 (1d6)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +4

Atk Options feat of strength 1/day

Special Actions greater turning 1/day, rebuke fire creatures or turn water creatures 11/day (+4, 2d6+10, 6th), spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 11/day (+6, 2d6+10, 6th)

Combat Gear *bead of force*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 10th, CL 11th for divination or good spells):

5th—*break enchantment*, *call lightning storm*^D (DC 18), *flame strike*^D (DC 18), *true seeing* (CL 11th)

4th—*dimensional anchor*, *dismissal* (DC 28 minus creature's HD), *restoration*, *spell immunity*^D

3rd—*call lightning*^D (DC 16), *daylight*, *fly*^D, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against evil* (CL 11th), *searing light* (+8 ranged touch)

2nd—*align weapon* (CL 11th if aligned to good), *consecrate* (CL 11th), *lesser restoration*, *remove paralysis*, *shield other*^D, *silence*

1st—*bless*, *command* (DC 14), *detect evil* (CL 11th), *entropic shield*, *magic weapon*, *sanctuary*^D (DC 15)

0—*create food and water*, *detect magic* (CL 11th), *detect poison* (CL 11th), *light*, *resistance*, *virtue*

D: Domainspell. Domains: Fire, Good, Luck, Knowledge, Protection, Strength, Sun, Travel, Weather*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 18

SQ aura of good, good fortune, freedom of movement 5 rounds/day, protective ward 1/day, vision unobstructed by nonmagical weather conditions

Feats Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Improved Turning, Spell Focus (abjuration), Worldly Focus†

Skills Climb +1, Concentration +6 (+10 casting defensively), Diplomacy +10, Heal +9, Hide +3, Jump –5, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +1, Spellcraft +7, Spot +3, Survival +6 (+8 weather-related or tracking on other planes), Use Magic Device +4 (+6 with scrolls)

Possessions combat gear plus +4 *chain shirt*, masterwork heavy mace, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *pearl of power* (1st), *ring of protection* +1

Feat of Strength (Su) As a free action, gain a +5 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 round.

Good Fortune (Ex) Reroll 1 attack, check, or save just made before DM declares whether the roll results in success or failure. You must take the outcome of the reroll, even if it is worse than the original roll.

Freedom of Movement (Su) Act normally regardless of magical effects that impede movement. This effect occurs automatically as soon as it applies, lasts until it runs out or is no longer needed, and can operate multiple times per day (up to the total daily limit of rounds).

Greater Turning (Su) Like regular turning except undead that would be turned are destroyed instead.

Protective Ward (Su) As a standard action, subject touched gains +5 resistance bonus on next save. Unless triggered, this abjuration effect lasts 1 hour.



As is the world, so are the gods.
As are the gods, so is the world."
A world still wild and dangerous . . .

CHAPTER TWO

THE DARK SIX

The Devourer. The Fury. The Mockery. The names alone strike fear into the hearts of the civilized peoples of Eberron. These deities, along with their mysterious fellows the Keeper, the Shadow, and the Traveler, make up a pantheon known as the Dark Six—the second-most powerful and widespread faith on Khorvaire. Yet the Dark Six are still truly a part of the pantheon that is known today as the Sovereign Host, despite being exiled from the body of that faith ages ago.

DOCTRINE

Like their brothers, sisters, and parents in the Host, the gods of the Six hold sway over broad aspects of mortal life. The difference between the two pantheons, however—and part of the reason for the Schism that separates them to

this day—is that the Six hold dominion over the more base, sinister, or violent aspects of creation. Where Arawai is a nature goddess who brings fertility and good harvests, her brother the Devourer represents the awesome power of nature unleashed, bringing storm and flood to those who displease or disrespect him or his charge. Likewise Dol Arrah is a god of honorable combat whose brother, the Mockery, represents all that is treacherous and dishonorable in conflicts.

As creation is itself a balance, so too the one pantheon cannot exist without the other. Indeed, the chief dogma espoused by followers of the Six is identical to that of the so-called Sovereign Host, though they do not much care for the term “Doctrine of Universal Sovereignty”:

As is the world, so are the gods. As are the gods, so is the world.

Like their fellow Vassals, followers of the Six also believe that nothing exists in this world without the

A Paper Schism?

That both “sides” of the Schism believe in the same basic truth about the cosmos might be the most telling argument for the universality of the Doctrine of Universal Sovereignty. Or it could simply confirm the greatest fear of the priesthood of the Sovereign Host that, despite their best efforts, the Six are not so far removed from the hearts and minds of the majority of the Vassals. Indeed, continual preaching about the dangers and horrors of the Six serves to reinforce the close ties between the pantheons. Recall that in the collected pantheon’s early history, all were known as the “Nine and Six and One.” Moreover, worshipers of the Six were similarly known as “Vassals” for most of the pantheon’s history, and still are in many places. It is my considered opinion that “Sovereign Host” is a comparatively recent term.

That one pantheon cannot exist without the other is reflected in the worst-kept secret concerning Vassal worship. A blacksmith offers the bulk of his prayers to Onatar and does so openly. More discreetly, he refuses to ignore the Fury, whom he believes will ensure that any weapon emerging from his forge is both inspired in design and efficient in execution. This is not to say that the blacksmith fears his work will be insufficient without the Fury’s blessing, but by keeping her in his silent prayers, he hopes to forestall misfortune. A blacksmith who accidentally burns himself, or whose forge explodes in a moment of fiery rage, could be said to have displeased or dishonored the Fury in some way.

Indeed, as most are well aware, many Vassals choose to honor deities of both pantheons with regular prayer, regardless of which god sees the bulk of their day-to-day worship. A noble-souled warrior who worships Dol Arrah and despises the Mockery might still see the wisdom in offering the occasional prayer to the outcast brother, if for no other reason than to ward off treachery in combat.

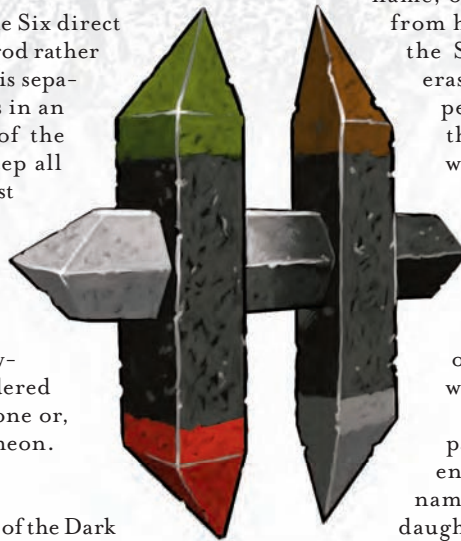
attention of the gods. The primary difference is that they focus on the darker or more explosive aspects of existence.

Most of those who stand with the Six direct the bulk of their worship to a single god rather than to the pantheon as a whole. This separates them from their fellow Vassals in an important way, since worshipers of the Host are strongly encouraged to keep all the gods in their hearts. (Indeed, Host congregations find religious focus so unusual that they view narrow-minded Vassals as schismatic to the faith, referring to them as "Disciples" rather than Vassals.) By this reckoning, a great many followers of the Dark Six would be considered Disciples for their devotion to but one or, in some cases, two gods of the pantheon.

THE NAMES OF FAITH

It is common knowledge that the gods of the Dark Six are known by titles, most of which elicit fear if not revulsion at their mere mention, rather than proper names. A great deal more rare, especially since the end of the Last War, is the truth about these exiled deities . . . and their names.

Before the Schism, all the gods were as one single family. Those who would become the Dark Six held dominion over the angrier, more primal aspects of creation, but were no less important or powerful than their kin.



The Dark Star, or the Hexagram, symbolizes the Dark Six as a separate pantheon

The Devourer did not change his personality or portfolio upon being exiled; he merely changed his name, or to be more precise, had it stripped from him. One of the greatest successes of the Sovereign church was the complete erasure over the course of time of records pertaining to the names of the Six, and the gradual replacement of those names with titles chosen to instill fear. In this manner, early Vassals could better distance their gods (and thus, themselves) from those whom their deities had cast out. By the close of the Last War, very few individuals recalled the names that once passed through the lips of so many who walked the face of Eberon.

Until it was stripped from him, in part by his own brother and sister, the entity now known as the Devourer had a name, and that name was Shurkaan. His daughter, too, had a name, given to her by her mother Arawai (if legend holds true), before losing all sense of identity to the power of her new moniker, the Fury.

For a brief time, she was called Szorawai. Even the lord of death once had a name, back when he walked beside his brother, Kol Korran. In those days long gone, the Keeper was called Kol Turrant. And last but not least, before he was flayed for his betrayal, the Mockery—one of a trio of divine brothers in arms—was known as Dol Azur.

Dark Symbology

While most citizens of Khorvair recognize the Octogram—the symbol of the Sovereign Host—on sight, the same cannot be said of the symbol of the Dark Six, despite similarities between the two.

With its six separate points, the design clearly pays homage to the gods who make up the pantheon. The number and application of colors seem to indicate a favored combination for each deity. Experts on the subject declare that the dark green of the top left bar represents the Devourer, with the crimson on the bottom of the same bar indicating his daughter, the Fury. The brown of the top right bar denotes the Mockery, and the gray of the bottom, the Keeper. Perhaps the most curious feature of the symbol, then, is the horizontal bar that separates them. By process of elimination, the black and white of the horizontal bar must correspond to the Shadow and the Traveler (though the priests of the Traveler actually claim no color as their own). But what is the significance of their "bisecting" the other gods? And why do their colors fade from one to the other, where the borders of the others are so clearly defined?

The most common explanation is that the Shadow and the Traveler occupy special places among the gods, each unique in a different way, and that together they are the "axis" of the Dark Six—cosmic forces that provide context to the rest. This concept seems logical, given the ethos of each god. The Shadow is not a god in the traditional sense, having been born from the literal shadow of Aureon; the Traveler, by all accounts, has absolutely no connection to the others, and operates outside the purview of both the Dark Six and the Sovereign Host. The other aspect to this (and I myself was shocked to hear of it) is the contention, held by many among the Traveler's congregation, that the Traveler itself created the Shadow or was at least the root of the Shadow's ascension to godhood. If any of this is true, it might help to explain the look of the symbol. Though many of the Dark Six faithful contest the claim, the question remains why they would permit the symbol to appear the way it does. I hope one day to discover the answer. . . .

These are the only established names found in references stretching back to antiquity. Being once a part of Aureon, the Shadow has never known nor needed any other name, and the Traveler has had so many names and faces over the millennia that if it ever had a true name, that name has been lost to time.

Knowing anything of these ancient names requires access to ancient scriptural texts or encyclopedic religious knowledge. Each name requires a separate DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check or a DC 30 Knowledge (history) check.

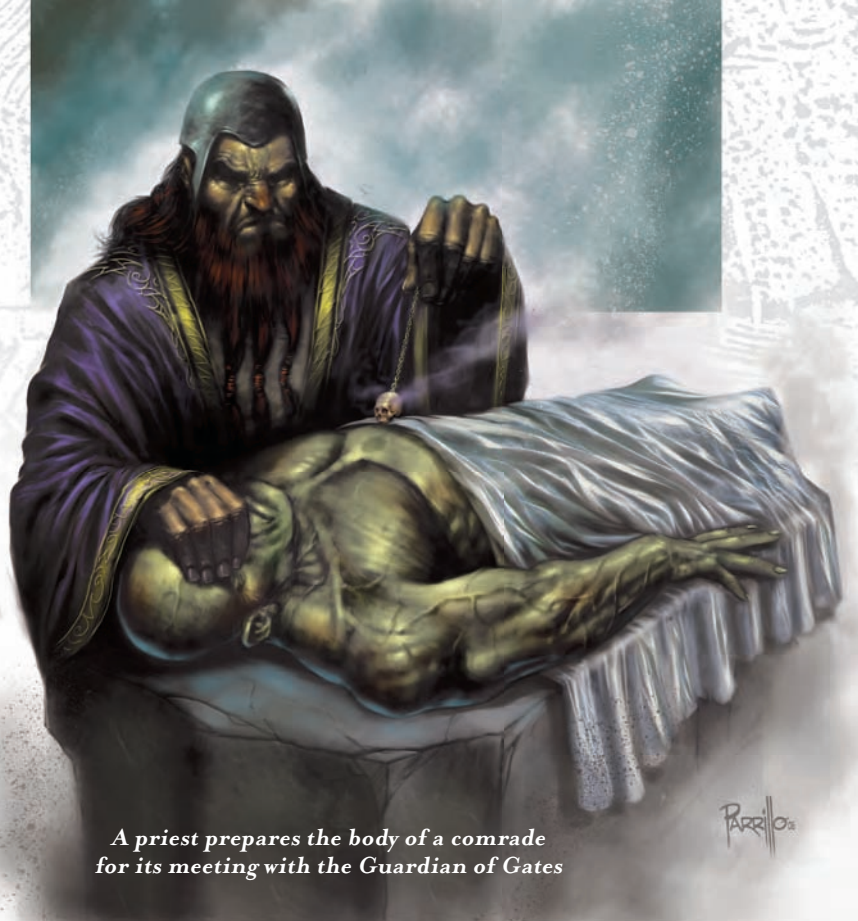
SOULS AND THE AFTERLIFE

According to Vassal dogma, the soul is the fragment of the divine that allows sentient life to exist, and this tenet holds true across the breadth of the followers of the Nine-and-Six. Unlike those who place the bulk of their faith in the Sovereign Host, however, vassals of the Dark Six (in whole or part) generally do not believe that the mortal soul—any soul—loses what small divinity it has over the course of time. They hold that it is not the weight of mortality that prevents a soul from finding paradise, or returning to the gods, or even remaining on Eberron upon bodily death. Rather, such determinations are made exclusively at the whim of the gods, and thus, it is their will alone that decides which souls will be shown paradise, which souls will be returned to Eberron, and which souls will be sent to the Realm of the Dead, to eke out eternity in bleakness. On this point, the true depth of the schism between Vassals comes to light: Those who place their faith in the Dark Six believe that the afterlife of Dolurrh is absolutely a place of punishment, rather than a plane simply devoid of divinity.

Most Vassals know of the Keeper, and of his purported role in the cosmos. Among the god's faithful, however, he is also known as the Opener or, more commonly, as the Guardian of Gates. Sovereign doctrine tells that he snatches souls at random, and that they are annihilated utterly, without even the hope for everlasting "life" in Dolurrh. Believers in the Dark Six know differently. The Keeper's true mandate is ferrying souls to their proper afterlife, as determined by the collected gods of the pantheon. If it is shown to be sufficiently gods-fearing, a given soul finds its way to paradise, courtesy of the Keeper. If the same soul has led a life of arrogance and heresy, however, it finds its way to the eternal nothingness of Dolurrh—the only destination it has earned. While the Keeper alone does not decide fates, his vote carries the most weight, and thus, those who would avoid Dolurrh direct their prayers to him.

Eternity

Vassals of the Dark Six are convinced that only by obeisance to the gods can a soul hope to escape an empty eternity. They believe that, contrary to what they consider Sovereign Host propaganda, there is an alternative to Dolurrh—it simply comes at a price, one that Sovereign Vassals have proven themselves too cowardly or ignorant to pay. So, those individuals have comforted themselves with a lie: There is no escaping Dolurrh; happiness is found only in life, not after; and—most important—happiness is ensured by honoring the Host.



A priest prepares the body of a comrade for its meeting with the Guardian of Gates

The power of such teachings is significant. For a priesthood that interprets and speaks for the gods, an overwhelming doctrine of obeisance helps to keep worshippers in line. Vassals of the Dark Six caution that one must always remember that doctrine is a tool. Viewed in that light, its rationale is often easy to discern.

SERVANTS OF THE DARK SIX

As with most faiths, the average priest of the Dark Six, or of any god therein, isn't a cleric *per se*. Among the Six, service comes in many forms, and most worshippers are content to do the work of the divine, without training for an adventuring class. Of those who choose to become spellcasting priests, the majority end up with levels in the adept class, which hosts a broad selection of the abilities and skills most often required by a congregation. The most devout go on to take one or more cleric levels.

BECOMING A PRIEST

While the roles and duties fulfilled are similar enough between the two pantheons, priests of the Six come to their calling in a more primal, less academic fashion than those of the Host. Acolytes of the faith rarely attend formal seminaries, as do their Sovereign counterparts. Instead, acolytes find their own way to the priesthood, at least in the early years. This process usually involves one of two approaches.

A fair number of those who join the priesthood of the Dark Six begin their lives dedicated to other vocations. All who come to the priesthood in this manner share a common thread: A single formative event (or series of events) shakes an individual's soul to the core, forcing him to reevaluate his life, particularly on the subject of his own piety. Each such incident is unique, but more often than not, it involves the mortal soul awakening to the majesty

and divine power of one or more of the Dark Six. A sailor who felt no desire to serve, for example, might come to the priesthood of the Devourer following a particularly harrowing episode at sea. When spiritual epiphanies of this sort lead souls into a priesthood of the Dark Six, they are known as callings. This calling is an important part of a given priest's experience under the cloth, and stories of the callings of some of the more well-known priests have passed into the realm of folklore.

The alternative to the priest who is called to serve is the one who is raised in the priesthood of a given deity. This is a far more frequent occurrence in communities that worship only one among the Six. Such communities are commonplace on Eberron, so priests of this sort are similarly common. The sahuagin, for example, are almost exclusively devoted to the Devourer, and thus most sahuagin priests know no other way. The individual who forsakes the god of the community not only to worship but to join the priesthood of another god—even one of the same pantheon—is rare and bold indeed. Among the followers of the Six, priests who are groomed to the faith from childhood are typically known as scions.

Proof of being worthy to serve varies from church to church, and often from region to region, but a handful of practices have become standard across the faith. For

example, almost every priesthood of the Dark Six, no matter how small, requires that any would-be priest show her faith before being accepted into the ranks. A temple to the Mockery might ask an acolyte to mortify her own or another's flesh in a certain way, to demonstrate her understanding of pain, or even to take a life in her god's name before being welcomed as a priest. Some temples require similar tests of established priests, but if an applicant's reputation proceeds her (or if she receives a strong recommendation from a high priest of another temple), such rites are usually formalities at best, when they occur at all.

HIERARCHY

Given the varied nature of the collected priesthoods of the Six, no rigorous hierarchy could possibly govern the entire faith. Instead, such hierarchies, if any, are determined by the individual priesthoods themselves.

A local hierarchy consists of the high priest or temple head, below whom stands everyone and everything else. Most priests (and worshipers) of the Dark Six live by a "might makes right" ideal, and the system generally works well (an unsuitable high priest is soon replaced by a more resourceful one). The most powerful leader in a given area is the de facto high priest, who sets policy and directs the spiritual progress of the congregation. Priests do not interfere in the affairs of other Dark Six congregations, except in highly specific situations, and most find this situation perfectly acceptable. While such insular autonomy results in a worldwide lack of unity, cooperation, and effectiveness, this is deemed an acceptable price by those in command.

In areas where worship of a particular god is especially strong, the priesthood breaks into liturgical councils, similar to those found among worshipers of the Sovereign Host. Typically, these councils fall under the auspices of a single high priest, but they offer an efficient compromise in areas that need a bit more structure. Only rarely does voting of any sort occur, even in the most liberal of priesthoods. The high priest sits atop the organization—by divine mandate, according to dogma—and has sole discretion to appoint council members. In some cases, the council has the power to outvote or even depose the high priest, and so even the most iron-fisted temple head must treat appointees with a modicum of political aplomb, or at least take care in whom she selects.

The nations of Darguun and Droaam both maintain multiple liturgical councils dedicated to the various gods of the Dark Six. Unlike those of the Host, which claim to represent their entire pantheon, each council of the Six is almost always devoted to a single god. This can lead to strained relations and conflicting annunciations of doctrine in areas where worship of more than one is strong. As with most matters, these disputes are settled in time by the mightier of the combatants.

DUTIES OF THE CLERGY

A priest of the Dark Six is similar to one of other faiths. Duties include not only those described for priests of the Host—conducting holy day rites, counseling the faithful, leading prayer services, and spreading the word—but also the following.

Mediation: In many communities where worship of the Six is dominant, the local priest is the only one to

Service by Demand

Rarely mentioned means to Dark Six priesthood is service by demand. In a faith that stresses obedience, it is not unheard of that a more senior priest simply orders a junior member to serve in a priestly capacity. For those without divine powers, involuntary service is relatively easy to establish. Just as with most priests, the newly appointed minister succeeds if he has the proper temperament, organization skills, and facility with people. Failure or disobedience is often punished by banishment or death, so the incentive to succeed is great. The rewards, in the form of servants, comforts, and riches, also encourage proper service. The disgrace of a failed priest often redounds to the 'demanding' priest, making him appear unwise in his ecclesiastical choices. Therefore, higher-ranking priests choose carefully before imposing service.

In time, more than a few involuntary priests come to hold sincere and devoted faith to the gods they were compelled to serve. I have even heard of involuntary priests developing actual cleric abilities. The gods do move in mysterious ways. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that few recipients retain their involuntary stance toward a god's service.

whom the average citizen can turn for objective advice. Just as the community must recognize a marriage that has been sanctioned by a priest, so too must it abide by any agreements or outcomes witnessed by one. This makes priests fine arbitrators in disputes (so long as they don't involve the priesthood itself, of course), and some priests even act as the equivalent of House Sivis notaries.

Protecting the Faith: This is a subtle but important aspect of being a priest of the Dark Six. Worship of the Six is discouraged in some places, shunned in others, and flat-out under attack in a select few. As deities, the Dark Six inspire fear and obedience, and their mortal representatives are expected to encourage those qualities in worshipers. While priests of the Six see little to be gained in forcing worship among the masses, they are honor-bound to stand in defense of their god and its portfolio. A priest of the Mockery who catches someone maligning her deity's power and influence, for example, is obliged to prove by her own deeds the true power and influence of the god. This is not to say that every priest of the Six whose faith is slighted must immediately attack the slighter, but spreading fear of the Dark Six strengthens the faith as a whole.

Unlike their counterparts in the Sovereign Host, priests of the Dark Six rarely make their office visibly apparent at all times. Especially in areas where worship of their gods is not dominant, priests of the Six are free to wear any attire they choose and bear no outward sign of their devotion. Clerics cannot cast some divine spells without the presence of a holy symbol, however, so these priests usually opt to carry one with them at all times, even if it is concealed. When inside their own temples, of course, priests wear whatever costume is appropriate to their worship. In emulation of their patron, priests of the Traveler adopt whatever attire they like, even within their temples—indeed, a substantial number choose to wear nothing at all.

Fallen Priests

The informality and deadly competition inherent in Dark Six worship means fewer situations that merit formal defrocking. Only the most egregious violations of a priest's duties earn this punishment. More often, a wayward priest of the Six forfeits her life, not just her office.

The usual situation is an individual deciding that her current office and practices do not properly honor her god. She is still a faithful worshiper but is now outside the faith as an organization, setting up independent worship in far-off lands or evangelizing a breakaway sect. She has not forsaken her god, though, and does not lose her cleric abilities. Indeed, other followers of the Six do not view her as an apostate. Some might even adopt her new ideas.

Only one thing is guaranteed to bring the wrath of the church and of the gods. A priest of any or all of the Six who turns away or stands idle as her patron is mocked displays a despicable weakness of faith. Even if it entails great risk, the faithful must demonstrate and defend the gods' power. A priest who behaves so shamefully is likely to die at the hands of her own flock. Unless she has a greater end that justifies temporary retreat, such behavior usually results in the loss of cleric abilities (assuming the priest survives).

QUESTS

Formal questing is unusual among priests of the Dark Six. Rather, the faithful are expected to demonstrate the gods' power through their actions. Individual gods require specific forms of respect (see the individual listings starting on page 49), but rarely do they assign adventuring quests of the sort that favored by the Church of the Silver Flame, for example.

rites and rituals of the Dark Six

Like the Vassals of the Sovereign Host, worshipers of the Six believe that every feature of the natural world bears at least a shadow of the divine, and is therefore worthy of reverence. The difference, however, comes in the manner, application, and some would say even the definition of that reverence. According to Vassals of the Dark Six, the gods want the mortal world to fear and respect their power; people must realize that peace and happiness come by the grace of the gods alone, and that both can be taken away at any time by those same gods. Failure to show the proper reverence is an insult to the gods, inviting disaster or misfortune.

PRAYERS

Prayer is the most common form of ritual, since it can be done anywhere, at any time. Most worshipers of the Dark Six offer prayers after having escaped misfortune of one sort or other. For example, spotting an assassin just before he attacks, thereby denying him the benefit of surprise, would be an appropriate situation for a prayer to the Mockery. Such prayers aren't invoked to avoid impending misfortune, however. If there is enough time to consult the Six beforehand, the worshiper should make the proper offering that characterizes a minor or major rite.

Prayers to the Dark Six are vocalized, as are those to the Host. Unlike those to the Sovereign Host, though, these can include gestures and the like. The line that separates prayer from rite is offering. Someone who offers or sacrifices something to the Dark Six is performing a ritual, not speaking a prayer. Traditionally, prayers to the Dark Six are chanted, and the cadence is often just as important as what is being said. According to dogma, the Dark Six are pleased not only by the sound of their names on the lips of believers, but especially by adherence to ritual even in such a small form. Many faithful followers grow competent with extemporaneous rhyme, though actual singing is viewed with suspicion and is reserved for specific occasions.

MINOR RITES

Among followers of the Dark Six, a minor rite is defined as anything that involves an offering but does not require a priest. Beyond this, what characterizes a minor rite is the occasion that demands it in the first place. Making a request of one of the Dark Six is, almost by definition, a rite. A word of thanks for a pleasing happenstance does not require offering anything in return. On the other hand, asking favors of the gods requires a commensurate sacrifice that shows good faith and humility. Most such rites involve a material offering of one sort or



Recognizing the importance of war with ritual is often just as important as the war itself

MT

other—whatever is appropriate to the god and situation in question. The sacrifice must have meaning, but need not necessarily be something of great worth; the circumstances are the ultimate arbiter. An athlete seeking victory in an upcoming contest might run himself ragged the day before in deference to the Fury, in the hope that she will grant him the strength to emerge victorious. An assassin hoping to ensure the eternal suffering of her target's soul might trap a cat in burlap sack and then set both on fire as an offering to the Keeper. A political advisor might burn a spell scroll in the Shadow's name to see that a rival advisor missteps in court.

MAJOR RITES

Given the disparate multitudes that follow the Dark Six, only the broadest overview of the more important ceremonies can be presented. Most of them involve sacrifice of some variety, as the Six find offerings of this sort the most pleasing. While prayers and minor rites can usually be performed in any place, and often by just a single worshiper, major rites typically require more in the way of space, participants, and resources, and are therefore planned and organized more carefully. Due to religious persecution, particularly in some areas of the Five Nations, many major rites take place in secret, often away from the community or even underground, to better ensure the security of those taking part.

Birth: While it is not a common occurrence, worshippers of the Dark Six do celebrate births from time to time; when they do, the event is significant. Every Vassal has the right to celebrate any addition to the household,

but all are expected to keep such celebrations private. The exception is when a priest of the Dark Six foretells a great future for a newborn child and brings news of the child's fate to the parents. The birth of such a special child is celebrated by the entire community, particularly those who pray to the same god as the parents, and is often a drawn-out, extravagant affair. The priest begins by spreading word of the child's blessing (often by a particular god of the Six) and organizing the rite. All who know and worship with the parents are expected to attend and bring an offering. The infant is wrapped in ceremonial garb appropriate to the favoring deity, then placed on the altar for all to see. The priest burns the collected offerings while praying over the child, until all that remains are cooling ashes. At this time, the parents of the child each step forward and mix six drops of their blood into the ashes. With the resulting paste, the priest draws the symbol of the patron god (or the Six as a whole) on the child's back, that he might walk with the power of the divine behind him all his days.

Coronations: Liturgical blessings of rulers have been waning for some time in the worship of the Sovereign Host, but the practice is still important to the faithful of the Dark Six. Indeed, coronations in Dark Six communities that proceed without the assent of a priest of the Six are considered inauspicious. Few would-be leaders are willing to take the chance of offending the gods, and thereby condemning their reigns to failure or worse, by forgoing the traditional rite of coronation.

Although it might be dressed in a number of variations, the ceremony itself almost always involves

two things. First, the would-be ruler must prove his worth to the gods. Most often, this requires a substantial sacrifice—a precious item, a portion of his blood, a favored mount, or the like. Whatever is offered, it must have real value to the new ruler, or it ceases to have meaning and so turns the ritual into an insult. In some cases, worth is instead demonstrated by a test; single combat (often with a deadly beast) is common, especially among the more savage peoples (goblinoids, sahuagin, and the like). Such duels need not be to the death but almost always are.

The second aspect common to Dark Six coronations is the ritual humbling of the new ruler. Once he has proven his worth, the aspirant kneels before the priest conducting the rite, offers up his weapon, and bares his throat. Most of the time, this gesture is symbolic, but in some particularly religious areas, the priest actually has the right to end the new ruler's life, should the subject be deemed unworthy.

Death: With a handful of notable exceptions, deaths are celebrated like nothing else. Whereas funerals are somber affairs among Vassals of the Sovereign Host, they are festive occasions among the faithful of the Dark Six. Because they believe that their faith ultimately saves them from an eternity in Dolurrh, they do not view death with despair. Funerals often draw the congregation's members closest to one another. All rejoice and lift their voices, hoping that the Keeper will hear their appreciation for their fallen brother or sister. That does not mean the faithful should deny their sadness at a loved one's passing, but they should try to remember that the soul served the gods well and has gone on to its final reward.

War: Among worshipers of the Dark Six, combat is a common and important part of life. Almost every congregation devoted to one of the Six has at least one major ritual to commemorate the inauguration or culmination of important military campaigns. The occasion can vary in scope from the largest of conflicts, involving the entire nation, to local feuds, even between a mere two rivals. Smaller conflicts do not merit grand war ceremonies unless one or both of the combatants is a priest, noble, or other important public figure. In many areas, particularly where worship of the Fury or the Shadow is strong, rulership changes as a result of mortal combat. The war rite precedes the combat, with the rite of coronation to follow, should the challenger emerge victorious.

The Calendar

Like the Vassals of the Sovereign Host, the faithful of the Dark Six use the standard Galifar calendar in day-to-day life. Unlike their counterparts, however, they see no need to account differently for days of religious

significance. Using the standard calendar is not only more efficient, it more easily allows Dark Six worshipers to conceal the nature of their rites and activities, should they feel inclined to do so.

There is one difference, however, and one to which Dark Six Vassals religiously adhere. Like the Sovereign calendar, the Dark Six calendar differs in the number of seasons recognized. Rather than three, it recognizes six different seasons: one for each deity of the pantheon. These seasons are known by differing names, depending upon the regional language, but each term translates roughly to the concept for which the god in question is known.

The first season, called Devouring, corresponds to the months of Zarantyr and Olarune (mid- to late winter) on the standard calendar. The second season, called Keeping, occupies the months of Therendor and Eyre (early to mid-spring). Traveling, which falls in the months of Dravago and Nymm (late spring to early summer), is followed by Mockery, a season occupying the months of Lharvion and Barrakas (mid- to late summer). The fifth season, named Fury, encompasses the months of Rhaan and Sypheros (early to mid-autumn). The final season, Shadowing, claims the months of Aryth and Vult (late autumn to early winter). Each season is eight weeks long, and the religious new year, like the secular, corresponds with the first day of the month of Zarantyr.

When naming a specific day, someone using the religious calendar of the Dark Six would also indicate the season. For example, saying Zolday the fifth Devouring indicates the Zolday that falls during the fifth week of the season of Devouring. The faithful rarely use this terminology around nonbelievers.

In addition to this seasonal division, a less widespread alteration of the liturgical calendar—seen mostly in areas where worship of the Dark Six is strongest—associates each of the standard days of the week with one of the gods, with the final day of the week representing all six. This is a holdover from the days before the Schism, when the Six held dominion over their own days of the Sovereign calendar.

Day of the Galifar Week	Associated Deity
Sulday	The Devourer
Molday	The Fury
Zolday	The Keeper
Wirday	The Shadow
Zorday	The Mockery
Farday	The Traveler
Sarday	The Dark Six

OPTIONAL RULE: HOLY DAYS REVISITED

Dungeon Masters who wish to use the optional "holiest of days" rule (see page 21) can offer similar benefits to worshipers of the Six. On a god's holy day during the favored season, any adept, cleric, or blackguard of that god gains a +1 bonus to effective caster level on spells cast. Thus,

a cleric of the Devourer gains this bonus on all eight Suldays during the season of Devouring. Clerics of the Dark Six as a whole gain this bonus on the Sardays of any one season; each cleric chooses the season that resonates most personally.

As with the Sovereign Host, some gods of the Dark Six have their own holy days, observed according to the Galifar Calendar.

Wildnight (18–19 Sypheros): At sunset on Wildnight, worshipers and the nonfaithful alike give vent to their passions, in a raucous festival dedicated to the Fury.

Long Shadows (26–28 Vult): Dark magic dominates this three-day period that honors the Shadow.

THE DARK SIX IN EVERYDAY LIFE

While the Sovereign Host is still the dominant religion on Khorvaire, the political and military strife of the Last War was a crucible for the power of the Dark Six, who emerged stronger and more influential than they ever had been before. Today, worship of the Six is dominant in more places than the Host worshipers would care to admit, including Darguun, the Demon Wastes, Droaam, as well as areas of the Lhazaar Principalities, the Shadow Marches, and Q'barra. Many priesthoods of the Six remained passive before the war, content to worship in their own way, but most have taken an aggressively missionary view in the time since. All across postwar Khorvaire, the Six are spreading their influence through a host of means, including bribery, evangelism, manipulation, and fear.

THE PEOPLE OF THE DARK SIX

While they accept the existence of the Nine, and even pay homage to specific gods thereof on occasion, the general feeling among followers of the Six is that the gods of the Sovereign Host simply are not as important to daily life as are the Dark Six. Kol Korran might have some influence over whether a given business venture prospers or dies on the vine, but the Keeper decides just what will become of the souls of the people involved. Without the Keeper's blessing, they believe, every venture is doomed to failure in the long run.

Worship of the Dark Six appeals to beings who live existences of savagery, poverty, or violence, but that fact has little bearing on the portfolios of the gods themselves. Even the most educated and wealthy soul can benefit from showing reverence to the Six, and a great many do—in secret. Still, the need to worship in secrecy makes the faith no less genuine.

Many of those who worship the Six revere but a single god. This holds most true in barbaric cultures and among the monstrous races, many of whom do not know or care about the difference between one god and the pantheon as a whole. Among the dragonmarked races, worship of the Six is a matter of simple pragmatism. If the gods of the Host do not govern the angrier forces of existence, then logically those who wish to avoid misfortune would do well to appeal to those gods who do claim such dominion. Even Sovereign Host dogma acknowledges the purview of the Six.

THE DARK SIX AND GOVERNMENT

A priest of the Six, asked about the influence of faith in government, might respond, "At least we are honest about the way the world works." The priests of the Sovereign Host claim to have no designs on civil or political control,

but the falsehood of this is apparent everywhere on Khorvaire. The beholden of the Dark Six hold that everything is connected, and thus, everything is permissible so long as the gods approve. If the gods do not want direct influence on political affairs, they will most assuredly put an end to the practice. After all, the Dark Six have never been shy about expressing their displeasure.

The influence of the Dark Six priesthoods is strongest where social bonds are tightest. A given priesthood can run the entire political structure of a small community. More insidiously, priests maneuver members of their congregations into positions of civil and military power. If the local baron or governor is a fellow worshiper, the likelihood dwindles substantially that someone will destroy the congregation.

This attitude is turned upside down in regions where worship of the Dark Six is the norm. Gnolls and goblinoids in Droaam, for example, operate openly under the priesthoods of the Six. In such areas, the influence of religion on political life is not only permitted—it is expected. The concept of the priest-king originated largely in areas strong in worship of the Dark Six, and the gods themselves seem to prefer it. Where this is not possible, the priesthood retains its role as the whisper in the night.

THE DARK SIX AND OTHER FAITHS

At the dawn of the Last War, priests of three of the Six—the Fury, the Mockery, and the Shadow—met in secret for the first time. They had maintained little to no contact with one another before the war (even those of the same deity), but now convened with one aim: to increase the power of their gods through the war of five nations. Each priest pledged a congregation to serve this goal as best befitted its capabilities. What began as a wartime practice developed into a bold new campaign to advance the hegemony of the Six and their priesthoods.

This movement translated to a two-tiered approach; both tiers, as might be expected, involved deception to a greater or lesser degree. The first step was to insinuate devout members of each priesthood into every corner of the conflict, from the front lines to the war rooms. The priests found plenty of volunteers among their congregations. Since all of the Five Nations were hungry for new blood, such volunteers integrated with little scrutiny. Most had only one assignment: spreading fear and worship of their gods. (Reporting the activities of the infiltrated groups would surely have resulted in discovery before long.) Soldiers prayed to the Fury in combat, and those who survived thanked her for heeding their call; assassins and spies called on the Mockery before dangerous missions, and then credited any subsequent success to their faith. Likewise, spellcasters invoked the Shadow to aid them in their time of arcane need. It wasn't long before people associating with these agents began to follow suit, if for no other reason than "better safe than sorry"—a popular sentiment in desperate times.

The second step involved the priests themselves, who were in the best position to administer the effort from the safety of their homes and temples. They took responsibility for seeing to the needs of the families of war dead, and not just those of their own congregations. For the first time, temple funds and resources went to assisting those outside the congregation, even

to those who worshiped only the Sovereign Host, in the interest of long-term benefit. The priesthoods of the three gods spent a great deal of money during the war, in effect buying the faith—or at least the allegiance—of many new converts. Ironically, this subtle integration earned great success—just like the tradition of the Sovereign Host.

Thanks to these efforts, the names of the Dark Six were on the lips of just about everyone in those grim days, even trusted figures such as ship captains and battalion commanders. This greatly reduced the social stress of letting slip a forbidden name, thereby spreading the one thing the priests desired above all else: acceptance. By the time the war ended, the cabal of priests had managed to make offering prayers to the Fury, the Mockery, and the Shadow a common practice.

This brief sense of unity and cooperation began to fade even before the war had ended. By the time of Cyre's destruction in 994 YK, most of the priests who had attended the original conclave were either dead or defrocked, often at the hands of subordinates who saw betrayal in such diversion of precious resources. Today, that liturgical league—never very numerous to begin with—has all but disintegrated. A few priests yet strive to maintain relations with the few similarly minded scions who remain in other temples across Khorvair.

Specific Attitudes

The worshipers of the Dark Six are as varied as those of any other faith. The following points summarize the archetypal views of the faith as a whole toward Eberron's other religions. Just remember that these are stereotypical attitudes, not rigid dictates.

The Sovereign Host: Despite what some of my fellow faithful might say, the Nine are equally as important to the balance of the world as are the Six—just not as important to me.

The Silver Flame: You cannot be serious. A cult that asks its adherents to accept as law the mortal interpretation of a "divine voice" none can hear? And to think they call *us* deceivers!

Druid Sects: I once heard tell of a peasant boy whose sole dream in life was to become a squire to a great knight. When asked why he didn't dream of becoming a knight himself, the boy replied, "How could one such as I hope for such things?" The boy would have made a fine druid.

The Blood of Vol: Children who will never know the error of their ways until they stand face to face with the Keeper—by which time it will be far too late.

Other Sects: When beings of such power and magnitude as the gods exist, why would one waste time giving one's faith and obeisance to a mere idol or to a beast, even one as mighty as a dragon? As powerful as they are, such beings can still be felled by blade and bow—the last time I checked, one could not say the same of a god.

THE DARK SIX IN THE LAST WAR

The disparate priesthoods of the Dark Six spoke with equally disparate voices during the war. Though issues of nationality and territory overtook those of religion, worshipers of the Six did not let their prayers and obligations slide. The war reinvigorated their faith, particularly in the Fury, the Mockery, and the Shadow, whose

congregations expanded greatly during and as a result of the Last War.

The influence of the remaining three dark deities also increased. One sage observed, "War is the preferred environment for the exiled gods, and who among us believes they would not choose to make it the preferred state of ourselves as well?" Regardless of which side's ranks swelled the fastest during the war, the influence of the Devourer, the Keeper, and the Traveler continued to grow. Desperation and suspicion are the children of war, and wherever they appear, hushed prayers to these gods are sure to follow. Sailors increased their prayers to the Devourer tenfold, to insure calm waters and victorious battles at sea; soldiers whispered pleas to the Keeper to spare them painful death or empty afterlife (or both), as priests of the Keeper walked the sidelines of every major battle; and all those who journeyed to meet strangers in battle many leagues from home kept the Traveler in their hearts in the hope of safety until they could return. By the time of the Treaty of Thronehold, the Dark Six had grown more influential than any among the Five Nations could have guessed.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE DARK SIX

Temples to the Dark Six are as varied as are the worshipers themselves. Most are built of stone, to better safeguard them and their inhabitants from would-be aggressors, but some use wood (particularly those devoted to the Devourer) or are carved from the very earth. A given temple's visibility depends on the community's attitude toward the god in question. Few temples to any of the Six (with the exception of the Traveler, in some areas) exist openly in good-aligned communities. The local shrine operates in secret, often underground or in a seemingly innocuous warehouse or private home. Most are blocky, even fortresslike, with few outward signs of their true purpose.

Given this need for secrecy, temples of the Dark Six are not required to have any specific layout or number of floors. All the same, the number six is an oft-repeated theme, and congregations with substantial resources build temples with six floors, six wings (often one hall of worship and five adjoining sections), six rooms per floor, or in rare cases, some or all of the above.

Each god has an associated color, as shown below, which dominates the look of any temple. The exception to this rule is the Traveler, whose priesthood claims no single color for its deity. Indeed, Traveler priests alter their temples on a regular basis, including their colors.

Deity	Associated Color
The Devourer	Green
The Fury	Red
The Keeper	Gray
The Mockery	Brown
The Shadow	Black
The Traveler	None

The only two colors that almost never appear in temples to the Dark Six are blue and gold—the traditional colors of the Sovereign Host.

Dark Six temples are practical and efficient. Most contain a hall of worship, an open area that serves as general-purpose chapel, sacrificial chamber, and common rectory. Beyond the hall of worship are the temple's ancillary chambers. In larger temples, these occupy separate wings and contain many rooms. In smaller structures, the hall of worship is the centerpiece of a single building and connects directly to the other rooms and halls.

Like those who worship the Host, the priesthods of the Six actively seek out temple sites in areas that have yielded dragonshards. Unlike the priests of the Nine, however, they are interested in Khyber dragonshards as well. They see as a sign of great favor a location that bears Eberon dragonshards on the surface and Khyber shards beneath. Even monstrous worshipers who cannot benefit from dragonmarks keep this tradition, if only for the obvious monetary benefits of such discoveries. Though most Dark Six temples are not on sites of dragonshard discoveries, each priesthood tries to build at least one "flagship" temple that is so favored.

Shrines to the Dark Six are often personal affairs, honoring whatever deity or deities are most important to the builders. Most are small, usually built into or around existing structures, and might not be obvious places of worship. Even the smallest shrine has an altar, but some are retractable or can be otherwise concealed to prevent unwanted discovery.

ORDERS AND MONASTERIES

The individualistic nature of Dark Six worship means that no formal orders exist, and monastic discipline is rare. One order of monks, the Flayed Hand (*Player's Guide to Eberon* 108), serves the Mockery. These fanatics are renowned for their unflinching dedication to the skinless god and to a belief system known as the path of pain. The order's members ritually mutilate themselves (and others), and work to spread fear and treachery among the Vassals of the Host. Most are so consumed with their ideology that they truly believe the Mockery to stand above all other deities, and even those who also pray to other gods do so only rarely. The sect is infamous for performing assassinations with cold efficiency.

SAHUAGIN TEMPLE OF THE DEVOURER

Deep in the Thunder Sea, a jagged skerry has been adopted as a shrine to the god as well as an indoctrination and breeding center for young sahuagin.

Upper Level: This level of the shrine is a natural cave and is largely dry.

1. Spawning Pool. A winding tunnel opens into a large chamber with a saltwater spawning pool at its center, which contains a dozen very young sahuagin. A senior priestess (female sahuagin cleric 10) guards the hatchlings and commands the troops inhabiting this level.

2. Barracks. This smaller cave is a sleeping area for four temple guards (sahuagin fighter 6). At any given time, two are resting here, one is in the main chamber, and one patrols the waters outside the entrance.

3. Nether Passage. A forking passage ends in a steep natural chimney that drops about 10 feet to the middle level of the shrine. This exit is defended by a fierce temple hunter (male four-armed sahuagin ranger 8).

4. Stores. This cul-de-sac serves as a storage area, containing supplies for the temple, weapons and potions, religious equipment, and so forth. No door or lock defends it, but a trap in the corridor unleashes a torrent of poisoned spears.

Poisoned Spear Trap: CR 8; mechanical; proximity trigger; repair reset; Atk +21 ranged (1d8 plus poison, spear); poison (deathblade, Fortitude DC 20, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con); multiple targets (1d6 spears per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 22.

Middle Level: This area is partially water-filled, roughly waist-deep to a Medium humanoid.

5. Training Room. Another large natural cavern serves as a training room for temple hunters, as well as a convenient spot to dispose of troublesome intruders. Two 6th-level rangers and four Large sharks operate in here. A water-filled artificial tunnel to the shrine proper opens from the bottom of this cave, and the hunters and sharks patrol back and forth between the areas.

6. Cell. A barred chamber contains what appears to be an aquatic elf prisoner (actually a 9th-level malenti sorcerer). This ruse is a fallback against attackers who get past the defenses to this point. The malenti is in contact with the cleric and the ranger in the upper level and enters the "prison cell" when warned of intruders. If possible, he assists the hunters in the training room with subtle spells, trying not to draw attention to himself as anything other than a helpless captive. When not in the cell, this malenti undertakes spying missions for the temple. A secret exit at the back of the cell connects to a hidden tunnel (both Search DC 20).

7. The Loop. This ring-shaped tunnel apparently has no exits. A room has been hollowed out of the coral center, with hidden peepholes to allow observation. An 8th-level underpriestess watches this area. Two secret doors (Search DC 20) allow quick exit to either side.

8. Treasure Room. Temple treasure, mostly offerings of jewelry and golden objects, is stored in a hollowed-out vault with a well-concealed door (Search DC 24). Stacks of sacrifices' bones form a grisly dais with the treasures heaped upon it. The chimney from the upper level opens into this chamber, defended by a roper that looks like a coral projection. Many of the bones in here are the remains of its feasts.

Bottom Level: The lowest reaches contain the shrine proper and are completely submerged.

9. Shrine of the Devourer. This great chamber has room to hold dozens of worshipers at a time. At its center is a raised platform decorated with coral and bone carvings of fierce sea monsters and bloody battle. The high priest of the temple is not a sahuagin but an adult black dragon, Tuorachthend, who also uses this chamber as her lair. The dragon's personal hoard lies piled deep under the black water; she hides beneath the surface most of the time, except when performing ceremonies.

SAHUAGIN TEMPLE OF THE DEVOURER



- Key**
- 1. Spawning pool
 - 2. Barracks
 - 3. Nether passage
 - 4. Stores
 - 5. Training room
 - 6. Cell
 - 7. The loop
 - 8. Treasure room
 - 9. Shrine of the devourer

One square = 5 feet

FORGE OF THE SACRED SPARK

The sect of the Sacred Spark attracts experts and artificers, both professions that specialize in creating new wonders. It is also a magnet to warforged who explore the emotional side of creation.

This small shrine stands in Ghalt, Aundair, where hostile attitudes toward worship of the Dark Six (regardless of context) have forced worshipers to maintain a low profile. The Forge of the Sacred Spark occupies a series of rooms and a hidden workshop in a windowless extension behind an ordinary-looking blacksmith's shop. The shopkeeper, Elsinter Grayhands (male human expert 6), is the head priest of this small group (numbering only a dozen souls) and makes sure that unwelcome visitors do not enter the back space.

1. Main Shrine. This large open space is for cult ceremonies. An engraved circle nearly fills an apse at the north end, and three dedicated wrights (*ECS* 285) labor over the sacred flame it contains. Near the circle are two anvils, each marked with the cult's emblem (a blend of Onatar's and the Fury's symbols), on which the sect's crafters and artificers (and their dedicated wrights) produce works dedicated to their patrons. Shelves to either side hold metalworking tools, spell components, and other ingredients needed for forging. The temple's high acolyte, Albrecht (male gnome artificer 5) attends to the everyday needs of worshipers and artisans, as well as devoting much of his own time to creating wondrous items. When not at work in the temple, he makes his home in a modestly wealthy part of town. A massive altar stands in the middle of the chamber, on which are piled offerings of finished goods.

2. Iron Defenders. Some of the sect's creations act as temple guardians. This nondescript room contains three iron defenders (*ECS* 287), which respond to sounds of combat or alarms in the main chamber. They are under Albrecht's direct control.

3. Furtive Filchers. Another group of created beings, four furtive filchers (*ECS* 286), occupies this otherwise unadorned room. They also obey Albrecht or Elsinter.

4. Apprentice's Quarters. Maril d'Cannith (female human expert 4) has been learning both the metalworking craft and the ways of the Sacred Spark as apprentice to Elsinter. Except when on errands to obtain supplies or special ingredients for the shrine's forge, she never leaves the building. She spends most of her waking hours laboring in the blacksmith's shop or practicing her craft within the temple. The rest of the time she is in this modest bedroom and study. The place is messy, heaped with half-finished projects, unlaundered clothes, and papers covered with scribbling. An unmade bed and a simple writing desk are the room's only furnishings.

5. Kindle's Chamber. Kindle (male personality warforged fighter 3) is a Reforged who recently found his way to the Sacred Spark. He hopes to understand fleshbound life better through exploring creative passion. He also makes for excellent temple security. He spends much of his time observing worshipers and artisans, though he is not artistically inclined himself, asking many questions of Elsinter and Albrecht. He is fascinated by the disorganized habits of Maril, but she

FORGE OF THE SACRED SPARK



Key

1. Main shrine
2. Iron defenders
3. Furtive filchers
4. Apprentice's quarters
5. Kindle's chamber

One square = 5 feet



finds the attention annoying. Although Kindle has no need of sleep, he retreats to his private room when the shrine is quiet. There he examines the sensory life amid his collection of bric-a-brac. He has a pet cat, so far unnamed, a stray he rescued from a grimy alley, which he keeps in his room at all times. He loves to observe its pleasure in mere existence and is surprisingly tender with it.

VARIANT SECTS

Worship of the Dark Six isn't a single, monolithic organization, so only truly exceptional concepts are considered to be "variant." Followers of the Six respect (or at least understand) all those who keep the gods in their prayers, and even unconventional sects go largely ignored.

The following are examples of sects whose ideologies and activities are extreme or controversial.

The Cabinet of Faces: An order of doppelgangers and changelings, this group's members believe that they are the true children of the Traveler. The motives of the Cabinet are always mysterious, and the sect might prove to be an unexpected ally or a deadly foe. More information about the Cabinet of Faces can be found in *Races of Eberron*.

Creation's Muse: This mysterious sect of deceivers venerates the Traveler in its capacity as great creator. Sect dogma maintains that the Traveler created all the other gods, either directly or indirectly (such as by inspiring the Devourer with the urge to sire a child), and that it is therefore the greatest of all deities. Cultists credit the Traveler with just about every significant discovery, including the creation of the warforged. They bear a special disgust for the Scions of the Forge (see Hierocrats, page 27) and actively work to ruin those warforged followers of Onatar. Creation's Muse comprises a wide variety of members, of many different races and classes, all of whom work in secret to bestow the "gifts of the Traveler" upon the other sentient races. The sect is also rumored to be in constant search of their god, whom they believe walks among them.

The Sacred Spark: One of the smallest and least known of all religious sects, the Sacred Spark exists on the fringe of both the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six, dedicated to the worship of a single god from each. Acolytes of the Spark revere both Onatar and the Fury, in whom they see two faces of the same divine force. The greatest mortal achievements come not by the grace of Onatar alone, but through him by means of the Fury's passion. Likewise, the passion of the Fury is useless without both context and focus—a fire with nothing to consume but itself. Vassals of the Host find the Spark dangerous, its members a bit unhinged; worshipers of the Fury consider its existence a blasphemy upon her holy name.

Schismatics: Rather than maintaining a sect of their own, schismatics can be found among worshipers of the Dark Six all over the world. They believe that the

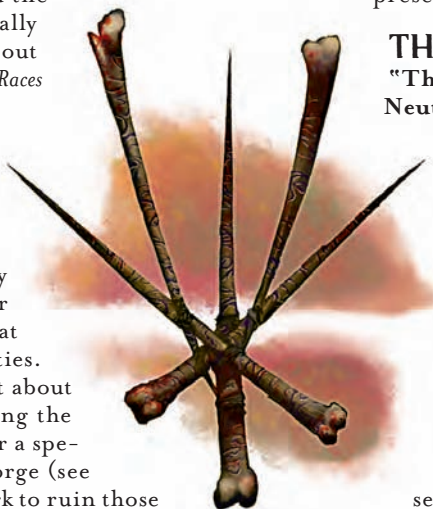
Schism was a divine blessing: The Six truly are a separate pantheon now and can rise up against the Nine, should they find the power. As a rule, schismatics are very devout. They discourage excessive worship of only one among the Six, as it weakens the unity of the pantheon and its followers, and they work to thwart those sects that place one god above the rest. Schismatics believe that worship of all the Dark Six strengthens the pantheon as a whole, and that once enough worshipers have united in their faith, the Six will conquer their former accusers.

THE GODS OF THE DARK SIX

Each of the gods of the Dark Six is presented below, along with information pertaining specifically to that deity (a sidebar details cleric information on the pantheon as a whole). As with the Host, this information represents traditional understanding of scripture, not divine truth as handed down by the gods themselves. Many Vassals hold interpretations that differ slightly from those presented here.

THE DEVOURER

"The Sovereign of Wave and Whelm,"
Neutral Evil



The Devourer

The Devourer is often associated with his sister, Arawai: Just as Arawai is the deity of the natural world, the Devourer is the lord of nature's destructive side. Civilized folk might pray to Arawai for a bountiful harvest, but they also beseech her brother to protect that harvest from flooding and drought. The Devourer is also god of the deep. The ocean waves are his sole purview, and any sailor (regardless of alignment or beliefs) would be wise to pay at least lip service to his power. In this capacity, the god finds worshipers among the lizardfolk, sahuagin, and other aquatic races.

Portfolio: Devastation, hunger, nautical travel, storms, water.

Domains: Cold†, Destruction, Evil, Pestilence‡, Ocean‡, Water, Weather*.

Priest Training: Priests of the Devourer are familiar with nature in general, and with water and storms in

THE DARK SIX

Neutral Evil

Worship of Dark Six deities usually focuses on an individual member of the pantheon, but some followers (especially the schismatics) observe the disparate gods as a divine entity.

Portfolio: Passion, destruction, individuality, fear, vengeance.

Domains: Any domain associated with one of the individual pantheon members.

Favored Weapon: Kama.

particular. Most were fishers, sailors, or slaves before becoming priests.

Quests: The Devourer's faithful quest to rescue those lost at sea, end or cause drought, or protect rivers and lakes from the unworthy (even if it means destroying them).

Prayers and Rites: Sacrifices to the Devourer involve immersion in water; grim stories abound of living creatures tossed into maelstroms. Vassals entreat the god to cease flooding or drought, and to show mercy when they are lost at sea.

Shrines: Shrines to the Devourer are usually built of wood, and many are roofless, allowing rain to enter freely. Others are built on the water itself, either on lakeside barges or in the cabins of seafaring vessels. They stink of blood and are hung with rotting seaweed.

Favored Weapon: Trident.

Holy Symbol: A bundle of five sharpened bones.

THE FURY

"The Sovereign of Rage and Ruin," Neutral Evil

Daughter to Arawai and the Devourer, the Fury is a deity of passion driven to extremes. She is patron to all who allow their passions to consume them, regardless of whom else they worship. Her followers cultivate rage and resentment among the so-called "civilized," to better spread the influence of their god. The Fury watches over barbarians everywhere, as well as certain types of artists, crafters, and bards. She is also the deity of flavor among many intelligent monsters.

Portfolio: Anger, extremism, insanity, passion, revenge.

Domains: Evil, Liberation†, Hatred†, Madness*, Passion*, Wrath†.

Priest Training: In all matters, the Fury's priests are passionate. They must have an intimate understanding of pain and loss. Many were bereaved during the Last War, and many fought in it.

Quests: The Fury demands her followers inflame passion by every means possible to break down the strictures of formality and custom.

Prayers and Rites: The Fury's rites are deeply personal affairs. Sacrifices almost always involve bloodshed, sometimes on the part of the petitioner, sometimes not. One word that never describes any rite conducted in the Fury's name is "somber."

Shrines: Shrines to the Fury are as varied as her worshipers. Among certain drow sects, temples are strangely elaborate and meticulously maintained. By contrast, a monstrous shrine might be little more than a pile of bones, with fresh kills piled regularly on top.

Favored Weapon: Rapier.

Holy Symbol: A red-and-black, winged wyrm with a woman's head and upper body.

THE KEEPER

"The Sovereign of Death and Decay," Neutral Evil

Another of the second divine generation, the Keeper is the son of Olladra and Onatar, and the flip side to his twin brother, Kol Korran.

Where his brother is the patron of material wealth, the Keeper governs shameless greed and gluttony. He

is the hunger in the dark,

clutching at anyone or anything

that strays too far from the light. It

is said that of all the gods, he alone

can waylay the deceased on their journey to Dolurrah, and no soul once ensnared

can escape the Keeper's chill embrace. He is the patron of death cults all over Eberron, and in this capacity, has become the unofficial god of the religious necromancer.

Portfolio: Death, entropy, greed, hunger, time.

Domains: Death, Decay*, Evil, Greed†, Hunger†, Pact†.

Priest Training: Servants of the Keeper

must have a working knowledge of life and death; disturbingly, many of his priests were once healers.

Quests: Quests in the Keeper's name often consist of killing someone or something specific, usually with a *Keeper's fang* weapon (ECS 226), but some revolve around discovering some mystery or acquiring an item of great value.

Prayers and Rites: Sacrifices to the Keeper almost always require ending life in his name. They range from breaking a rabbit's neck to beheading multiple sentient creatures, depending on the importance of the rite.

Shrines: The Keeper's shrines are constructed of stone, and many are underground, in tombs, or both. Personal shrines often include a decorated skull.

Favored Weapon: Scythe.

Holy Symbol: A Khyber dragonshard in the general shape of a fang.

THE MOCKERY

"The Sovereign of Betrayal and Bloodshed," Neutral Evil

This evil deity, known in some circles as the Betrayer, is brother to Dol Arrah and Dol Dorn. His betrayal led to his flaying and banishment from the Sovereign Host. Once part of the triumvirate of combat deities that included his brothers, the Mockery now represents the dark side of their portfolios. He is the god of dishonorable combat and unjust war, and is patron to all manner of evil warriors and rogues. Assassin cults, of which the most infamous is the Flayed Hand (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 108), keep him in their prayers.

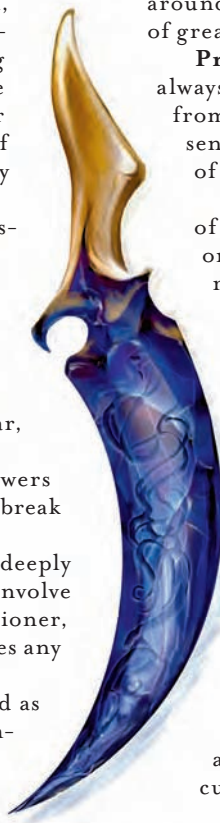
Portfolio: Combat, dishonor, murder,

terror, treachery.

Domains: Destruction, Domination†, Evil, Illusion†, Trickery, War.



The Fury



The Keeper

*The Mockery*

Priest Training: Priests of the Mockery must know betrayal personally, and thus must bring to ruin someone close to them before entering the priesthood. They are also expected to learn something of anatomy and surgery.

Quests: The Mockery's adherents often exact bloody vengeance on those who have wronged them or their god. They also seek to destroy the priesthoods of both Dol Arrah and Dol Dorn—corrupting a priest of either god earns the Mockery's highest favor.

Prayers and Rites: The Mockery is often invoked just before a killing, whether through assassination or armed combat. Sacrifices usually consist of things valued by the petitioner's enemies, perhaps a trusted weapon or beloved mount.

Shrines: The Mockery's shrines are downright ghastly, more charnel pits than temples. Bloody chains dangle from the ceiling, and the walls are hung with strips of skin. Rather than cleaning up blood spilled in the god's name, priests treat it chemically to retain its fresh color and viscosity, so that shrines seem literally coated in blood.

Favored Weapon: Kama.

Holy Symbol: Five blood-spattered tools, laid out in the rough shape of the divine Octogram of the Host.

THE SHADOW

"The Sovereign of Magic and Mayhem," Chaotic Evil

If Dol Arrah represents the light of the mortal soul, the Shadow is the darkness within. The literal shadow of Aureon, it acquired both sentience and godhood as the cosmic price paid by its creator for arcane knowledge. It is a god of ambition, corruption, and dark magic, and evil spellcasters the world over conduct foul rituals in its name. The Shadow is the progenitor of the medusas, and patron to a great many other monster races, especially in Droaam, where its worship is most popular. Legends say that were Aureon and his shadow to be once

again united, the age of civilized peoples would come to an end.

Portfolio: Arcane magic, consequence, corruption, darkness, duality.

Domains: Chaos, Darkness†, Evil, Magic, Mind†, Shadow*.

Priest Training: The Shadow's priests must have some knowledge of both magic and the natural world, and many are equally proficient with both arcane and divine magic.

Quests: Followers quest to unearth ancient and forbidden lore, lead good people into temptation, or twist things of the natural world to suit selfish ends.

Prayers and Rites: The Shadow is invoked in the name of ambition or discovery, especially arcane insight. The god prefers offerings of great value, whether it be personal bloodletting or destroying a precious gem or magic item.

Shrines: The Shadow's favored stone is obsidian, and it forms his highest temples. Though the glassy mineral is difficult to work, the priesthood's facility with arcane magic makes the task of construction easier.

Favored Weapon: Quarterstaff.

Holy Symbol: A block of obsidian in the shape of a tower.

THE TRAVELER

"The Sovereign of Chaos and Change," Chaotic Neutral

The most mysterious of the Nine-and-Six, the Traveler is neither child nor parent to any other god in the collected pantheon. It is the only god said to walk the face of Eberron in body, as well as in spirit, but its mastery of form prevents any mortal from recognizing it. The sovereign of cunning, invention, and transformation, the Traveler is patron to all who embrace change, whether physical or philosophical. Changelings, doppelgangers, lycanthropes, and shifters view the Traveler as the highest god.

Portfolio: Chaos, deception, evolution, invention, transformation.

*The Shadow**The Traveller*

Domains: Artifice*, Celerity†, Chaos, Charm†, Creation†, Liberation†, Travel, Trickery.

Priest Training: The Traveler's priests are consummate deceivers. Many were artisans or other inventors before donning the cloth of change.

Quests: Priests of the Traveler often go on long journeys, sometimes to deliver messages or objects, often to produce change by upsetting the social order in some way. At other times, they wander without apparent purpose. Some are called upon to adopt alternative identities, often for years at a time, to aid in their subversive efforts.

Prayers and Rites: Sacrifices to the Traveler require the petitioner to create something and then destroy that creation in the god's name, thereby proving willingness to accept change and transformation. Nearly all Vassals pray to the Traveler before embarking on long or perilous voyages.

Shrines: Shrines to the Traveler have no consistent make or design. Each worshiper is expected to create a personal place of worship and to alter it regularly.

Favored Weapon: Scimitar.

Holy Symbol: An eight-pointed configuration of four crossed and rune-inscribed bones.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

The following prestige class is unique to followers of the Dark Six.

Other divine-themed prestige classes appropriate for worshippers of the Dark Six or one of its deities include the divine crusader, the stormlord (The Devourer), the temple raider of Olidammara (The Traveler; change deity name), and the acolyte of the skin (The Mockery). The first three appear in *Complete Divine*, the last in *Complete Arcane*.

ESCALATION MAGE

"In the hinterlands of magic, the might of the Shadow is absolute—all can hear the promise of untold power in its whispered call. Still, only the worthy find the strength to face the price of that power."

—Lovos, the Shadow of the Wolf

Many know the tale of the shadow of Aureon, god of law and knowledge, coming into a life of its own as an evil deity. According to legend, the unholy divestiture was the price Aureon paid to master the arcane arts. Millennia later, mortals who walk the paths of the escalation mage still benefit from Aureon's sacrifice. By giving themselves over to the Shadow and focusing on the dark side of magic, these arcane spellcasters learn how to "bargain" with their god to make their spells more effective—for a price.

It is an ongoing dialogue. Such devotees must entreat the Shadow for aid before casting every spell they wish to enhance, and success is not guaranteed. As a general rule, the more control the caster has over magic, the greater the likelihood of maintaining that control. Yet even tried and true incantations can take unexpected tolls on occasion, as a boosted spell becomes too much to handle. This process of arcane enhancement through silent prayer is known as "escalation," and while the rewards can potentially be great, few arcanists are

quite so faithful as to risk life and limb merely for the possibility of greater efficacy. Those who take these risks are known as escalation mages, and if they survive their early years, they can grow into the most powerful mages to walk the face of Eberron.

BECOMING AN ESCALATION MAGE

Although this is an arcane spellcasting class, the most important characteristic of any who would enter is abiding faith. Only those who truly believe that they will become greater spellcasters by the grace of magic's dark half stand a chance of making the hope a reality, and they must be prepared to pay whatever price the Shadow demands. The wizard's path is potentially the shortest to becoming an escalation mage, but any arcane spellcaster can qualify with ease, including sorcerers and even warlocks. The Dark Six worshippers' propensity for rhyme even produces a disproportionate number of bards who enter the class. In addition to the character's normal casting ability score, Charisma (for certain class features) and Constitution (for the hit point loss exacted by the Shadow) are the key abilities for any escalation mage.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Concentration 4 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 8 ranks.

Feats: Any metamagic feat.

Special: Caster level 5th, must worship the Shadow.

CLASS FEATURES

As you advance in level, you learn how to parlay with the Shadow to increase your spellcasting prowess.

Spellcasting: At each level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in an arcane spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one arcane spellcasting class before becoming an escalation mage, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

The Shade Within (Ex): When you first embark upon the path of the escalation mage, you draw strength from the Shadow to prepare for the dangerous road ahead. At 1st level, you permanently gain a number of hit points equal to 1 + your Cha modifier (minimum of 1). At each subsequent level, you gain 1 additional hit point. For example, an escalation mage who reaches 5th level would have received a total of (5 + Cha modifier, minimum 5) extra hit points.

Escalation (Su): By appealing to the arcane mastery of the Shadow, you put yourself at risk in exchange for the promise of power. Beginning at 2nd level, you learn how to instantly work such appeals into your arcane spellcasting, mimicking the effects of metamagic feats. These escalations do not actually change the spell's level or casting time. The more escalations you master, the more powerful your spells potentially become, but the greater the risk to yourself. You can use escalation a number of times per day equal to your class level.

TABLE 2-1: THE ESCALATION MAGE

HIT DIE: D4

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	The shade within	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	Escalation (shadow focus)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+1	Escalation (shadow power)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+1	Escalation (shadow growth)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5th	+2	+4	+1	+1	Escalation (shadow haste)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+2	Soul of shadow	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Craft, Decipher Script, Hide, Intimidation, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes), Knowledge (religion), Profession, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, and Use Magic Device.

Using an escalation effect requires a swift action unless stated otherwise in the text below, and applies only to the next spell you cast as long as it is within 1 round. You can use only one escalation effect per spell. You can use escalation effects in conjunction with metamagic feats, but doing so involves additional risk, as you must use the spell's new level (including the metamagic effect) to set the caster level check DC (see below).

Each escalation effect requires a caster level check of varying difficulty; if you fail the check, the escalation effect still functions, but Shadow exacts a toll from you. If you take damage as a result of failing the required check, you must also succeed on a Concentration check (as if taking damage during the casting of a spell) or lose the spell entirely.

Escalation effects can be applied to spell-like abilities just as if they were spells.

Shadow Focus: Upon reaching 2nd level, you unlock the first secret of the art of escalation. You can attempt to increase the effective level of a spell by +1, as though using the Heighten Spell metamagic feat. The caster level check DC is 10 + twice the spell's level. If you fail the check, you immediately take 1 point of damage per level of the spell.

Shadow Power: Beginning at 3rd level, you learn to escalate the potency of your spells. You can attempt to increase all variable numeric effects of the spell by one-half, as though using the Empower Spell metamagic feat. The caster level check DC is 12 + twice the spell's level. If you fail the check, you immediately take 2 points of damage per level of the spell and become fatigued for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level.

Shadow Growth: Upon reaching 4th level, you learn to bargain with the Shadow to shape your magics. You can attempt to increase any numeric measurements of a burst, emanation, line, or spread spell's area by 100%, as though using the Widen Spell metamagic feat. The caster level check DC is 14 + twice the spell's level. If you fail the check, you immediately take 3 points of damage per level of the spell and become shaken for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level.

Shadow Haste: By the time you reach 5th level, you can entreat the Shadow to catalyze your spellcasting. You can attempt to

cast the spell with a casting time of 1 full-round action or less as a swift action, as though using the Quickened Spell metamagic feat. (The activation of this ability is subsumed within the casting time of the spell.) The caster check is DC 16 + twice the spell's level. If you fail the check, you immediately take 5 points of damage per level of the spell and become *slowed* for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level. Unlike other escalation effects, failing this check also means that the spell is not cast (though you don't lose the spell and can attempt to cast it again using the normal casting time, assuming you have sufficient actions remaining in the round).

Soul of Shadow (Ex): At the culmination of your studies, you master enough of the Shadow's capricious nature to exert some small measure of control over your escalations. You can employ each of your four escalations (shadow focus, shadow power, shadow growth, and shadow haste) once per day without a caster level check.

*Lovos, the Shadow of the Wolf,
an escalation mage*



These uses are in addition to those normally granted by your class level.

One restriction exists: you may not apply any free escalation to the highest level of arcane spell you are capable of casting. For example, a 5th-level wizard/6th-level escalation mage can cast 6th-level wizard spells, but can only apply her free escalation effects to spells of 5th level or lower. (Her normal escalation effects can be applied to any of her spells.)

PLAYING AN ESCALATION MAGE

Given the nature of their beliefs and activities, the majority of escalation mages are evil-aligned. This tendency makes them somewhat ill-suited to be PCs, but this need not be the case. Whatever your moral outlook, you worship the Shadow genuinely, if not exclusively, and truly believe in the god's superiority to its "creator," Aureon.

You are often a solitary individual, walking a narrow road with only scholarship and faith for companions. The rigors you endure also ensure that escalation mages are never very prevalent. An exception could be a cult of mages devoted specifically to the power of the Shadow. Such cults are rare and extremely diverse, however, and most of you have little to no affiliation with the others, making discovery difficult.

Combat

As with other arcane casters, you devote yourself to magical advancement and therefore become a powerful spellcaster. Usually, you focus on schools of magic that enhance your association with the Shadow, using spells of a martial or damaging nature, as befits the god's tastes. You are generally weak in physical combat, preferring instead to hang back and launch magical attacks. However, at the cost of some mental resilience, you are surprisingly tough: You gain extra hit points and greater physical fortitude.

You truly come into your own at 2nd level, when you acquire the ability to escalate the power of your spells. You can potentially increase the effectiveness of any spell you cast, though you must be careful not to risk such escalation too often, lest the Shadow ask for too much in return.

At high level, you can be one of the most terrifying spellcasters to face. While your spell selection is no greater or worse than any other spellcaster of equal level, you have the potential to make any spell much more effective, without sacrificing higher-level spell slots in the process. By 6th level, you can even call upon such abilities in times of need without risk of harm.

Advancement

Few arcane spellcasters make the conscious choice to incorporate faith into their magical techniques, but arcane followers of the Shadow know that it is the way to power. You are the result of focusing on this dialogue with the divine to the exclusion of other paths. Even so, your path does not involve forsaking any magical studies. The Shadow merely enables traditional arcane mastery through faith and occasional self-sacrifice; it doesn't replace or alter it in any way.

As you advance in this class, your relationship to the Shadow strengthens, allowing you to uncover new

escalations while growing more confident in your ability to call upon known ones. This process is a powerful religious experience. By the time you reach the culmination of the class, you feel as deep and potent a connection to your god as does even the most pious priest.

It is unthinkable for you to abandon this path once begun. While some of you take periodic breaks (often because of injury from calling upon the Shadow too much), few choose to interrupt their progression in the class. Because the Shadow would never ask you to forsake magical study, even briefly, the only reason to take levels in another class would be to pursue a nonarcane path. Such individuals exist, but they are rare.

Resources

As an escalation mage, you have access to whatever resources are common to members of your previous class by the time you've reached a given level of arcane mastery. Some of you are intimately connected with temples to the Shadow and can look to your priestly counterparts for divine magical assistance. Otherwise, the only special resources to which you have access are those possessed by other escalation mages in your cabal.

ESCALATION MAGES IN THE WORLD

"They are heretics. And like all heretics, they will pay for their heresy—if not in this life, then in the next."

—Tellerson Fenster, high priest of Aureon

Escalation mages, though rare, are dangerous because they are not restricted to a particular region or environment. Wherever the lure of arcane power is strong, the escalation mage arises. Some serve the Shadow (and themselves) from within the ranks of other organizations or even other faiths, where their true allegiances remain all but invisible in the course of day-to-day affairs. In other areas, such as in Droaam, escalation mages walk the streets as arcane nobility.

Organization

Escalation mages have no real organization. However, the class does contain arcane cabals, which concentrate local influence.

The arcane cabal has no predetermined structure. It is simply a gathering of like-minded mages who put their faith in the Shadow. In this regard, each cabal is more akin to a cult of the Dragon Below than anything else. In some areas, it is known as a "ring," in others a "cell," and in certain city-based cases, a "salon." The only rule that applies across the board is that might makes right: The most advanced mage in the cabal determines policy.

Much of a given cabal's activity depends on the circumstances surrounding its foundation. Some are very politically involved and operate as underground cells, subverting the local government or predominant faith in the Shadow's name. In wilder areas, particularly where the goblinoid races are strong, a cabal might act as tribal council and even contain priests of the Shadow. In more civilized venues, arcane cabals are little more than social groups—"clubs" of spellcasters devoted to the Shadow and to exploring its mysteries. Whatever else it does, the arcane cabal always exists to increase the magical might of its members, and any individual

mage who wants to get ahead had better have something to offer the group.

The arcane cabal is thus doubly merit-based. Not only is arcane mastery the gauge by which status is measured, but a member's direct benefit to the cabal determines how much aid and magical learning she can expect to receive. Higher level does not always equate to higher involvement, however. Some of the most advanced spellcasters do the least to better their colleagues' situations and thus are the least inclined to require or receive aid. By the same token, a lower-level mage who actively assists and betters his fellows is likely to receive a great deal in return, even from those who did not benefit directly.

NPC Reactions

Secrecy is a strength of the escalation mage. Nothing outwardly distinguishes an ordinary arcane caster from an escalation mage (except, perhaps, when he calls on the Shadow to boost his spellcasting). Thus, common citizens react to an escalation mage much as they would to any other wizard, sorcerer, or bard. If an escalation mage uses his powers to terrify and destroy, and makes his allegiance known in the process, he is likely to be met with hostility, fear, and resentment.

ESCALATION MAGE LORE

Characters with Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge can research escalation mages to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check or bardic knowledge check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Some arcane spellcasters offer prayers to the Shadow in hope of earning favor.

DC 15: The most devout arcanists receive an answer to their prayers, gaining an occasional surge of great power in their spellcasting, though often at a terrible price.

DC 20: These surges of the Shadow's power are known as "escalations," and some mages spend their lives dedicated to discovering and mastering them.

Anyone who witnesses an escalation in use can attempt a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check or a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check to discern that the caster is one of the Shadow's favored arcane disciples.

ESCALATION MAGES IN THE GAME

Player characters need not realize that they have encountered an escalation mage until you feel the time is right. And even if the PCs know they are dealing with an arcanist who worships the Shadow, they cannot be sure he is actually an escalation mage until they see him use escalations in combat. Escalation mages also provide great narrative context, making equally interesting temporary allies against shared foes, or hidden masterminds behind long-term campaigns.

Like other arcane spellcasters, escalation mages make poor front-line fighters, and the DM should ensure that any encounter featuring an escalation mage provides proper distance from the PCs, at least initially. Use lower-level ground troops to act as blockers or fodder—undead are always a good fit with the Shadow.

Adaptation

Although the concept and methods of the escalation mage clearly link it to the Shadow, the class can easily be adapted to suit other faiths or even entirely different settings. The idea of "power at a price" is an archetypal one and need not necessarily require deity worship. The class could work just as well with an archfiend as its focus, for example.

Sample Encounter

Its peculiar mix of faith and arcane mastery makes the escalation mage an interesting addition to any game, whether as ally or antagonist.

EL 10: The shifter mage known as the Shadow of the Wolf is devoted utterly to his divine namesake. He sought out the Shadow at the close of the Last War, seeing in the dark god a way to overcome the weakness that had resulted in the deaths of his battalion-mates in combat, leaving him the sole, guilt-ridden survivor. Since then, he has endeavored to erase all sense of both guilt and weakness in himself, though his reckless use of escalations betrays the sadness still anchored to his heart. Lovos seems to have a death wish—this impression is not far from the truth.

LOVOS, THE SHADOW OF THE WOLF CR 9

Male longstride shifter sorcerer 6/escalation mage 3

CN Medium humanoid (shapechanger)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Listen** +2, **Spot** +1

Languages Common, Gnome

AC 15, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 13

(+2 Dex, +3 armor)

hp 51 (9 HD); **DR** 2/silver when shifting

Fort +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); 50 ft. when shifting

Melee +1 *spear* +5 (1d8+1/×3)

Ranged light crossbow +6 (1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4

Atk Options shifting 2/day (9 rounds)

Special Actions escalation (shadow focus), escalation (shadow power)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 9th):

4th (4/day)—*dimension door*, *enervation* (+6 ranged touch)

3rd (6/day)—*dispel magic*, *fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 15)

2nd (7/day)—*invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow* (+6 ranged touch), *protection from arrows*, see *invisibility*

1st (7/day)—*endure elements*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+6 ranged touch), *shield*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+6 ranged touch), *detect magic*, *flare*, *light*, *message*, *open/close*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (+6 ranged touch, DC 12)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14 (16 when shifting), Con 16, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 14

Feats Great Fortitude, Healing Factor*, Longstride Elite*, Scribe Scroll^B, Shifter Defense*

Skills Balance +4, Climb +2, Concentration +8, Hide +4, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spellcraft +2, Spot +1

Possessions bracers of armor +3, +1 *spear*, light crossbow, amulet of health +2, *periapt of wisdom* +2

Evil and suffering exist in
all corners of Eberron.



And the Silver Flame
opposes them everywhere.

KA

CHAPTER THREE

THE SILVER FLAME

Ofall the varied faiths of Eberron, the Silver Flame stands apart. The Purified, as followers of the faith call themselves, worship a divine entity of nonmortal origin, unlike the elves of Aerenal or the cultists of Rhashaak.

Still, their god claims no dominion over the world, nor that it has existed since the Dragons formed that world, unlike the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six. The Silver Flame is a god with a purpose, and only those of equal principle are drawn to serve.

DOCTRINE

The Purified are bound together by numerous rites and traditions, by many beliefs, but by only a single religious doctrine, called the Tenet of Purity:

Burn the corruption and taint of evil from all Eberron. Other gods have begun the creation, but it is the Silver Flame, by searing wickedness and darkness from their imperfect world, that must complete it.

This belief that the world can only be made perfect by the Silver Flame and its followers embodies the height of arrogance in the eyes of followers of other religions, but it is absolutely central to the faith of the Purified. They acknowledge the existence and divinity of other gods, such as the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six, and of the three great Dragons. They even honor them, knowing them worthy of respect. After all, the Silver Flame has never claimed to be a creator deity, and it has not even existed as long as Eberron itself.

Even so, the Purified believe that although the Silver Flame was not the first god of Eberron, it will be the last. So long as evil exists, the world remains flawed and cannot become whole. By ridding the world of all evil, the Silver Flame will transform Eberron into a paradise without wickedness or sin or pain. Then will the other gods fade, for even the best of them are also impure, leaving the Silver Flame to hold dominion over heaven on earth.

For many thousands of years, the Flame existed in Eberron but could not commune with mortals. It was too holy, say the Purified, for flawed creatures to hear its voice. Only when Tira Miron, a paladin most pure of heart, joined with the Flame did it gain a voice that could speak to mortals.

The Purified believe in a hierarchy of evil. All wickedness must eventually be purged, but some is of more immediate import, and is more heavily damaging to the world itself, than other sources of wickedness. Not that the Church feels any evil is acceptable or less important;

this is strictly an issue of prioritization. In simple terms, the hierarchy of evil is as follows.

- Entities of alien evil. These include evil outsiders and many aberrations. Being not merely creatures of innate malevolence, but also foreign to Eberron, these entities cause the most harm to the physical and spiritual health of the world.
- Entities of unnatural evil. These include undead and lycanthropes, creatures that were native to Eberron but corrupted into something hideous. Their presence taints the world around them, making them almost as great a threat as outsiders.
- Entities of innate evil. These include most creatures that are malevolent as a group, such as medusas, yuan-ti, and hags, but are not unnatural.
- Those who choose evil. This includes all evil humanoids, warforged, and the like. Though the cliché of the Purified shows no mercy to evildoers, most real followers of the Flame seek to save these people, not destroy them. Human evil should be fought with compassion, diplomacy, and leading by example. Whenever possible, people should be shown the error of their ways and have the chance to correct their behavior. If this is not possible, the sword might be the only answer; it should never be the first choice, however.
- The evil within. Even the most devout follower of the Silver Flame holds sin in his heart. The Purified believe that once all other evil is destroyed, mortals must purge the very desire for it from their souls. Only then will the demon be expelled from the Silver Flame, and the final traces of evil vanish from the world.

Not only does the Church prioritize evil, it accepts the notion that sometimes a lesser evil can serve to fight a greater. Sometimes, good people might be forced to commit questionable acts in the battle against darkness, or sometimes even be sacrificed for a yet greater good. The Silver Flame does not encourage such decisions, nor does the Church always approve extreme measures, but sometimes no other choice exists.

SOULS AND THE AFTERLIFE

The Purified maintain that the soul is a form of divine energy, but that it does not originate from the Silver Flame or indeed any god. Rather, it coalesces from the energies of the world. Each person born adds a spark of the divine to the world. Those who are faithful to the

The Substance of the Flame

The Church of the Silver Flame was born in the year 299 YK, but the Flame itself is far older. Historical and sacred writings agree, at least, on that much. Where they cannot seem to reach any accord is on the birth, or the nature, of the Flame.

Most scholars attribute the source of the Flame to the end of the couatl-demon lord struggle, roughly a hundred thousand years before the founding of the Kingdom of Galifar, at the end of the Age of Demons. The couatls sacrificed themselves, almost to the last, to banish the native fiends and their terrible overlords to the underworld of Khyber, where they remain trapped to this day. According to this theory, the souls of the couatls merged together into a force of great purity and light, the power with which the paladin Tira Miron would eventually bond.

Most of the Purified have a different interpretation. They believe that the couatl souls did not form the Flame but rather opened the way for it. This supreme act of selfless good caused them to bond with the force mortals view as the Silver Flame, and allowed it access to the world of Eberron from a heavenly realm—a transcendental dimension beyond any known plane. Once the door was opened, it could not again be closed.

Another dispute exists over the nature and influence of the Silver Flame.

The more rigid of the Purified, including the Puritans, claim that ancient texts are mistaken about one fact: the demon was merely bound by the paladin and serpent; it did not merge with them. They claim the Flame itself and thus the Voice of the Flame is unburdened by any darkness. It is merely beholden to its prison to keep the evil contained.

The majority of the priesthood refuses to disclaim ancient writings that speak of the binding of demon, serpent, and paladin together forever. They acknowledge the evil at the heart of the Flame, but reject any notion that that darkness can influence the Flame's essential goodness. They also consider heretical the notion of some scholars that the faint impurity within the Flame made it possible for mortals to communicate with it—that the divine had to be lowered at least one tiny step nearer mortals and the physical world before any such congress was possible.

Silver Flame join with it after death, their own souls adding the tiniest bit to its own near-infinite power. Others are condemned to Dolurrh, where their souls' divinity is extinguished, condemning them to an endless existence as passionless minds with no true spirit. Only the Silver Flame can offer an alternative to Dolurrh, and that is proof to the Purified that the Flame will eventually be the one true god of Eberron. When that day comes, the realm of Dolurrh will cease to exist, for it will no longer serve any purpose.

SERVANTS OF THE SILVER FLAME

Unlike most other faiths, which are primarily regional or cultural, the Silver Flame appeals to specific types of people. A faith based on purging evil calls most clearly to those with similar goals. People who believe the world is not just and wish to make it so, those who have been wronged (by individuals, governments, or even other faiths), and those who yearn to make a difference and to give their lives real meaning, are all likely candidates for worship of the Flame. The precepts of faith dictate that simply leading a virtuous life is a blow against evil. Even common worshipers of the Silver Flame, incapable of crusading against evil, try to lead lives of goodness and charity. The majority of the Church's priests come from their ranks.

That said, not all faithful, or all priests, focus on virtue to the exclusion of all else. The Church of the Silver Flame is a powerful religion, particularly in Thrane and specific communities of other nations. Advancement in the Church is a viable path to temporal and political power. A sizable minority of priests seek to advance not the Flame's objectives, but their own. As the Church spreads and new generations are born into its worship, it becomes more of an establishment. In the earliest days, the Purified were entirely converts, and their faith was absolute. Today, the Church of the Silver Flame is becoming a cultural presence, although not nearly as much so as the Sovereign Host or the Undying Court. Entire populations worship the Flame because they were raised to do so, not because its precepts called to them. This has increased the numbers of the Purified, but it has also diluted the intensity of their belief. Like the priesthood of the Sovereign Host, the Church of the Silver Flame is seen by some as a mere vocation, a means to make a living for those with few other prospects.

BECOMING A PRIEST

Taking the cloth in the Church of the Silver Flame is a rigid, formal procedure. The would-be acolyte must serve under a Silver Flame priest, learning the basics of the faith. This period might last for only a few months, or as long as several years. Once this training is complete, the acolyte petitions for admission to one of the Church's many seminaries, located throughout the civilized nations. The most prestigious of these include the Psalm of the Flame Seminary, or simply the Great Seminary, which is part of the massive Cathedral of the Silver Flame in Flamekeep, Thrane; and Saint Ignatius the Mentor's School for Divine Service in the city of Passage, Aundair.

Before being accepted as a seminarian, the petitioner is subject to a battery of questions and tests of faith. These are almost entirely verbal or written, but they are intense. The individual need not show a deep knowledge of the scripture or liturgy—only what one would be expected to learn when serving a priest—but must display unshakable devotion to the Flame itself. She must demonstrate past acts of charity, faith, and goodness, and she must find at least one established priest to speak for her.

A successful petitioner becomes a seminarian for a period of no less than four years. During this time, she receives intense training in matters of philosophy, history, and dogma. If she displays a propensity for adept or cleric magic, or the calling of a paladin, her training focuses in these areas as well. At the end of every year, seminarians are tested on their knowledge and their faith. Early trials are mere tests, such as those required for admission, but later ones ask the student to solve real community problems, adjudicate doctrinal disputes, and make moral judgments. Most who fail are permitted to retake the year's courses, and no stigma is attached to those who require more than four years to graduate. A truly horrific failure, however, revealing corruption or a flaw in character, might result in expulsion.

All in all, seminary training is a long and arduous process. Those who succeed emerge as true priests of the Silver Flame, with all the rights and responsibilities of the office. During the course of the training, instructors study the students' interests and talents, and recommend which of the Church's various orders to consider upon graduation. A new priest is not bound to follow this advice, but the vast majority of them do so.

HIERARCHY

The Church of the Silver Flame has a rigid hierarchy formed from four formal orders. These orders are supplemented by various smaller brotherhoods and branches.

The Orders

The Order of Ministers: This order includes what most people would consider standard priests. They lead services at local temples, act as community leaders, conduct research and liturgical debate, or serve in Thrane's military. Most priests of this order are experts, but adepts and clerics make up a significant minority.

The Order of Templars: These are the true warriors of the Church. They might be temple guards, crusaders against evil creatures, wandering adventurers in search of wrongs to right, or soldiers in the armies of Thrane. The templars consist largely of warriors, with a substantial number of fighters and monks, and a few clerics. Most of the Silver Flame's paladins serve as templars.

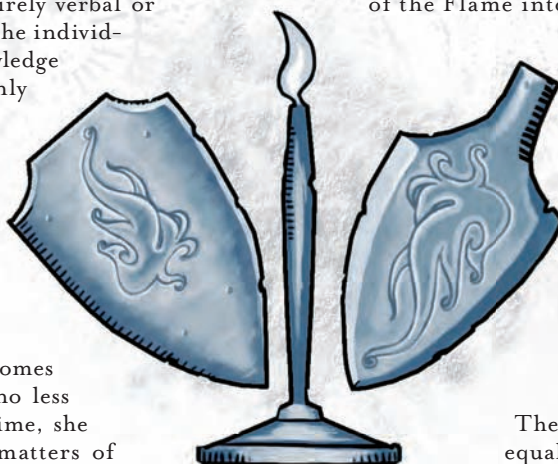
The Order of Friars: In the argot of the Silver Flame, friars are priests who serve a missionary purpose.

Rather than being assigned a specific region or community, friars travel from land to land, bringing the light of the Flame into dark places and converting all

who seem receptive. A smaller proportion of the order's members are pilgrims rather than friars. They are also wandering priests, but their duties are less well defined. They serve where they can, lead by example, conduct services and offer sermons, and aid those who require assistance. Friars are also called "priests errant," particularly among older Purified.

The Council of Cardinals:

The previous three orders are largely equal in the eyes of the Church. The Council of Cardinals stands above them. Seminarians can enter the Ministers, Friars, or Templars immediately upon graduation, but only experienced and well-respected priests are promoted to the Council of Cardinals. Most Cardinals



The symbol of the Silver Flame can appear almost anywhere

The Symbol of the Silver Flame

The standard symbol of the Silver Flame is simply a flame drawn either on silver, or carved in a silver object.

The longbow is the chosen weapon of the priesthood, and the symbol is commonly found on arrowheads. Scholars suggest that the arrows of the bow represent shafts of firelight and sunlight piercing the darkness, radiating outward from a central source. I think the longbow enables warriors of the Church to battle evil without exposing themselves to it, such as during the ancient battle against the rakshasas (who are also most vulnerable to piercing weapons), or the lycanthropic purge.

In the end, the use of the longbow might be a matter of simple good sense and pragmatism rather than symbolism. Followers of the Silver Flame believe in honor in battle, but there's no call to be stupid about it.

are from the Order of Ministers, with a notable few coming from the Order of Templars. Only rare individuals rise from the Order of Friars.

Cardinal Distinctions

Most outside the Church of the Silver Flame believe that the Council of Cardinals refers to the governing body of the Church. In truth, that body is properly entitled the Diet of Cardinals, and its members are drawn from the ranks of the Council. The Council itself is simply another order, like the others, albeit a higher one. As in any specialized profession, nomenclature helps separate the insiders from the outsiders. Scholarly pursuits are no different from religious ones in this manner.

The Ranks

The Voice of the Silver Flame: This is the highest position in the Church hierarchy, though one could argue that it is not a position at all, so much as it is part of the god itself. The paladin Tira Miron joined with the Silver Flame in 299 YK, binding a couatl and the escaped demon lord they were attempting to destroy. Since being joined with the paladin, the Flame has communicated with mortals—Tira serves literally as the Flame's voice.

The Keeper of the Flame: This individual serves as the intermediary between the Voice of the Silver Flame and the Diet of Cardinals. The Keeper is not elected but is called by the Voice. The current Keeper is an eleven-year-old girl named Jaela Daran.

Cardinal: A cardinal is a member of the Council of Cardinals, the most senior priests of the Church. Cardinals rarely conduct ceremonies of their own and have little to do with governing affairs in individual cities, as they are too busy running the Church itself. Only a cardinal can serve on the Diet of Cardinals—the actual ruling body—but not all cardinals are members of the Diet. Because cardinals must be nominated and elected by other cardinals, the overwhelming majority of them come from the ranks of the archbishops, since the cardinals have regular discourse with few others.

Archbishop: A priest who holds authority over the bishops of several major cities is an archbishop. Only the Order of Ministers has members of this rank, and it is the highest rank clergy can obtain without joining the Council of Cardinals.

Bishop: A bishop holds authority over all the priests of a given city or other large community. The term is

used primarily by the Order of Ministers. The equivalent title in the Order of Templars is "Prefect." There is no equivalent among the Order of Friars. A friar who wishes to advance farther in the hierarchy must change orders.

Priest: Those who have successfully joined the priesthood, but have obtained no higher position, are simply called priests. The overwhelming majority of Silver Flame functionaries never rise higher than this rank. A priest in the Order of Ministers is referred to as "Father" or "Mother." A priest in the Order of Friars is referred to as "Brother" or "Sister." A priest in the Order of Templars is "Sir" or "Lady."

Pilgrim: The lowest rank of true priests, pilgrims are beginning members of the Order of Friars. They are lower in the hierarchy than starting members of the other orders, because their responsibilities are fewer and less well defined.

Acolyte/Seminarian: These two designations do not technically count as ranks in the priesthood, since those who hold them have not yet become priests.

DUTIES OF THE CLERGY

All priests, and indeed all followers, of the Silver Flame have one duty above all others: Purge the world of evil. Everything else pales before this one imperative. Priests of the Flame do not necessarily have to seek out evil if doing so is beyond their abilities or expertise, but should they stumble across it, they must not turn their backs or shut their eyes. They must try to destroy it or at least expose it to the light of justice if possible. If not, they must seek out those who can.

Obviously, how driven a given priest is depends on which order he represents. Many templars, and some pilgrims, actively hunt creatures and people of evil, either to destroy them, bring them to justice, or show them the error of their ways. These devoted few have little time for other duties. For the less martially inclined, however, the struggle against evil could simply be a matter of leading virtuous lives and encouraging others to do the same. Friars, priests, and cardinals have many other duties, and many simply are not equipped to hunt down demons or criminals.

Clergy of the Silver Flame conduct ceremonies and lead prayers for their faithful, just as priests of other faiths do. Because the faith of the Silver Flame originally grew from those who worshiped the Sovereign Host, they undertake many of the same duties, even if they go about them by different means. These include leading services, holy day rites, and life-event rituals; offering counsel to the faithful, or to any who seek it; and undertaking charitable works. This last is considered to be of paramount importance, since alleviating suffering is a step on the road to banishing evil.

One duty on which the Purified place substantially more importance than do the worshipers of the Sovereign Host, however, is evangelism and proselytizing. The followers of the Silver Flame believe that their duty is to cleanse Eberron entirely of evil. Spreading the faith can hasten that glorious aim. After all, those who turn to the Flame are less likely to commit acts of evil themselves (or so the theory goes). Furthermore, the more Purified there are, the more soldiers the Flame

THE SILVER FLAME

Lawful Good

The Silver Flame is a real, recent force active within Eberron. In that regard, it is different from other mainstream religions.

Portfolio: Purity, light, redemption, self-sacrifice, just war.

Domains: Exorcism, Good, Inquisition†, Law, Protection, Purification†.

Favored Weapon: Longbow.

has to battle the forces of evil. Either way, good grows stronger and evil weaker.

All priests of the Silver Flame, regardless of rank or order, must wear the holy symbol of the faith when engaging in the duties of their office. They are supposed to wear it at all times, but this dictate is less rigorously enforced. If doing so would put them in danger—such as a templar attempting to infiltrate a stronghold of evil, or a pilgrim passing through Droaam—they are permitted to go without. When conducting services, priests wear garb of predominantly silver and white. It might be white robes with silver trim, silver armor, or whatever else is appropriate to the circumstances.

True clerics of the Silver Flame have a religious duty to avoid spells that raise the dead, such as *resurrection*. The Purified believe that the souls of the faithful join with the Silver Flame after death, granting them an afterlife of peace and bliss, and strengthening the Flame itself. Thus, calling a soul back weakens the Flame and subjects the soul to further pain and suffering in the material world. Clerics of the Flame return the dead to life under only the most extreme circumstances, and only if the dangers of not doing so outweigh the possible trauma to the soul. Most Purified priests cannot be enticed to do so for any amount of money, though the Church does have members who bow to temptation. Raising a member of some other faith is even less likely. In all recorded history, fewer than half-a-dozen instances exist of a Silver Flame cleric resurrecting a non-Purified individual, and each case was the result of a greedy or weak-willed cleric being tempted by material reward.

FALLEN PRIESTS

The procedure for defrocking a priest is just as rigid and formal as that for taking the cloth. Any Purified can bring charges against a priest simply by offering a formal complaint to any clergy member of equal or higher rank. The priest who receives the complaint turns it over to an inquisitor. In many cases, the complaint is without merit, and the inquisitor swiftly dismisses it; the accused might never even know she was under investigation.

Should the initial inquiry suggest a more thorough examination, the subject is formally accused of wrongdoing, temporarily stripped of her authority, and placed under guard while the inquisitor investigates. These investigations can involve standard detective work and information gathering, *discern lies* and other divination spells, or, in extreme circumstances with a particularly driven and brutal inquisitor, physical coercion.

Certain lesser crimes result in expulsion from the priesthood, but no further punishment. These include corruption, lying to superiors, failure to uphold one's duties as a priest, taking inappropriate advantage of congregants, and similar offenses. Some crimes, however, are so great that the Church dispenses lethal justice on those who commit them. A priest who secretly prays to the Lords of Dust, for instance, is likely to be executed as a heretic and traitor, as is a priest who murders other priests.

Conversion and Cosmetics

One of the reasons the typically rigid Church of the Silver Flame has not generated more ill will in communities is their refusal to engage in coerced conversion. Converts are expected to be virtuous and to banish evil from their hearts and minds. That goal has served to dissuade even the most violent and misguided members from conversion by the sword. Even if such techniques were not anathema to the precepts of the Flame, what value is there in forcing someone who still harbors evil in her heart to claim allegiance to good? Though they might not state it as bluntly, I believe that most soldiers of the Silver Flame would much rather see a truly repentant worshiper of the Sovereign Host or even the Radiant Cults than a falsely penitent convert to the Flame.

Also on the issue of duties, it is interesting to note that in the earliest days of the religion, the faithful were forbidden from using cosmetics or otherwise altering their appearance. Men could not shave, nor could anyone cut their hair, except to keep it out of the way in battle. The idea appears to have been that vanity led to greater sins of pride. In the modern era, priests have taken on more established positions with substantial secular power and been drawn from less-zealous generations of faithful. As a result, this tradition has largely been abandoned. Some Servants of the Pure Flame—the Church's rigid, puritan faction—do still maintain this practice. Their current rarity, however, renders these wild-haired faithful all the more striking.

For Love of Silver

It astounds many people that a Church claiming to stand for justice, right, and the abolishment of evil could be so rife with corruption. For all their enemies, it sometimes seems that the priesthood of the Silver Flame must inevitably be brought down not from without, but from the growing darkness within.

To an extent, this is a skewed perception. The overwhelming majority of Silver Flame priests are legitimately faithful, if perhaps not as pure as they would like. Only a small portion of Purified priests are truly corrupt, but they stand out so starkly against the bright background of the rest, and tend to hold positions of great importance when they are discovered, creating the impression that the taint runs deeper than it truly does.

Still, corruption does indeed eat away at portions of the Church hierarchy. For the most part, it seems to manifest in three different forms.

The most common form of corruption occurs when zealous devotion causes a priest to set aside mercy and compassion. Such a priest might be a pillar of the community and an admirable citizen, absolutely dedicated to the Church, who nevertheless gladly sacrifices the innocent in pursuit of the greater good. He tortures and kills without remorse. He does not glorify these actions, and does not take them needlessly, but neither does he shrink from using dark methods to win the battle against evil.

A second form of corruption is greed. Clerics and adepts of the Silver Flame are not supposed to sell divine spells; these miracles are intended to protect the faithful. Yet some clerics use their magic to gain gold or influence. Some merely want to live in luxury, but others believe that political power is a more effective weapon against evil than a paladin's sword. Even if these priests have evil alignments, they might still be working in the interests of the greater good—at least, as they see it.

Both the above types of priests do not see themselves as evil and might even aid the cause of good. The third category is the priests who knowingly embrace darkness. They hear a second voice calling from the Silver Flame, the whispers of the terrible demon that Tira bound in battle. It is this false Flame that leads a good priest astray. Worse still, a few seek out the evil within the Flame, serving the Lord of Dust at the very heart of the Church.

QUESTS

All quests in the name of the Silver Flame are intended to thwart or destroy evil. Paladins and clerics take the battle to bastions of wickedness, hunting down monsters in the wild, exorcising ghosts and demons in the hearts of cities, obliterating shrines to the Dragon Below and the like. Even less adventurous priests or Purified might undertake quests, however. A friar seeking to bring the word of the Flame to distant villages or a priest who travels far from home to acquire medicines to aid the sick are both battling evil in their own way, and are just as well loved by the Church.

rites and rituals of the Silver Flame

Unlike other faiths that celebrate and venerate aspects of the world, worship of the Silver Flame is primarily a religion of deeds. For a Purified, leading a life of virtue is honoring the Silver Flame, requiring few rituals to enhance that veneration. Thus, prayers and rites to the Flame are relatively uncommon, practiced only under fairly specific circumstances. As with all other aspects of the religion, when they do occur, they are conducted in a formal and prescribed manner.

PRAYERS

Due to the martial birth and nature of the faith, many prayers to the Silver Flame are intended for utterance in the midst of battle. Thus, they are short and direct. Nearly all such prayers make some reference to light, flame, justice, or similar concepts.

Prayers to the Silver Flame are usually requests for aid of some sort or another. This might be as simple as, "Flame of righteousness, grant me strength" during combat, or "Divine light, show me the way" when lost. Purified might also pray for aid in living a life free from sin and evil. These prayers tend to be longer, though still relatively brief, and are often led by priests during larger ceremonies.

The Purified rarely use prayer as a means of thanking the Silver Flame. While a tired warrior might utter a brief "Thank you for bringing us victory" after battle, followers of the Flame assume that their god prefers they show thanks by living virtuously. A follower who feels the need to offer thanks by some other means consults the local priest, who might assign a minor duty, such as bringing alms to the poor or comforting the bereaved.

MINOR RITES

Minor rites to the Silver Flame are uncommon and serve special purposes, usually when priests or other Purified seek to accomplish very specific goals. They are considered ritual magic, although they do not produce any obvious spell effects. Minor rituals exist entirely for purification, and normally apply to any one of four separate circumstances described below.

Burial of the Faithful: The Church of the Silver Flame does not believe in long or ornate funeral services. They do not forbid them, but they are primarily secular gatherings; the religious aspect is relatively short. A funeral consists of a small series of prayers over the

body or gravesite, asking the Silver Flame to forgive any lingering impurities in the deceased's soul and accept it as a new part of the divine Flame. Silverburn-enhanced candles illuminate the corpse or gravesite, onto which silver dust is sprinkled. These are symbolic gestures, intended to keep any evil spirits away from the soul until the Flame takes it in.

Death of the Foe: When a Purified slays a creature of evil, such as an outsider or lycanthrope, tradition requires that she perform a brief rite over the body. These include prayers to the Flame while sprinkling silver dust into the eyes of the deceased. If the Purified lacks silver dust, drawing the symbol of the Silver Flame on the creature's flesh is an acceptable alternative. The purpose of this rite is to ensure that the creature does not mystically rise again, and to protect the surrounding lands from any evil that might be unleashed as its soul travels to Dolurrh (or whatever realm it calls home). This rite is frequently ignored, since adventuring or martial Purified often slay such creatures in the midst of larger battles and cannot take the time to perform it immediately. Some attempt to return afterward and do so, but the opportunity is not always available.

Illness: Lighting silverburn candles around a sick friend or relative while praying is said to attract the Silver Flame's attention. If it is time for the sick person's soul to join the Flame, no amount of supplication will prevent it, but if not, this ceremony hopes to purge the illness from the victim and return him to health.

Evil Injury: A Purified who is injured by an evil being is required to sprinkle silver into the wound and cauterize it with a silverburn flame, if magical healing is not available. This gesture symbolizes her will to resist evil, and petitions the Flame to prevent any possible corruption from traveling to her soul through the wound.

MAJOR RITES

Because funerals are minor rites, the only two life events requiring major priestly attention are births and weddings. Weddings among the Purified are always conducted during one of the high holy days rather than forming ceremonies unto themselves. Only the birth of a child to a Purified couple is cause for a ceremony unaffiliated with a particular holiday. This is the only major rite that is not strictly defined by religious doctrine. While the priest must say certain specific prayers and light silverburn candles in a particular pattern, the remainder of the ritual—hymns, any specific dances, particular sermons—is up to the parents. Expecting couples normally meet with their priest months in advance

to arrange the service as they wish it. The symbolism behind this is readily discerned: Not even the greatest priest can foretell what will happen in life, so it is not the Church's place to determine how a newborn child enters the world.

The faith contains one weekly celebration: the first day of each week, called the Day of Cleansing Fire. For most of the Purified, the Flame is honored on this day by skipping a single meal in favor of prayers of devotion and repentance. For priests and especially devout followers, the entire day is one of fasting and prayer, second only to Rampartide (see below). The Day of Cleansing Fire is a religious holiday in the larger cities of Thrane, and many shops are closed. The service always begins with a recitation of the Nine Miracles of the Silver Flame, spoken in Draconic. The precise nature of these miracles varies a bit from sect to sect and church to church, but for the most part consists of the following:

- Bringing light to the world.
- Imprisoning demons.
- Offering souls an afterlife beyond Dolurrh.
- Granting cleric magic.
- Bonding with Tira Miron.
- Transforming Thrane into a holy nation.
- Victory over the lycanthropes.
- Victory (of a sort) in the Last War.
- The promise of the end of evil, and the creation of a better world to come.

Other than births and the Day of Cleansing, the Silver Flame uses major rites to celebrate thirteen high holy days. Each of these days is marked by specific prayers and rites.

Rebirth Eve (14 Zarrantyr): The Purified new year, Rebirth Eve occurs on the winter solstice. It celebrates the passing of the longest night, when the world begins its slow journey toward light and warmth. The faithful stay up the entire night, holding spiritual vigil and guarding against evil, and spend the following day in rest or celebration, as they see fit.

Bright Souls' Day (18 Olarune): As the dark days of winter draw to a close, the Purified celebrate the lives, and the sacrifice, of every follower of the Flame who died fighting evil and protecting the faithful. Those who have lost relatives in the past five years perform the funeral rite on the gravesite (or in a church, if the gravesite is not accessible), while everyone else sings paeans of gratitude to the fallen. On this day, the Purified are forbidden to use artificial or magical light sources, except in emergencies. They enjoy the day and accept the fall of night, as those who have died experienced life and did not fear death.

BURNING SILVER

Many Flame minor rites and major rites use silver dust and an alchemical substance called silverburn (see page 153) that, when added to a flame, causes it to burn with a silver hue. While these materials are relatively expensive, Purified who can afford them are under religious obligation to use them. Those less well-off

are permitted to find substitutes, such as iron filings, tiny shards of glass, or sweet-smelling oils mixed with the fire's fuel. Most temples to the Silver Flame, unless they are unusually impoverished, keep a small store of silver dust and silverburn for poor Purified who require them.



Khybersef marks the start of winter, when light is at its weakest and the forces that bind the demons of Khyber grow thin

Tirasday (5 Therendor): This holiday celebrates both the start of the planting season and the birth of Tira Miron, Voice of the Silver Flame and the woman who brought mortals and the divine together. This is a day of work, but also of joyous celebration in the evenings. It is a time for giving gifts, and one of the most popular marriage dates.

Initiation Day (11 Eyre): According to Church histories, on this day the priesthood of the Silver Flame formally declared itself an independent faith, rather than an offshoot of the Sovereign Host (as it had been considered in its earliest years). Construction of the first Silver Flame cathedral began on this date. Even today, groundbreaking on a new cathedral or major church is usually scheduled for Initiation Day, as are most seminary graduations.

Baker's Night (6 Dravago): On this night, families and friends gather to share magnificent pastries and similar treats, prepared by bakers and confectioners faithful to the Flame. This is one of the most popular Flame holidays, particularly among children, yet it is also the least understood. It has been a tradition since the earliest days of the church, yet not even the Cathedral of the Flame in Flamekeep, Thrane, has records suggesting where it came from, when it was adopted, or what it celebrates. Practice of Baker's Night has begun to fade in some of the more puritan communities of Purified, and it might slowly disappear from the calendar in coming generations.

Promisetide (28 Dravago): As nature's bounty reaches its height in late spring, the Purified honor the

Silver Flame for the promise of paradise to come. They also honor—but do not worship—the Sovereign Host for creating the world that the Flame would later complete, and for graciously stepping down to allow the Flame its rightful place as the last god of Eberron. Not surprisingly, many people who do not worship the Flame find this holiday offensive.

First Dawn (21 Nymm): On this day in 914 YK, the Church of the Silver Flame officially assumed control of Thrane's government. On the anniversary of this ascension, the Purified give thanks that at least one nation is firmly in the hands of the just, pray that the Diet of Cardinals and the nation's secular leaders will receive the Flame's guidance, and honor the memory of King Thalin, whose passing paved the way for the Church to take over.

Silvertide (14 Lharvion): The highest holy day in the faith, Silvertide commemorates the sacrifice of the couatl and the entry of the Silver Flame into Eberron thousands of years ago. Cathedrals fill to overflowing as all Purified who do not absolutely have to be somewhere else spend the day in prayer and observance.

Victory Day (9 Barrakas): Victory Day commemorates the successful conclusion of the lycanthropic purge. Children act out great tales of these final battles with toy swords, while adults attend sermons on the lessons of the triumphs, the defeats, and the sometimes questionable methods used by the templars during the purge.

The Ascension (1 Sypheros): On this day, worshipers remember the sacrifice of Tira Miron, who became the Voice of the Flame. They gather to reaffirm their faith and to thank Tira, attending great blessing ceremonies in the cathedrals. On this day, the faithful seek ways to contribute to the community.

Saint Valtros's Day (25 Sypheros): This day commemorates the birth of Saint Valtros, the first paladin called to serve the Silver Flame (as distinguished from those who had served other gods until they heard the voice of the Flame). Although important, this festival is perhaps the least of the high holy days; it is marked primarily by brief prayers and church services.

Rampartide (24 Aryth): As the world turns toward winter and longer nights, the Purified steel themselves against evil, both without and within. They follow the scriptures, which say, "Make thyself a bastion, a rampart against wickedness." This is a day of fasting and repentance; Rampartide is a time to atone for the evil within. Children, the sick, and the elderly are not required to fast, but merely to give up their favorite foods for the day.

Khybersef (27 Vult): A shortening of the original name, "Khyber's Eve," this is the start of winter, when light and goodness are at their weakest and worship of the Shadow is strongest. Scripture states that the bonds holding the demon lords in Khyber are at their thinnest between this night and the solstice. The Purified spend the night in intense prayer and spiritual vigilance. Many quests and crusades begin on Khybersef.

THE CALENDAR

The Church of the Silver Flame did not come into being until after the formation of Galifar. Thus, the faith uses the standard calendar as their liturgical calendar.

THE SILVER FLAME IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Despite the importance most Purified devote to their faith, active worship of the Silver Flame does not consume much of the faithful's day-to-day living. The churches hold mass three times a day, but only the most devoted attend more than once or twice a week, and only the truly zealous attend more than once a day. By all appearances, the Purified offer little more than lip service to the Flame.

This is a false impression, though. The Purified do not offer many prayers or rites throughout the day because they honor and worship the Flame through living virtuous lives, and doing good deeds for themselves and their fellows. "A life of virtue," states one of the religion's greatest axioms, "is the greatest gift a mortal has to offer."

This does not mean that the Purified never demonstrate their faith, merely that overt worship is not so common as in other faiths. Purified pray to the Flame whenever they require aid or succumb to fear. They perform rites, and they attend services on the thirteen holy days of the religion, as well as on days commemorating local events of religious significance (such as the ascension of a new bishop). They give thanks for positive events, such as the recovery of a sick relative or even a meal with family and friends. Such prayers are very brief, sometimes involving no more than the lighting of a silverburn candle to shed its glow over the table.

Because living virtuously honors the Flame, sinning against others is a religious offense. This does not mean that the church punishes Purified who commit secular crimes—that's what government is for, even if, as in Thrane, that government is controlled by the church—but even minor offenses are stains on the soul, which the Purified must atone for before being worthy of the Flame.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SILVER FLAME

In some regions, most notably Thrane, worship of the Silver Flame is the dominant religion. Most locals are born to the faith rather than seeking it out.

That said, in all areas but Thrane, the Silver Flame still gains as many new worshipers from conversion as from procreation. It is the only major religion that specifically preaches a need to change the world and the ultimate triumph of good over evil, justice over injustice. Other faiths preach the need to protect Eberron (as some of the druid sects do) or to ascend from mortal life (such as the Blood of Vol), but few grant worshipers the sense of purpose required to transform Eberron into a heaven for all virtuous people. Worship of the Silver Flame appeals to those who have suffered injustice or who seek to make the world a better place. It also resonates with people who have a strong martial ethic—many of those who fight for good in the name

of the Silver Flame are in it more for the fight than the good.

THE SILVER FLAME AND GOVERNMENT

The Church of the Silver Flame has always been strongest in Thrane. For many years, the nation's rulers were followers of that faith, and the Diet of Cardinals took over the nation in 914 when the people rejected the claim of King Thalín's heir. The nation has been a theocracy ever since, with the Keeper of the Flame and the Cardinals wielding secular as well as religious power.

In most other nations of Khorvaire, the Silver Flame is just one faith among many. Although the church might attempt to convert members of the government and influence political decisions, it has only a limited ability to do so. Some of its more zealous factions call for an open coup, claiming that the violence would be more than justified by the good the Flame could do with all the Five Nations under its sway. Fortunately, the majority of the Diet of Cardinals is opposed to this action—the church, powerful though it be, lacks the means to carry it out in any event. The Purified coexist with followers of the Host and other faiths, and preach to the nobility as much as they are able. The church also makes itself indispensable by lending its soldiers to national armies—if those armies are fighting for a cause it can support.

Only in regions vehemently opposed to the Silver Flame, such as Droaam, do the Purified not operate openly and actively. Even here, however, the church has a few hidden enclaves of templars seeking to do what good they can. Some rescue travelers menaced by Droaam's forces, while others actively sabotage the workings of local governments. Most importantly, however, they watch for those rare natives who seem unhappy with the current situation and might be suitable candidates for conversion. A faithful insider is a greater weapon against the darkness than half a dozen holy warriors.

THE SILVER FLAME AND OTHER FAITHS

The Purified have a simple attitude toward the other religions of Eberron: They're all wrong.

This does not necessarily translate into hostility. The Purified have an abiding respect for the Sovereign Host, who created the world the Silver Flame will complete. They feel, however, that worshipers of the Host are clinging to old and outmoded ways, and that they are unwittingly delaying the inevitable coming of paradise. Thus, Purified proselytize to followers of the Host and attempt to convert them at every opportunity. Followers of the Flame approach the druid sects in much the same way. They acknowledge the druids' role in protecting Eberron from great evils, but claim that the Church of the Silver Flame can do a better job, especially if the druids join them.

Where the Silver Flame is not trying to convert other faiths, it is trying to destroy them. The Dark Six, the Dragon Below, and the Lords of Dust are all

the darkest evil in the eyes of the Purified. Individual members of those religions might still be saved, shown the error of their ways and brought to the light, but they are few. Templars do not walk down city streets beheading anyone who utters a prayer to the Six, but in regions where the church has power, such faiths are vigorously stamped out.

Specific Attitudes

Different members of the faith might hold these attitudes to a greater or lesser degree.

The Sovereign Host: They mean well, but they must be convinced that clinging to the old ways harms the future. Certainly I honor my parents, but more importantly, I work to give my children a better world. Clearly, we and future generations owe a debt to the Host, but we cannot complete our holy task until all serve the Flame.

The Dark Six: A barbarous, savage faith. At least those who follow the Host, misguided though they are, venerate gods who represent the best of what was. Those who worship the Six cling to the worst of the old, and they must be cleared away to make room for the coming day.

Druid Sects: To protect the world without also improving it only condemns it to a slower death. The druids should turn their attention to shaping the future, not merely maintaining the present.

The Blood of Vol: Devotion to the blood within is misguided and foolish. Those who take this so far as to seek to become vampires, liches, or other evil undead are fiends most vile. If a common Vol worshiper will listen to reason, he must be turned from its twisted path. Those who become evil undead must be destroyed.

Other Faiths: Some are merely misguided, worshipping beings no more divine than I. Others are heretics on par with twisted souls who offer their loyalty to the Lords of Dust and other demons. Some might possibly be converted, but better that no one so foolish be brought into the fold.

THE SILVER FLAME IN THE LAST WAR

The bulk of the church's resources in the Last War were tied up in Thrane's campaigns. As a theocracy ruled by the Keeper and the cardinals, Thrane fought for not only its own dominance but that of the Silver Flame. Many among Thrane's Purified sought victory to unite the Five Nations not merely under one rule, but under one faith. Even today, many of them resent the soldiers of the other nations, not for their own political defeat, but because Thrane's victory would have hastened the promised earthly heaven.

The church did take advantage of the war to attack enemies uninvolved in the political struggle. Moving templars under cover of Thrane troops, or using battles as diversions, it launched assaults on temples

*Those who believe the
lycanthropic purge was a
church-sponsored massacre
never experienced its
horrors for themselves*



of the Dark Six, or against cults of the Lords of Dust. They struck deep into territories belonging to other nations, sorties that would have been acts of war if war were not already ongoing, to reach some of these foes. The more violent factions even wiped out communities of Sovereign Host worshipers who stood in the way of Purified expansion. The church has punished those who were discovered, but in the war's chaos, more than a few have avoided exposure.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE SILVER FLAME

The Silver Flame is a religion of extremes when it comes to houses of worship. Nearly any structure or room can serve as a shrine to the Flame. All that is required is a spot for a fire—preferably tinted with silverburn—sufficient to light the entire space. This symbolizes the Silver Flame offering light to the Purified and warding off the darkness. Most such shrines are private family affairs, but some are the only place to worship in smaller or poorer communities.

True temples of the Flame, more properly called churches or cathedrals, are another matter entirely. Churches are constructed of stone, and while they require no prescribed number of stories, the first floor always has abnormally high ceilings. All Flame churches feature enormous arches, peaks, open spaces, and graceful flying buttresses, in what has been dubbed the Flamic style. Many have stained glass with silver filigree. The main sanctuary has a mosaic floor, with a representation of the Flame in the very center. A real flame burns in the middle of the mosaic or in a brazier hanging from the ceiling above. This flame, tinted with silverburn, is never allowed to gutter out. Whites and silvers are the primary decorative colors, augmented with deep blue in times of mourning and red and gold in times of active war. The priesthood seeks out manifest zones with connections to Syrania and, to a lesser extent, Irian. Only a tiny handful of these exist, of course, but the Flame's followers prefer to build their greatest cathedrals on such sites.

The greatest house of worship is the Cathedral of the Silver Flame (or simply the Grand Cathedral) in Flamekeep, Thrane. The Cathedral, formerly a castle, has grown to the size of a town and is entirely self-sufficient. It is as defensible as any fortress and contains artisans, soldiers, and even a few large gardens, as well as its various sanctuaries, libraries, and of course the Chamber of the Flame. Even if cut off completely from the outside world, its several hundred inhabitants could maintain a reasonable quality of life for many months.

The neighborhoods surrounding the Cathedral never experience true darkness. Twenty-four hours a day, 336 days a year, a great fire burns atop the Cathedral. This flame is tended constantly, mystically protected from rain, wind, and other elements, and never allowed to die. It burns directly above the Chamber of the Flame, creating the illusion that the Silver Flame itself rises through the ceiling into the night sky, illuminating the city. It does not always burn silver, though. When the Keeper of the Flame dies, it is treated with an alchemical

The Lycanthropic Purge

One reason the Church of the Silver Flame was so effective in, and so well prepared for, the Last War is that it had just finished fighting a war of its own. Many of today's historians, particularly those with a grudge against the church, paint the lycanthropic purge as a massacre by an autocratic religious institution mercilessly and needlessly slaughtering thousands of poor souls who were cursed through no fault of their own.

The truth, as always, is a bit more complex than that.

Around 800 YK, the lycanthropic curse, at least as it manifested in the western portions of Khorvaire, somehow changed. Afflicted lycanthropes gained the ability to spread the curse, a power normally available only to those born with it.

It took a number of years for the Diet of Cardinals to recognize the problem. Led by the Pure Flame faction, the Silver Flame embarked on the Lycanthropic Inquisition—or the Purge, as it is more commonly known—in the year 832 YK.

Unfortunately, the inquisitors had no good lycanthropes to study; these were rare to begin with, and most had fallen into evil because of the curse. The physical similarities between were-beasts and rakshasas convinced the templars that all lycanthropes were evil. And because curing lycanthropy was so difficult, they assumed it was impossible.

To make matters worse, the Keeper of the Flame of that era had an agenda of his own. Keeper Golan Sol saw an opportunity to strengthen the influence of the Silver Flame in Aundair. He proclaimed that the curse of lycanthropy corrupted the soul itself.

The battle was long and brutal. As the tide slowly turned in the favor of the church, lycanthropes hid among human and shifter communities. Here again, many followers of the Flame were overzealous, harming the innocent in their desperate quest to eliminate the remaining shapeshifters. Ultimately House Medani produced a dragonshard focus that could detect lycanthropes and guide the templars to the true foe, heralding the end of the Purge. By 880 YK, the Church of the Silver Flame withdrew its forces from the Eldeen Reaches and claimed that the curse had finally been eliminated.

substance that causes it instead to burn the deep blue of mourning. It remains thus until the Silver Flame calls a new Keeper, and the Diet of Cardinals confirms his or her appointment. Only then does the fire atop the Cathedral return to silver, signaling to all that a new Keeper rules from Flamekeep.

ORDERS AND MONASTERIES

The Silver Flame boasts an enormous number of knightly and monastic orders, each with their own specific devotion or their own assigned region. (These are distinct from the ecclesiastical orders described above, such as the Order of Ministers.) Knightly orders are usually drawn from the Order of Templars and consist of warriors and fighters, with a smattering of paladins, clerics, and monks. They are based in or near large cities, operating from enormous chapterhouses that double as fortresses. Monastic orders, however, are located in simple abbeys in or near smaller cities and villages. Comprised primarily of experts and warriors, monastic orders also include a number of fighters and monks. Only a few paladins and clerics grace these chambers.

Some of the most famous orders are the Order of the Argent Fist, boasting elite holy warriors called argent fists (see page 70); the Holy Brethren of the Silver Blade, a knightly order based in Lathleer, Aundair; the Monastery of Saint Dioscian the Anchorite, near Black Pit in Breland; and the Knights Custodial, who protect other members of the clergy, with chapterhouses in all the major cities of Thrane, and in many in Aundair and Breland.

One order stands out in the minds of Purified and nonbelievers alike. Its members have been known at various times as the Ardent Seekers of the Illuminated World, the Knights Inquisitive, the Office of the Hallowed Confessors, and—most simply and most famously—the Inquisition. They have been a knightly order and a monastic order, but are now simply a semiformal gathering of Church operatives. Whatever their shape, their purpose remains the same: to root out enemies of good and of the Silver Flame, within the Purified and without, and to cleanse the world of them by all appropriate means. The definition of “appropriate” changes from era to era, and inquisitor to inquisitor. Most would never stoop to acts of evil, but some believe strongly that the ends justify the means. Some even resort to torture, or to burning innocents to cleanse a village of a single evil. Unfortunately, the actions of these few have tainted the reputation of the Inquisition, so that other people see all inquisitors as the worst of the Silver Flame. The Inquisition answers to a single cardinal on the Diet, referred to as the Grand Confessor, whose identity is known only to the Keeper and few elder cardinals. Even other inquisitors see their leader but rarely; they normally receive directives through channels and intermediaries. In those rare personal appearances, the Grand Confessor is masked and cloaked in magical protection. Such extreme secrecy keeps the Grand Confessor free from outside influences.

SHRINE OF THE SERPENT

Many thousands of years ago, a cult dedicated to the worship of the mighty couatls carved a combination community and shrine into the side of a large hill. The shrine was constructed like a step pyramid, each layer 20 feet deep and 20 feet high, creating a profile that looks the same whether viewed from above or from the side. A single stone staircase winds up the center of the shrine. Each level features two arches of brass, formed in the shape of couatls, through which visitors must pass when leaving the staircase. Winding tunnels connect the various levels, sloping up through the hill itself.

Each level but the topmost boasts squared watchtowers (labeled “2” on the map), jutting out over the level below; buildings built into the sides of the hill itself; and, in most cases, free-standing step pyramids at their outer edges. All are carved with serpentine motifs, and all have open, circular doorways fit for both humanoid and serpent. The pyramids appear to have been places of worship, while the structures built into the hill were living quarters.

Today, all structures have been defaced and are now devoted to Khyber. The shrine is occupied by yuan-ti and their lizardfolk slaves, all of whom worship Tava Rassa, a yuan-ti anathema (*Fiend Folio* 193) as a god. The Church of the Silver Flame would like nothing better than to take the shrine and reconsecrate it to the Flame, returning it to the souls of the couatls who sacrificed themselves so many centuries ago.

Level 1: Essthus’s Lair. This level, 20 feet above the ground, is the home of the lizardfolk Essthus (male blackscale lizardfolk fighter 5), taskmaster and collaborator with the yuan-ti.

1. Desecrated Shrines. Essthus uses these former shrines as armories.

3. Living Quarters. These areas house the temple’s lizardfolk slaves.

Level 2: Pureblood Halls. This level, 40 feet above the ground, houses yuan-ti purebloods.

4. Desecrated Shrines. These locations now serve as yuan-ti torture chambers.

5. Living Quarters.

Level 3: Breeding Chambers. This level, 60 feet above the ground, is used for breeding new halfbloods.

6. Desecrated Shrines. These former shrines are now used for forced breeding of favored slaves.

7. Living Quarters. Home of the yuan-ti halfbloods.

Level 4: Halfblood Halls. This level, 80 feet above the ground, holds more yuan-ti purebloods.

8. Living Quarters.

Level 5: Great Shrine. This enormous shrine to the couatl, 100 feet above the ground, stands on a pillar of stone, above a deep pit that drops almost back to ground level. It is now the home of Tava Rassa.

9. Pit.

10. Bridge. A single bridge provides access to the staircase. The tunnels to the side open up into the pit, so that worshipers can see the shrine, but they do not permit access to it.

SHRINE OF THE SERPENT

Key

Level 1: Essthus's lair

1. Desecrated shrines
2. Watchtowers
3. Living quarters

Level 2: Pureblood halls

4. Desecrated shrines
5. Living quarters

Level 3: Breeding chambers

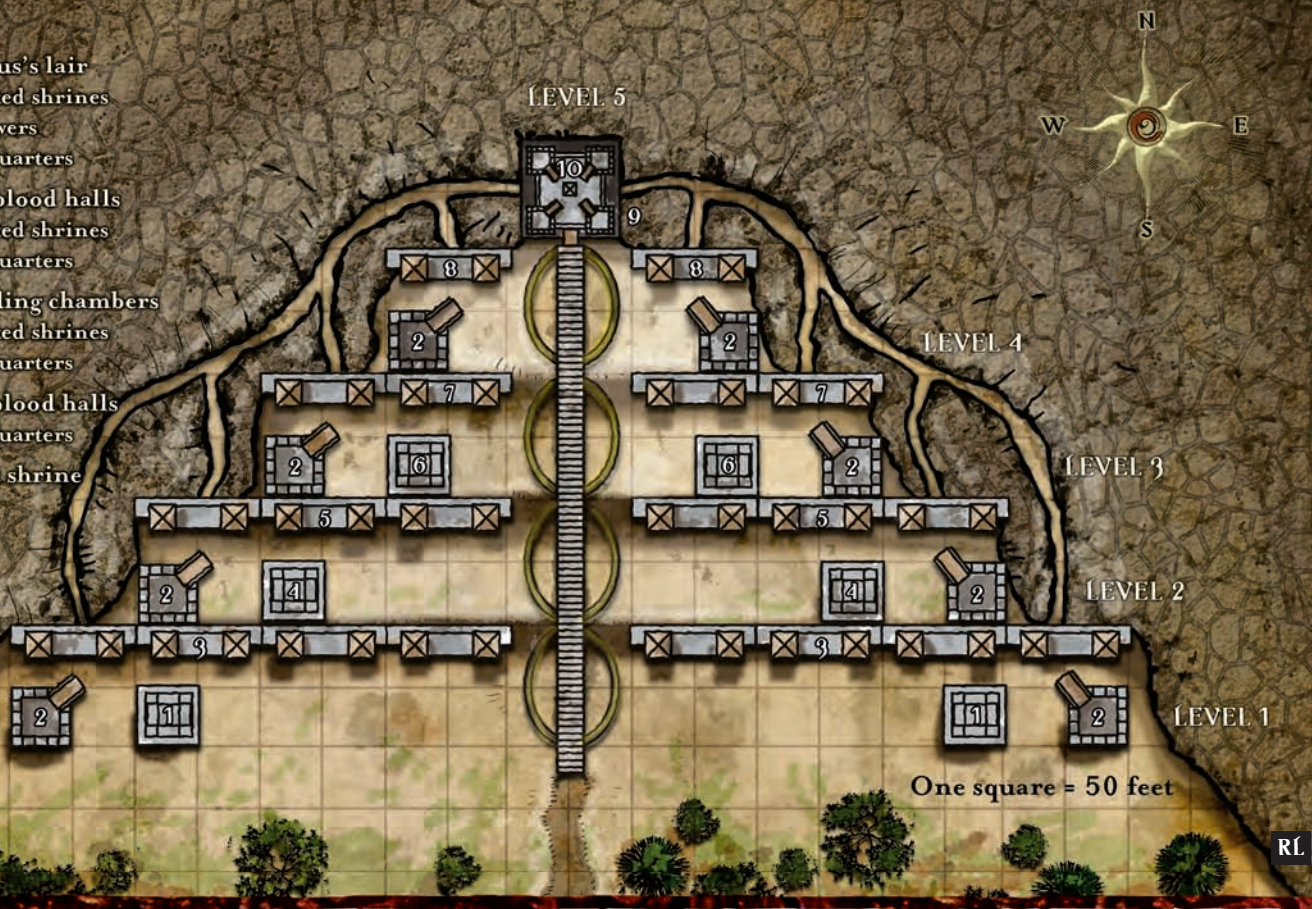
6. Desecrated shrines
7. Living quarters

Level 4: Halfblood halls

8. Living quarters

Level 5: Great shrine

9. Pit
10. Bridge



VARIANT SECTS

The Silver Flame boasts a number of variant sects and subsects. Some are simple factions within the Church, not recognized as separate entities by the priesthood. Others are considered heresies by the faithful, subject to ostracism, rigorous proselytizing, or even open conflict. What follows is a list of some of the larger or more important subgroups and variants.

Ghaash'kala: The "Ghost Guardians" tribe of orcs believes it has a divine duty to prevent evil from escaping the Demon Wastes into the world. The tribesmen worship a great power called the *Kalok Shash*, the "Binding Flame," which gathers the souls of the departed and keeps darkness and evil at bay. Some Purified refuse to accept this as an embodiment of the Silver Flame, unwilling to share a faith with barbaric orcs. Most priests, however, acknowledge that the Ghaash'kala do indeed worship the Flame, but believe their view of it to be skewed and inaccurate. The Flame has sent several missionary expeditions, but none of any real size or success to date, due at least in part due to extremists among the Servants of the Pure Flame who would rather see this heretical worship wiped out than accepted.

Knights Militant: This rigid order maintains extreme standards of purity and morality. The Knights tend to emphasize heroic sacrifice in battle more than imposition of their way on others. As such, they have not generated the depth of hostility the Puritans have.

Order of the Radiant Flame: A more contemplative group, the Order seeks spiritual union with the Flame in

this life, instead of after perishing in the battle against evil. They do not shun the physical and are valiant foes, but neither do they quest far and wide for conflict. They are content to ponder the mysteries of the cosmos from their monasteries and shrines.

Penitent Brethren: This subsect of Purified, consisting largely of shifters, believes that its members are innately creatures of evil. The shifters see themselves as tainted with the lycanthropic curse, while the few nonshifter members consider themselves cursed in some other way. (Warforged might believe themselves incapable of anything but killing, for instance.) They join the Silver Flame in an effort to atone, and seek injury and even death in its service as punishment for their innate sins.

Servants of the Pure Flame: The Servants (also called Puritans) are true fanatics and extremists. They follow every law of the faith to the letter, seek the destruction of every force even remotely opposed to the Flame, and have no compunctions—unlike other Purified—about forced conversion. The Puritans are the most likely to resort to violent or questionable means to obtain a "good" goal, and they have substantial power and influence in the priesthood, all the way to the Diet of Cardinals. The Pure Flame is based primarily in Aundair's major cities, where it has been strong since the lycanthropic purge.

Tarnished: This is not a single group or entity. Rather, "Tarnished" is the name the Purified apply to any who devote themselves to the demon trapped within the Silver Flame. While the faithful refuse to believe

it, a number of individuals claim that a so-called Voice in the Darkness occasionally whispers to the faithful. Sometimes it tricks devout followers into believing it is the voice of the Flame itself, or it works with the greed or corruption in an individual, offering power or even immortality in exchange for service. The Shadow in the Flame is a potent demon overlord, and while it lacks the power of a god, it was a world-spanning power in its day. The Tarnished believe it remains strong enough to follow through on its promises. The greatest of the Tarnished was Melysse Miron, the so-called Anti-Keeper who challenged the established Keeper in the year 497 YK. Melysse presented herself as a reformer, claiming that the Church had lost its way. Only after gaining a substantial following that threatened to rip the Church asunder was she revealed as a servant of darkness. She was captured after a brief but bloody struggle and sentenced to an eternity of slumber in Dreadhold. No agent so powerful has pledged service to the demon since, perhaps because part of its power is still trapped in Melysse. Still, those who claim to hear its voice and bear its powers cut a swath of darkness through Church ranks.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

The Purified are most well known for the exorcist of the Silver Flame (*ECS* 77), but many other Flame-appropriate prestige classes exist in other supplements. The hunter of the dead, justiciar, and knight of the chalice appear in *Complete Warrior*. The church inquisitor, consecrated harrier, and sacred exorcist are featured in *Complete Divine*. The skullclan hunter appears in *Miniatures Handbook*, while *Complete Adventurer* presents a pair of classes suited particularly well for the Silver Flame: the shadowbane inquisitor and shadowbane stalker.

Presented here is a Silver Flame prestige class that focuses on the more martial aspects of the faith.

ARGENT FIST

"I am the hand of the Silver Flame. Its purity infuses my soul, its righteous anger flows through my body. Repent, sinner, or I must share it with you."

—Brother Micah, the Wolf-Hammer

Many Purified devote their talents to battling the enemies of the Silver Flame. Some use divine spells, but the most iconic of the Flame's soldiers are those who imbue their very bodies and weapons with magic: paladins and monks. Although very different in approach, both these combat specialists bring holy might to bear against the forces of evil. Embodying the pinnacle of these techniques is the argent fist, a devotee of the Silver Flame who combines the skills of both monk and paladin into a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Only a precious few possess the focus, the dedication, and the physical prowess to master the abilities of the argent fist, but few enemies can stand against those who do.

BECOMING AN ARGENT FIST

All argent fists—or, more properly, Seekers of the Argent Fist, or Knights of the Argent Fist—begin their training

as monks or paladins. They then shift focus, moving from one to the other, until they have a basic mastery of both disciplines. Only characters with levels in both classes can effectively gain entry into the argent fist prestige class, though the precise combination varies with the individual. Some argent fists begin as paladin/rogues, or even paladin/cleric/rogues, though these are both very unusual paths.

One reason for the rarity of argent fists is that nearly every ability score is useful, if not essential, for success in the class. Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are all valuable to melee combatants. Each argent fist must find the best combination of these ability scores, given his preferred tactics (and other feats and class features). A high Charisma is particularly important in that it grants additional turning attempts, which power some of the most important class features, while Wisdom aids defense.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Lawful good.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks.

Feats: Knight Training* or Monastic Training*, Improved Unarmed Strike.

Special: Evasion class feature, smite evil class feature, turn undead class feature, must worship the Silver Flame, and join the Order of the Argent Fist.

TABLE 3–1: THE ARGENT FIST HIT DIE: D10

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Ascetic knight, ki focus, stunning smite
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Holy armor, ki strike (silver)
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Balm of the Silver Flame
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Smite evil 1/day
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Wrath of the Silver Flame
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	—
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Ki strike (cold iron)
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Mettle
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Smite evil 2/day
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Embrace of the Silver Flame

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Heal, Jump, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Listen, Profession, Ride, Sense Motive, Spot, Tumble.

CLASS FEATURES

As you advance in the argent fist class, you combine many of the abilities of the monk and paladin, as well as learning new abilities unlike any other.

Ascetic Knight (Ex): Your paladin, monk, and argent fist levels stack for the purpose of determining

your unarmed strike damage. For example, a 2nd-level monk/4th-level paladin/2nd-level argent fist would deal 1d10 points of damage with her unarmed strike.

Your paladin, monk, and argent fist levels also stack when determining the extra damage dealt by your smite evil ability.

In addition, you can multiclass freely between the paladin and monk classes. You still face the normal XP penalties for having multiple classes more than one level apart.

This class feature effectively subsumes the benefits granted by the Ascetic Knight feat (*Complete Adventurer* 105). If you already have that feat, you can select any other feat for which you qualify in its place.

Ki Focus (Su): When wielding any special monk weapon, you can treat it as having the *ki focus* special property (*DMG* 225).

Stunning Smite (Ex): When you deliver a Stunning Fist attack in conjunction with your smite evil class feature, you add your argent fist class level to the save DC of the stunning attack.

Holy Armor (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you retain the AC bonus granted by your monk levels (including Wisdom bonus to AC), even when wearing armor or carrying a shield or a medium or heavy load. This doesn't extend to any other monk class features lost when wearing armor or carrying a load (such as fast movement and flurry of blows).

Ki Strike (Su): Beginning at 2nd level, your unarmed strikes are treated as silver weapons for the purpose of dealing damage to creatures with damage reduction. At 7th level, your unarmed strikes are also treated as cold iron weapons for this purpose.

Thanks to your *ki focus* class feature, these benefits also extend to any special monk weapons you wield.

Balm of the Silver Flame (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, you can spend one of your daily turn undead attempts as a swift action to enhance your healing power. Until the end of your turn, any spell or supernatural ability you use that heals hit point damage restores double the normal amount of hit points. For example, if you cast a *cure light wounds* spell that healed 6 hit points of damage, it would instead heal 12; if you used lay on hands or wholeness of body to restore 10 points of damage, it would instead heal 20.

Smite Evil (Su): At 4th level, and again at 9th level, you gain one additional use per day of your smite evil class feature (*PH* 44).

Wrath of the Silver Flame (Su): Starting at 5th level, you can spend one of your daily turn undead attempts as a swift action to cause your fists (or any special monk weapons you hold) to erupt with silver flames. This fire gives off no heat but sheds light as a torch. The silver flames add 2d6 points of damage to any lycanthrope, undead, or evil outsider you strike (merely touching such a creature deals no damage). This damage actually results from pure divine power and is thus not subject to fire resistance. Once activated, the silver flame burns for a number of rounds equal to 5 + your Charisma bonus (if any).

Mettle (Ex): The blessing of the Silver Flame allows you to shrug off effects that would otherwise harm you. Beginning at 8th level, if you make a successful Will or Fortitude save that would normally reduce a spell's effect,

you suffer no effect from the spell at all. Only those spells with a "Will partial," "Fortitude half," or similar Saving Throw entry can be negated through this ability.

Embrace of the Silver Flame (Su): At 10th level, you gain the ability to manifest a tiny ember of the Silver Flame. By spending one of your daily turn undead attempts as a swift action, you become engulfed in an aura of argent fire that sheds no heat. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to 5 + your Charisma bonus (if any) and grants the following benefits:

- You gain fast healing equal to your Wisdom bonus (minimum 1).
- You can spend 1 action point to take an extra move action.
- You radiate light as if you were the center of a *daylight* spell.
- Any lycanthrope, undead, or evil outsider within the 60-foot radius of the pure divine energy you radiate takes a –2 penalty to AC and also takes 2d6 points of damage each round at the end of your turn.
- Any critical threat you score against a lycanthrope, undead, or evil outsider with an unarmed strike or special monk weapon is automatically confirmed, and you can even score critical hits against undead that are within the effect (again, thanks to the divine energy flowing through you).

PLAYING AN ARGENT FIST

You are utterly committed to battling evil in the service of the Silver Flame. You have trained your mind, body, and soul to become a weapon against the darkness and a channel for the divinity of the Flame itself. You have few interests outside the Order; service is not merely a part of your life, it is your life. You understand that some good people have not yet found their way to the Silver Flame, and you consider it part of your duty to lead by example. Those who worship other gods might be shown the error of their ways, but those who worship evil must be purged.

You belong to a branch of the Church known as the Order of the Argent Fist. Unlike most orders, the Argent Fist is considered both a knightly and a monastic order, and it possesses both monasteries and chapterhouses. For the most part, your official title depends on where you began your career of service; most who began as paladins are Knights of the Argent Fist, while those who began as monks are Seekers of the Argent Fist. These are primarily cosmetic differences, however, and all members of the order are brothers and sisters in arms.

Combat

Combining features of both paladin and monk make you a skilled melee combatant. You are equally proficient with your hands and with a small but potent selection of weapons. You lag a bit behind the single-classed paladin in hit points and base attack bonus, but your AC quickly outclasses that character to make up for the gap. At low levels, you remain a competent melee fighter, with a few tricks up your sleeve, and you can bring some healing to bear as well.

At higher levels, you become a truly frightening foe to the enemies of your Church, but any who oppose you have significant difficulty in overcoming your

defenses. Once you reach the pinnacle of your power, your ability to surround yourself with a spark of the Silver Flame allows you to put yourself in harm's way, protecting your companions while simultaneously injuring your enemies.

Advancement

The Order of the Argent Fist never recruits; only those who actively seek to join are considered for membership. The testing process is demanding: You must demonstrate martial skill, the mystical abilities of monk and paladin, a deep knowledge of the faith, and the ability to make difficult moral choices. Of the relatively few Purified who even petition for membership, perhaps one in ten succeeds. If you fail the entry tests due to lack of skill, you can try again, but a candidate who fails for lack of commitment or moral weakness can never make a second attempt.

Membership in the order is a life of ongoing training and service. When not actively questing or battling evil, you engage in training exercises and intensive study. Few argent fists have time for any sort of life outside the order, but then, few of them want one.

Argentfists must be well rounded, so you cannot simply focus on a single ability or skill set and expect to prosper. Choose weapons that complement your abilities and fighting style, and feats that enhance your class features, such as Extra Turning. While it is tempting to spread your ability increases across many scores, it is probably best to choose two or three to ignore in favor of others. If you have Weapon Finesse and a good Dexterity,

for instance, you can probably get away with leaving your Strength score relatively low. Your Intelligence will likely never be a strong suit, and you have enough hit points (and healing abilities) that even a slightly above-average Constitution might well be sufficient.

Resources

Argent fists fight beside their comrades and can call on other resources of the order in times of need. Many donate treasure from quests, knowing that they can request aid in the form of items or money in return. Because you are such a potent combatant with even your bare hands, you might consider magic items that enhance your ability scores and Armor Class rather than expensive weapons.

ARGENT FISTS IN THE WORLD

"Surely the Silver Flame itself does not blaze so brightly, or so fierce, as the burning need of the Order of the Argent Fist to serve that Flame. And like all fires, that devotion scorches any who stand in their way."

—Camarind Alst, Provost of Ecclesiastical Studies,
University of Wynarn

The Silver Flame's greatest warriors come in the form of disciplined monks, or paladins called to holy service. The argent fist prestige class allows players to combine these wildly divergent disciplines into a functional whole, and offers DMs the opportunity to showcase unique and potent servants of this god of justice.

Daily Life

Daily life in the Order is a strict regimen of training and study, with the occasional break for mass. Unless an argent fist is on a quest, life is largely limited to the chapterhouse or monastery. While this seems terribly confining for most people, argent fists consider it an honor, an opportunity to ensure maximum effectiveness when called to serve. Argent fists never seek positions of community leadership, which would distract them from their duties and drills. An argent fist who is also a military leader seeks the swiftest and most efficient means to victory that does not violate the Silver Flame's precepts.

Notables

The argent fists are few, and most do not seek fame outside their own ranks. Still, some are warriors of such renown that their names reach the ears of others, and some do indeed seek prominence in the hope of inspiring those who hear of them. The most famous include Brother Micah, an Eldeen half-orc raised in the Church; Sister Ronas Kelur, said to have fought in more battles than any other argent fist alive today; and the changeling Sir Wyrren, who has mastered a fighting style that involves shapechanging in ways few others of his race can manage.

NPC Reactions

Everyone recognizes the devotion and fanaticism of the argent fists. How people react to that depends largely on their view of the Silver Flame as a whole. Other Purified, or those allied with the Church, tend to be helpful or at least friendly. Enemies of the Silver Flame and anyone nervous about the Church's history and inquisitions are likely hostile or unfriendly. Very few people are ambivalent toward the argent fists.

**Brother Micah, the Wolf-Hammer,
an Argent Fist**



The argent fists count among their enemies all worshippers of what they see as dark powers and evil gods. The Dark Six, the Blood of Vol, and the Dragon Below are faiths that the argent fists consider corrupt and would happily eradicate if they could. Most lycanthropes consider the argent fists enemies as well, remembering the purge.

ARGENT FIST LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge can research argent fists to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check or bardic knowledge check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The Order of the Argent Fist is made up of holy warriors for the Silver Flame.

DC 15: Argent fists combine the martial skills of the monk with the holy powers of the paladin. While they do not have the full capabilities of either, their unique combination of abilities makes them exceptionally powerful in combat.

DC 20: Truly skilled argent fists can surround themselves with a divine nimbus that they claim is a spark of the Silver Flame itself. When thus protected, they are deadly and practically unstoppable.

ARGENT FISTS IN THE GAME

Player characters never encounter an argent fist by chance. Fists remain in their monasteries or chapter-houses unless actively engaged in a quest for the Church. The DM might introduce them as allies or adversaries in pursuit of the same goal, or the PCs might be forced to seek shelter at an Argent Fist establishment.

Potent as the argent fist is, it is not quite up to the level of a single-classed paladin or fighter in terms of sheer ability to land blows against most monsters. The DM should ensure that at least some encounters offer specialty foes that the fist can strike at (evil outsiders, undead, and lycanthropes). This not only allows the argent fist player to take full advantage of class abilities, but it also keeps the character involved.

Adaptation

The specific powers and symbolism of the argent fist clearly link it to the Silver Flame, but a few cosmetic changes allow customization to other faiths. Changing the powers to appear less like flame and more as ghostly weapons makes the argent fist appropriate for any good-aligned war god. Adjusting the same powers to mimic natural effects or claws allows the class to fit into a more primitive or savage faith.

Sample Encounter

The fanaticism of the argent fist allows the DM to introduce them into almost any adventure as allies or

adversaries. They might aid agents of justice in destroying evil, or they might oppose the PCs for reasons of religious doctrine. In any case, such encounters usually take place at close range, allowing the argent fist to pose the greatest challenge to the party.

EL 10: Brother Micah's devotion to the Silver Flame and the Order of the Argent Fist is almost slavish. He sought out the order during the Last War, seeing in it a way to control his violent temper, which had resulted in the deaths of several of his tribesmen in the Eldeen Reaches. Today he is in complete control and channels the fire burning within into serving the Silver Flame. He is well known for his efforts to destroy the surviving lycanthropes, since a shapechanger slew the seeker who first trained him.

BROTHER MICAH, THE WOLF-HAMMER CR 10

Male half-orc monk 2/paladin 4/argent fist 4

LG Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +3

Aura courage (10 ft., allies +4 against fear)

Languages Common, Orc

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 25; **Deflect Arrows**, **Dodge**, **Mobility**

(+1 Dex, +3 Wis, +10 armor, +2 shield)

hp 56 (10 HD)

Immune disease, fear

Fort +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee unarmed strike +10/+5 (1d10+2) or

Melee +1 kama +11/+6 (1d6+3)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +9/+4 (1d8+2)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Stunning Fist 4/day (DC 14), *ki* strike (silver), smite evil 2/day (+2 attack, +10 damage), stunning smite (DC 18)

Special Actions Balm of the Silver Flame, lay on hands 8 points/day, turn undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+3, 1st)

Combat Gear 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds*

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 2nd):

1st—*cure light wounds*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th):

At will—*detect evil*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 15

SQ ascetic knight, aura of good, holy armor, *ki* focus

Feats Deflect Arrows^B, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Knight Training*, Mobility, Stunning Fist^B

Skills Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +12, Sense Motive +12, Spot +3

Possessions combat gear plus +2 full plate armor, masterwork steel shield, +1 kama, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus), 20 arrows, *amulet of health* +2, *circlet of Charisma* +2



"Look not to the skies, nor
to the depths below . . .
Seek the divine within,
for the blood is the life . . ."



CHAPTER FOUR

THE BLOOD OF VOL

Few religions are as misunderstood as the spiritual path known as the Blood of Vol. Seekers, as followers of the faith call themselves, do not worship a divine entity, nor do they revere their ancestors, as do the elves of Aerenal. Indeed, it would be difficult to classify the Blood of Vol as a religion at all were it not for the fact that its adherents do believe in a divinity—albeit a most unusual one.

DOCTRINE

If any single religious doctrine unites the Blood of Vol, it is the concept worshipers call the Divinity Within. This notion is embodied in one of the Seekers' most treasured axioms, spoken at the opening of almost every ritual gathering:

Look not to the skies, nor to the depths below, nor even to the distant past or future. Seek the divine within, for the blood is the life, and in its call can be heard the promise of eternal life. One has but to listen.

This chant illustrates how the faith stands apart from more traditional religions. Seekers believe in no divinity but that which courses through their own veins, and refuse to acknowledge the existence of any "god" on principle alone. To them, followers of the Sovereign Host and the Dark Six are living deluded lives that will ultimately end in despair. Seeker philosophy does not exclude the three great Dragons but views them more as concepts than as literal beings. Worshipers believe in the power of things seen and grasped, and a dragonshard can be held in the hands, power coursing through it. Seekers hold that any "creator" who would devise the plane of Dolurrh as a soul's final reward is worthy only of contempt. Thus, the faith focuses on the pragmatic—specifically, the life-or-death coin toss that is existence.

Seekers believe that traditional faith is a self-indulgent conceit, a means for small minds and even smaller souls to come to terms with the true nature of existence. In a world as unforgiving as Eberron, the only faith that is not misplaced is faith in oneself and one's own capabilities. When priests of Vol meditate on their daily spells, for example, they are praying not to deities or to concepts, but in truth, to themselves. The Divinity Within grants the power to shape reality, not some outside force.

HISTORY

Before moving onto the details of the Divinity Within, it is instructive to learn how the Blood of Vol came to be. Most would be surprised to learn that the roots of the faith stretch back tens of thousands of years

to the time of the giants in Xen'drik. It was not until the lost mark—the Mark of Death—appeared among the elves of House Vol, however, that the Blood of Vol as we know it was born. In a misguided attempt to put an end to the conflict that had ravaged both elves and dragons, the matriarch of House Vol mixed the blood of the two races, resulting in the birth of a baby girl who embodied both. The matriarch, a powerful necromancer named Minara d'Vol, named her daughter Erandis after her grandmother. Unknown even to the rest of House Vol, Minara fell deeply in love with the girl's father, a mighty green dragon known as the Emerald Claw (his true name is believed known only to Vol), over the course of her pregnancy. Erandis was raised in secret while both House Vol and the Emerald Claw tried to secure a peaceful end to the conflict.

How word of the half-dragon's existence got out is still a mystery to this day. Some claim the baby girl was betrayed by one of the elves of House Vol, but none can explain who did so or why. The prevailing belief is that the girl's own father, desperate for an end to the intermittent but devastating conflicts between the elves and dragons, announced the news of the successful union between elf and dragon. Whatever the cause, revelation of Erandis's existence did indeed unify of the two races (and ironically, brought an end to the periodic conflicts) but not in the House Vol as they had hoped. Mutual outrage brought elves and dragons together, and they immediately began a campaign to obliterate all traces of both half-dragons and House Vol from the face of Eberron.

According to legend, the Emerald Claw vanished not long after the purge began. Some say he was killed defending the race of half-dragons (of which his daughter was now the most famous example). Others claim he withdrew from the world in shame over what his hubris had wrought. Twenty-six hundred years ago, House Vol was brought low, and the Mark of Death was lost in the process. Rather than see her daughter destroyed, Minara used her powers over life and death to transform Erandis into a lich. She had just enough energy left to send her daughter to safety before a powerful red dragon named Avothirax arrived at the head of a thousand elf warriors.

SOULS AND THE AFTERLIFE

Seekers maintain that blood itself is the "soul" of life, coursing through the veins of sentient beings like a liquid god. In the mindset of most Vol cults, creatures that

know nothing of blood—constructs, plants, oozes, and the like—are thus removed from true divinity. Vol doctrine holds that blood truly *is* life, and that without it, there is no real life at all. As a result, Seekers believe that blood holds the key to myriad doorways of power and wisdom, including the greatest passage of all: the door to life everlasting.

The concept of the Divinity Within is central to the Seekers' view of the soul and to any notion of an afterlife. They absolutely believe in Dolurrrh, and a few of the most powerful in the faith even claim to have been there and returned to tell of its vast emptiness. These grim testaments are often spoken in cult sermons all across Khorvaire to further embolden the Seekers' drive to escape that gray fate. The Blood of Vol maintains that the key to such an escape lies in the Divinity Within. Those who look outward for succor are destined for betrayal by the very powers they revere, doomed to a soulless eternity. Only by looking inward, and by drawing strength from the



Blood of Vol

Divinity Within, can a soul hope to find its own afterlife: a beautiful creation crafted to its particular nature and character, and filled with an eternity of happiness.

The high position of the undead within the church might surprise those outside the faith. Vampires, liches, and mummies no longer have blood or life, and so can never fully bond to the Divinity Within. The Seekers believe that the intelligent undead have made this terrible sacrifice to overcome mortality and to serve the sect. Thus, they are revered and respected, but they are also pitied, for they can never touch perfection. The undead are champions of the church, guiding the people of Vol to their true destiny, but few who follow the faith would make that terrible choice.

SERVANTS OF THE BLOOD OF VOL

Unlike the cult's enemies in the Church of the Silver Flame, the people of Vol are an exceedingly diverse lot who would be surprised to learn that they have anything at all in common. The faith incorporates all the diversity of the Sovereign Host, and is spread out just as far, but with fewer members in its global congregation.

COMING TO THE FAITH

The most telling characteristic of the Blood of Vol is the variety of ways in which its followers come to the faith. Only a specific type of person actively seeks to join a religion such as the Silver Flame, and being brought up within the Church is no guarantee of continued faith. By contrast, almost anyone could seek out a Vol cult. Despite the faith's broad-reaching charter and the deception inherent in its hierarchy, one trait is common to every Seeker, regardless of race or region—unshakable belief in the power of the self. Any true student of Vol's mysteries is a devotee of the Divinity Within, and whatever else a soul might be, so long as it stands firm by this single creed, it will always be a Seeker at heart. This unifying belief not only lends strength to the faith as a whole, but fosters power and versatility in its congregation.

BECOMING A PRIEST

The bulk of the faith's priests hail from the lay worshippers. Once their understanding of the Divinity Within has progressed beyond a certain point, some Seekers feel compelled to help others find the path and are subsequently exalted to the role of priest. In theory, joining the priesthood takes nothing more than a clear understanding of its role in the journey of the individual, and a strong desire to serve. In practice, of course, things play out somewhat differently.

The global priesthood of the faith (such as it is) is the mechanism by which the lich-queen Vol influences the lives of Seekers everywhere. Most worshipers have no idea that Vol still exists, let alone the full extent

The Symbol of the Blood of Vol

Despite its lack of organization, the Blood of Vol maintains a surprisingly consistent symbol for its faith worldwide. Every Vol cult I have seen or read about used at least a variation of the same icon—a stylized dragon skull resting atop a glowing red teardrop-shaped gem meant to symbolize the blood that is central to the beliefs of the faith.

The significance of the skull is obvious to anyone even slightly familiar with the Blood of Vol. What else would a self-styled "Queen of the Dead" use to aggrandize herself and her faith? (It would be surprising if a religion of death-obsessed necromancers did not have a skull of some sort in their symbology.) But why a dragon skull? Some of my colleagues have theorized that the faith claims a far deeper connection to the various Cults of the Dragon Below than many realize, and that this symbol is the proof. This assertion makes little sense, since such a blatant reference would nullify any attempt at hiding said connections. No, the tie must lie elsewhere, though I have yet to discover what it could possibly be.

of her schemes and manipulations. A secret circle of advisors and functionaries known as the Crimson Covenant acts as the “ruling body” of the faith—the Blood of Vol equivalent of the Silver Flame’s Diet of Cardinals—despite the fact that many Seekers never learn of its existence, nor of the extent of its impact on their own lives.

Taking the cloth in the Blood of Vol does not necessarily involve learning the truth about the Crimson Covenant. Most would-be priests of Vol are carefully investigated by Covenant agents before being exalted. In order to maintain this structure, the high priest has to be “in the know.” Each cult of any size has a temple head who is in direct communication with the Crimson Covenant or is an active part of it (the latter is always the case with the largest temples).

When a potential new priest appears, the local temple head sends word to superiors in the Covenant. While waiting for an official reply, the temple head begins to test the would-be priest on matters of faith—specifically, knowledge of the twin subjects of life and death. He also conducts a special Sacrament of Blood in the petitioner’s honor, secretly preserving the blood for delivery to the Crimson Covenant. When the Covenant finally does address the request, it has accumulated enough information to provide a detailed recommendation one way or the other. If all goes smoothly, the temple head is permitted to induct the petitioner into the priesthood. If not, . . .

The specifics vary from one group to the next, and some cults are cut off entirely from the Covenant (though the organization is doing its best to corral the most important ones), but most new priests go through some period of probation akin to seminary study. Usually, probation lasts no longer than three years, and no less than one year. During this time, the priest studies intensely in matters of death, history, and spirituality. An individual who displays a propensity for adept or cleric magic receives additional education and training in these areas. At the close of each year, the temple head who first sponsored the acolyte (or the present temple head, if a change has occurred) submits another report to the Crimson Covenant. Based on this report, as well as on its own findings in the interim, the Covenant decides either to let the priest in on the truth, or to keep him ignorant for another year. If permission is not granted to indoctrinate the priest into the truth of the Covenant after the third year, that priest will never be so indoctrinated.

THE BLOOD OF VOL

Lawful Evil

Those who follow the Blood of Vol seek immortality from within, and many do not know of or willingly support the secret ambitions of the cult’s leader.

Portfolio: Undeath, immortality, blood, destiny, obedience.

Domains: Death, Deathbound†, Evil, Law, Necromancer*.

Favored Weapon: Dagger.

HIERARCHY

Although it might seem disorganized in comparison to certain faiths, the Blood of Vol is a formal hierarchy, as rigorous as any other. The difference lies in the levels of secrecy maintained, and in the flow of information throughout every level of the faith. While many are unaware of it, the religion maintains a number of suborders and titles, the most pivotal of which are as follows.

Vol, Queen of the Dead: At the top of the religion sits its progenitor and namesake, Erandis d’Vol. From her place of seclusion in Illmarrow Castle, perched on frozen Farlnen island in the far northern reaches of the Lhazaar Principalities, the lich directs the efforts of a vast network of priests, spies, catspaws, and agents provocateurs. She is the supreme authority of the faith, and anyone lucky enough to communicate with her directly is expected to follow her orders to the letter, quickly and without question. Like any organization of willful (and usually evil) beings, the faith sees its fair share of political backstabbing and scheming, but Vol is chillingly efficient at maintaining absolute loyalty.

The Crimson Covenant: The lich-queen’s operations would be hampered substantially were it not for her inner circle of trusted functionaries. For centuries, the Crimson Covenant has been the primary link between Vol and the day-to-day operations of the faith worldwide. The Covenant numbers thirteen, each of whom is either an intelligent undead or a mortal who has managed to bypass the rigors of time (see the thief of life prestige class on page 84). Each member has an unrestricted line of communication to Vol herself (though few dare abuse the privilege), and provides regular updates on the activities he or she oversees. Unlike other tiers of the faith, those who sit on this council know the identities of their fellow Covenant members, and the entire body is protected by the mightiest magic at Vol’s disposal. Few could even hope to divine the existence of the Covenant, let alone its makeup or the location of individual members.

The Abactors: The Crimson Covenant maintains a network of Seekers known as abactors. Each is a temple head, responsible for the operation of both a temple and cult of substantial size. (The two groups are not mutually exclusive, and a handful of those in the Crimson Covenant are abactors themselves.) Abactors are, by definition, Seekers who are clerics of the Blood of Vol. Their ability and trustworthiness sets them apart from other priests, and they are inducted into the deepest mysteries of the faith. In return, they coordinate the induction of new cult members and oversee the collection and shipping of preserved blood to Covenant-chosen areas.

The Order of the Emerald Claw: Not beneath so much as beside the network of abactors is Vol’s paramilitary arm in Karrnath and beyond, the Order of the Emerald Claw. Ties to the Blood of Vol are known only to the highest ranks of the Order. Given the Order’s high profile, especially in Karrnath, security is a top concern, and even the most trusted unit commander typically knows only her immediate superior in the Covenant (often by a false name or face). In this manner does Vol protect herself and her secrets.

The Clergy: The lowest rung on the ladder of faith hierarchy is the general priesthood. Many in this tier are ignorant of the truth of the religion's makeup, even after years of faithful service. The magically active clergy of Vol includes a number of clerics but is primarily composed of adepts, with the remainder being necromancers of various stripes. Clerics are inducted into the truth of the faith more often than noncleric priests, due in part to the depth of their connection to and understanding of the Divinity Within. Priests of Vol hail from all races and walks of life, and were it not for common ritual and symbology, they would fail to recognize one another on a busy street.

DUTIES OF THE CLERGY

Every priest of Vol shares the same duty as every follower: Seek out the Divinity Within. Even those who have already unlocked their own potential divinity, becoming immortal in the process, are expected to continue research in the mysteries of life, death, and beyond (furthering the cause of the lich-queen Vol in the process). All priests of Vol must obey reasonable orders from their superiors in the faith. For most, this means executing the local temple head's commands without question. For temple heads and others in the know, it means following the orders of the Crimson Covenant to the letter.

The clergy of the Blood of Vol conduct ceremonies and lead important rituals, just as priests of other faiths do. In all but the most savage of cults, priests of Vol can be found fulfilling mundane roles in the lives of their fellow Seekers, offering counsel to the faithful, and even taking confessions. While it is far from common, a priest might even host and witness the union of two Seekers in the congregation, although the ceremony generally needs to be repeated before a civil representative to be legally binding (especially in Thrane).

There is no single, mandated holy symbol associated with the faith. While the Blood of Vol has a symbol, which sees a great deal of usage as a holy symbol, it is not the holy symbol of every priest. Each is allowed (and indeed, expected) to find a symbol that resonates with him, and to keep it sacred. This unorthodox practice not only reflects the faith's focus on the needs of the individual, but also keeps its activities private. Along the same lines, priests of Vol are not expected to don any particular attire outside their temples. When conducting services, they wear garb of predominantly black and red. Shaved heads are common, especially in some cults, but are not mandated.

Clerics of the Blood of Vol pursue and master spells of the necromancy school, especially those dealing with death or the animation of the dead. A strong grasp of how divine magic interacts with death and the soul is fundamental to understanding the Divinity Within. Those who have the power to raise the dead, for example, are seen as spiritually advanced, thus gaining greater status and respect. Any Vol cleric capable of *true resurrection* is deemed particularly blessed.

FALLEN PRIESTS

The procedure for removing a priest of the Blood of Vol is disturbingly uncomplicated. As a rule, something grievous enough to warrant defrocking is enough to

justify the priest's death. Death before divinity is the worst fate a Seeker can conceive, so execution is the only suitable punishment for a betrayer. This harsh treatment typically occurs only when a priest is discovered to be actively serving the interests of a rival faith, most often the Church of the Silver Flame. In the eyes of many Seekers, particularly those who know the truth about the faith, such punishment is "too good" for the offending traitor.

QUESTS

Ostensibly, most quests in the name of the faith are intended to acquire something Seekers hope will provide insight into the mysteries of life, death, and beyond. Often a relic or scrap of data from before the Last War, such an item could also be a vision or even a living being. In practice, the majority of quests are little more than dirty work, commissioned by the higher-ups in the faith (often on behalf of the Crimson Covenant) to advance the cause of the lich-queen. The faith's leaders have no qualms about deceiving those who have not yet been brought into the fold, and indeed, service without question determines whether one is likely ever to be so inducted. In this regard, quests serve double duty as tests of faith and loyalty. Those who return successful move one step closer to earning a valued place in the Covenant. Those who do not have proven their ineptitude or cowardice (or both) and are treated accordingly. Those who fail to return at all were clearly never worthy in the first place.

rites and rituals of the Blood of Vol

The Blood of Vol does not conduct rituals in the name of a specific deity, as many other faiths do, nor does it celebrate or revere the natural world. Yet ritual is no less important to Seekers than it is to members of other faiths. The difference lies in purpose. Seeker rites are not intended to garner the favor of a deity but must serve a particular purpose, and that purpose must be not only worthwhile, but vital.

PRAYERS

Followers of the Blood of Vol make little use of conventional prayer, since no specific deity exists to entreat. Seekers of certain variant sects, especially those whose worship involves one or more named deities, often pray to those deities, but usually only during rites of greater import. Most Seekers only pray to themselves, often to steel their souls for an upcoming challenge or event. Such "prayers" consist of a quiet or even soundless recitation, the most common being "As the blood is the power, and the blood flows through me, the power is mine."

MINOR RITES

The Blood of Vol as a whole maintains no minor rites, as any faith-wide practice is considered a major rite, by definition. All localized practices and rituals are therefore considered minor rites, and these vary from cult to cult. Most cults prefer to leave many minor rites to the individual, as the pursuit of the understanding of the self is of paramount importance in the faith, and therefore

they keep few (if any) such rites as a group. Other cults, however, choose to focus on the communal identity of the faith, and thus encourage all local Seekers to be in attendance. These situations are more accurately seen as examples of how the faith uses ritual to build the bonds between members, rather than any indicator of the importance of the ritual itself. In these circumstances, minor rites can include things such as the celebration of a fellow Seeker's enlightenment (often represented in game terms by advances in class level), the induction of a new member into the cult, or, perhaps most commonly, the communal meditation circles held regularly in most Vol cults.

MAJOR RITES

The Blood of Vol as a faith does not mark life events as others do (although individual worshipers might). By its very nature, it has little interest in what passes for daily life among the civilized peoples of Khorvaire. Weddings, for example, are of no significance to most Seekers. However, the faith is concerned with matters of life, death, and beyond, so two events of daily life hold as much import for Seekers as they do for others: births and deaths.

Unlike other faiths, the Blood of Vol ritually marks the passage of life-giving or life-ending events even if they occur outside the ranks of the faithful. The faith is not indifferent to the births and deaths of Seekers (these, too, are marked with ritual), but it also pays attention to the lives of important figures regardless of religion. This unusual habit puts Seekers in the position of ritually venerating the birth or death of complete strangers.

On rare occasions, a cult leader calls the local Seekers together to mark a birth or death of an unknown or otherwise unremarkable individual. Even so, no loyal Seeker questions the decision. This rite happens most often with deaths but can also occur at births from time to time. The order to conduct the rite almost always comes straight from the Crimson Covenant, and even local leaders are often mystified as to the significance of the individual so honored. Most never realize their leaders are acting on orders from above, of course.

Beyond this veneration of the twin passages into life and death, the Blood of Vol has two "high holidays" that

involve substantial ceremony. The first, the Sacrament of Blood, is held at irregular intervals throughout the course of the year, and is the cornerstone ritual of the faith entire. The second is held during Crya, the thirteenth and "lost" month of the year.

The Sacrament of Blood: This is the most sacred practice in the Blood of Vol. During the Sacrament, all the local Seekers gather in a specially prepared chamber, far from the eyes of prying outsiders. The cult leader begins with a brief chant in Draconic, welcoming the assembly as both individuals and parts of a collective soul. After the chant, the leader moves in turn to each participant, who ritually cuts himself with a special dagger known as a bloodfang. He then allows the Seeker seated next to him to hold his hand while it drips blood into the ritemaster's ruby chalice. The ritual continues in this manner until every Seeker in attendance has given of his own blood. Unknown to many who partake in the ritual, the blood so collected is stored in *barrels of preserving pine* and shipped across Khorvaire for use in a wide variety of necromantic practices.

Revelations Day (Crya 13th): As the year grows colder and finally dies, each Seeker examines whatever spiritual progress he has (or has not) made in the preceding year. Revelations Day, also known as Ascension Day, offers every member of the faith the chance to take back a portion of what he has given throughout the year, and to reflect on the insights so gained. During the Revelations Day ritual, the ritemaster convenes the assembled Seekers for a Sacrament of Blood. This time, though, the ritemaster conducts a magical ceremony over the filled chalice that simultaneously cleanses the blood of impurities while concentrating the life energies inherent within the precious liquid. (Secretly, it is often mystically altered in other ways, depending on the ritemaster's orders.) When this ceremony is complete, the ritemaster passes the chalice around once more, with each Seeker drinking from it in turn, taking back no more than he had put in. This ingestion always results in a mind-altering episode whose duration and intensity varies with the individual, and to a lesser extent, the amount consumed. These "blood trips" offer faithful souls the chance to visualize the truths that lie within not only their own blood, but within that of their fellow Seekers.

TRAFFICKING IN BLOOD

The precious fluid so carefully collected at the Sacraments of Blood would go to waste, had not the church devised a means of preserving and transporting it for later use. The priests and artificers of the Crimson Covenant created the *barrel of preserving pine*, a cheap but effective tool (see below).

BARREL OF PRESERVING PINE

This enchanted barrel perfectly preserves any liquid stored within.

Description: The barrel prevents contamination, fermentation, evaporation, and coagulation. It

does not, however, purify any liquids that are already contaminated when placed within. The Blood of Vol sells these items (always through commercial proxies) to various private businesses; they are popular among innkeepers, who use them to preserve various exotic beverages.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint transmutation. CL 1st.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *purify food and drink*.

Weight: 30 lb.

Price: 500 gp.

THE CALENDAR

The Blood of Vol has been around since long before the formation of Galifar, and thus does not use the standard calendar to mark either religious observances or the passage of time. The faith follows the oldest active calendar on Eberron, called the Qabalin Wheel. Named after the elf civilization that developed it on Xen'drik millennia ago, it was the only calendar of record for much of Eberron's early history. Like its modern counterpart, the Qabalin Wheel is divided into months that correspond to the moons of Eberron, but unlike the Galifar calendar, it still recognizes the thirteenth moon (believed lost to the cosmos when the giants sealed off the plane of Xoriat so many centuries ago). The Wheel has thirteen months rather than the standard twelve, with the last—Crya, associated with the lost Mark of Death—coming after Vult and before Zarantyr on the Galifar calendar. This renders the Qabalin Wheel year one month longer than the Galifar year.

The Blood of Vol liturgical calendar reckons time from the year when the House of Vol was betrayed, forcing its last scion into an eternity of undeath. To Seekers in the know, 998 YK corresponds to 2398 FH (the 2398th year since the Fall of the House). Many Seekers do not use this convention, of course, and even those who do still use the Galifar calendar for dealings outside the faith.

THE BLOOD OF VOL IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Unlike the Sovereign Host or Church of the Silver Flame, the Blood of Vol has neither a region where the faith is dominant (at least, not outwardly) nor a nation to call its own. Worship is strong all over Khorvaire, particularly in Karrnath and Droaam, but even where practice of the religion occurs openly, no dominance can be claimed.

THE PEOPLE OF THE BLOOD OF VOL

Members of the monstrous races (particularly goblins, gnolls, and minotaurs) are often born into the faith, while other humanoids (especially humans and half-orcs) typically come to it later in life. In all but the most savage Seeker communities, forcible conversion is seen as senseless, and worse yet, a waste of time and resources. People too ignorant to see the truth should be left to their own devices (until they are needed). Even when Seekers capture someone outside the faith, they almost never give the nonbeliever the "convert or die" ultimatum. Examples of captured souls asking to join the faith do exist, but Seekers demand that individuals come to them. The growth of the spirit is always a personal matter, left entirely to the individual (though half-hearted souls might become community sacrifices in some areas).

THE BLOOD OF VOL AND GOVERNMENT

Although many Seekers are unaware of it, their faith is one of the most politically active on Eberron. In its upper

echelons, the Blood of Vol is a force for political and social change that uses its congregation as a worldwide masquerade for its true agenda.

The Blood of Vol is involved to some extent in every major government on Khorvaire. The faith is best known for its connections to Karrnath, where it is responsible for, among other things, turning the tide of the Last War and begetting the recently outlawed Order of the Emerald Claw. With the reemergence of Kaius I (now a vampire, thanks to Vol herself) in the guise of Kaius III, the faith has met with setbacks. Still, it is stronger and more influential in Karrnath than in most other areas. And if the recently converted Shirin d'Deneith succeeds in his bid to take over House Deneith, the tide could turn in favor of the Blood of Vol once more.

The faith is almost as active in the neighboring state of Aundair, though its presence is not nearly as open or accepted. The capital at Fairhaven is the headquarters of the Cult of Life, the single largest order within the Blood of Vol, which serves as the Aundairian equivalent of the Order of the Emerald Claw (though without the public persona). Vol is much more careful about her operations in Aundair, for the region is important to her future plans. Her operatives have thus far managed to keep a low profile, despite having made substantial inroads in the Aundairian political system.

Seekers are influential in both Breland and the Lhazaar Principalities, each of which houses one of the most important temples of Vol worldwide (the Widening Gyre in Xandrar, Breland, and Illmarrow Castle in the far north). Vol's efforts are much more hands-off in the Principalities, due to the region's political system and her desire to deflect attention, but in Breland, the Crimson Covenant is waging an all-out campaign to wrest power and influence from the locals. Some Seekers believe Breland will be the site of the faith's greatest struggle.

THE BLOOD OF VOL AND OTHER FAITHS

Like the Church of the Silver Flame, the Blood of Vol believes that all other faiths are wrong. The typical Seeker believes in no divinity beyond that which runs through his own veins, and vehemently decries mindless worship until (and often beyond) his last breath. The Blood of Vol holds most other religions in contempt: No sane soul would choose to give up self-determination, the greatest gift of existence. Yet every other major religion on Eberron places the fates of its members in the hands of outside forces, whether gods, angels, demons, or nature itself. Perhaps the only tenet that Seekers share with members of other faiths is that a soul's actions in life determine its final reward. Still, where others believe that actions are tallied and judged by those they worship, cultists of Vol hold that an individual's actions are the only way for the soul to escape Dolurrh, for their own sake.

Specific Attitudes

Individual members of the cult of Vol have differing attitudes on other religions, often based solely on their

individual experiences with said faiths, but the “party line” is roughly as follows.

The Silver Flame: Empty-headed zealots of the worst order. The best lesson one can learn from the so-called Purified is how destructive faith can be when it is left to another to dictate. The only pure thing about these soulless sheep is the self-righteous condescension they harbor for us.

The Sovereign Host: A faith that could almost be considered quaint, were it not so pervasive. It is a terrible pity that so many are content to eke out miserable lives in the honor of “gods” who have clearly forsaken them. I leave them to their misery . . . and to Dolurrh.

The Dark Six: Vassals of the Six suffer from the same disease of the soul that affects those of the Host, but at least they are more honest about it (followers of the Keeper in particular). If nothing else, they make valuable if untrustworthy allies against the more zealous of the Silver Flame.

Druid Sects: Some claim that these nature-worshippers are our greatest enemies. In truth, we are more alike than different. We both venerate nature. They look to the natural world beyond us, and in that are misdirected. It is the nature within us all—blood—that deserves the greatest reverence.

Other Faiths: Simpletons. I can respect power and can understand why some might want to be in league with mighty beings. But to offer one’s soul to such beings—to lay all hope for divinity at another’s feet—is beyond pathetic. Even the druids are worthy of more respect.

THE BLOOD OF VOL IN THE LAST WAR

Many individual Seekers tried to make the most of the “opportunity” that was the Last War. Some used the chaos as cover for operations to ferret out relics or secrets whose existence or access had been forbidden during peacetime. A few were successful; many others fell alongside those who fought in the war. The bulk of the Crimson Covenant’s resources in the Last War, however, were tied up in the lich-queen’s efforts to secure Karrnath’s power and wealth.

Once the Last War had begun in earnest, Vol directed elders of her priesthood to approach King Kaius I with an offer. The Blood of Vol, influential in the region for some time, pledged full support to Kaius and to Karrnath in exchange for a few “small considerations.” The timing, of course, was perfect. Cyre and Thrane were on the move, each eager to claim Karrnath for its own, and Kaius’s diplomatic relations with what few allies remained had never been worse. Were it not for Vol’s aid, Karrnath would have fallen during the Last War.

The Blood of Vol provided two primary sources of aid, which mark Karrnath to this day. They created undead to bolster and replace Karrnath’s living troops, stemming the tide of Thrane’s advance. Combined with the elite corps known as the Order of the Emerald Claw, also provided by the Blood of Vol, Karrnath gained ground against not only Thrane, but Aundair, Breland, and Cyre as well.

Vol herself came before the king of Karrnath to claim her due. First, she demanded that her cult be

allowed to establish temples and bases in his kingdom. Second, she required Kaius to undergo the Sacrament of Blood. Kaius had heard of the ritual and knew it was harmless to participants, so he agreed. Vol deceived him, however, and used the ritual to turn Kaius into her own personal thrall as a vampire. However, Kaius refused to bow, and Vol triggered his bloodlust in response, causing him to murder his own wife. Ever since his return as Kaius III (posing as his own grandson), he has worked ceaselessly to remove Vol’s influence from his land, first and foremost by outlawing of the Order of the Emerald Claw.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE BLOOD OF VOL

The Blood of Vol is flexible about what structures can serve as shrines. Once again, individuality is respected. Seekers keep their faith in their own ways, and the religion mandates no adherence to any particular size, style, or construction of a shrine. It must contain an altar of some kind, along with a means for collecting ritually shed blood neatly and without undue waste. Any room can serve this purpose, so long as it is prepared with the proper care and reverence. Most shrines are private affairs and usually small, since proper temples serve the needs of larger groups.

True temples are almost as varied as shrines but share more features. They are built of stone, natural or worked; the type is immaterial. Some are elaborate, using state-of-the-art engineering and magical techniques, incorporating multiple wings and vast, vaulted chambers. Others are simple, one-room cubes of severe look and design, and a few are converted natural caverns. As with smaller shrines, the only requisite detail is an altar (preferably in its own room). Even the altar itself need not have any specific shape or design. In some temples, it is located against the far wall of the altar room; in others, on the floor in the dead center of the room; in still others, it is elevated and placed to one side. Every temple of any means also maintains a system to collect and preserve blood in the altar room. This can be a permanent magical effect, in the case of the largest and wealthiest temples, or simply a pattern of grooves in the floor of the chamber, where spilled blood can pool in a specified collection place.

Candles, braziers, and other sources of fire are common, and a temple usually maintains at least one flame for each member of the local cult. These soul-flames are kept alight, burning bright and red, whenever the temple is in use. They symbolize the sacred fire flowing through all sentient life. When a cultist unlocks the secret to divinity—by no longer aging or by becoming undead—that flame is extinguished, but the candle or brazier remains. If a Seeker dies before making sufficient spiritual progress, that flame is treated with chemicals that make it burn a different color—most often black, but some temples use silver when a Seeker is murdered by a Silver Flame zealot—for three full days and nights. After this time, the light is extinguished and the source of the flame destroyed.

Priests of the Blood of Vol seek out manifest zones of Mabar, the plane of Endless Night, to build shrines

and temples. When the plane is coterminous with Eberron, it enhances the power of magic sacred to the faith, but this happens only once every five years, and for just three nights. Unknown to even most Seekers, the Crimson Covenant aggressively searches for such zones, and has built numerous new temples since the end of the Last War. Rumor tells of a massive ritual to be conducted during the three nights when next Mabar is coterminous, but none can say what such an ambitious rite is to accomplish.

The largest and most famous of all Vol's temples is the Crimson Monastery in Atur, the City of Night, in Karrnath. Like the Cathedral of the Silver Flame, the monastery is fortresslike in design and defensibility. Unlike its counterpart in Flamekeep, it presents a far more humble exterior. The local high priest, an abactor of the Covenant named Malevanor (LE male mummy cleric 9), uses his temple's innocuous reputation to hide in plain sight amid the turbulent political climate of postwar Karrnath. Malevanor rarely leaves his inner chambers and when he does, he goes heavily cloaked.

Khorvaire boasts two other notable temples. The first is Illmarrow Castle, the home of Vol herself, in northern Lhazaar. The second is the Widening Gyre, a subterranean complex hidden beneath the streets of Xandrar, on the northwestern outskirts of Breland. From this underground temple (which is concealed by magic, as well as by natural rock), a Covenant abactor named Baszilio (LE male vampire [human] rogue 2/necromancer 5/cleric 3) runs not only local affairs, but also a corridor of communication and trade with Covenant agents in Karrnath. According to rumor, Baszilio was in life a cousin to Shirin d'Deneith, Lord Commander of the Blademarks, and has been aiding the ambitious dragonmark heir in his plan to wrest control of House Deneith away from Breven d'Deneith, the current baron of the house.

CULT OF LIFE SAFE HOUSE

Those who take on the thief of life prestige class operate in the greatest secrecy, and they need safe places to practice their arts. Such locals are often found in the grandest cities. This safe house in Karrlakton, Karrnath, belongs to Randall Aleazar d'Deneith, a minor noble who has cultivated a public image of refinement and intense privacy. In fact, he is a vampire, a member of the Crimson Covenant, and a friend to the Cult of Life.

Ground Floor: This area includes the more frequented sections of the house.

1. Courtyard. The house proper is reached through a walled courtyard, open to the sky. The superior masonry, 12-foot high walls contain two tinkling fountains and tasteful marble statues. Marble stepping stones extend to the house's double doors while a balcony overlooks the area.

2. Foyer. This grand hall features a mosaic floor of abstract patterns and a massive stone stairway dominating the far end. Numerous doors open into the main living areas, while a side passage ends in a hidden vault (area 9).

3. Closet. A walk-in closet has space to hold coats for dozens of guests or occupants.

4. Pantry. Behind the main staircase is the pantry, with an indoor privy adjacent. A cunningly worked panel (Search DC 12) assures privacy.

5. Kitchen. This is a large and functional kitchen, although it contains no staff. Users of the safe house must prepare their own food.

6. Dining Hall. To keep up appearances, Randall occasionally hosts a formal dinner in here. His guests are usually fellow cultists. Sometimes he has a real gathering of other nobility, who have no idea what lies behind the other doors. Even so, this area is rarely used.

7. Living Room. Guests of the safe house relax here. It contains comfortable stuffed furniture, and shelves filled with the sort of books expected in a noble's library.

8. Lower Bedroom. A couple of cultists (human rogue 5/thief of life 2) rest here en route to an assignment for the Crimson Covenant. Should trouble arise, they attempt to escape through the large windows (whose heavy curtains are always drawn) rather than start a fight.

9. Vault. Guests of the safe house can store their valuables in this room. These include weapons and combat magic.

Upper Floor: These rooms hide the mansion's deepest secrets.

10. Closets. Two ordinary-looking closets hold linens and toiletry items. Between them is a hidden room (Search DC 18) for storing *barrels of preserving pine* until the blood can be shipped out.

11. Shrine to Vol. This small shrine serves for prayers and Sacraments of Blood. A marble altar is surmounted with the emblem of the Blood of Vol, and contains a basin for blood collected during rituals. A bloodfang ritual dagger hangs above the basin. A hidden panel beside the altar (Search DC 18) affords an escape route should the house be attacked.

12. Prisoner Cells. Being a vampire, Randall requires a reliable supply of blood. In a pinch, he can avail himself of a *barrel of preserving pine*, but he prefers his meals fresh. This room has shackles on the floor that hold human commoners (usually vagrants or would-be burglars) until needed. A permanent *silence* spell ensures no untoward disturbances.

13. Upper Bedroom. This guest chamber is currently occupied by Ganzar Ulbann (male dwarf rogue 4/cleric 3), who serves as the priest for ceremonies to Vol. This room also has a hidden emergency escape route (Search DC 18).

14. Gallery. Randall's personal treasure is stored in this room. He is an art collector and keeps his most precious acquisitions locked up. The door has a masterwork lock, and an *alarm* spell alerts the vampire to intruders.

15. Randall's Chamber. Randall (male vampire human rogue 7) has his personal quarters here. They are completely windowless but opulently furnished. His coffin is piled with velvet cushions and occupies the center of the room. Bookshelves contain rare volumes and delicate art objects. A rich carpet covers the floor, and an elegant writing desk of exotic Xen'drik woods occupies one corner. On the desk is a *crystal ball with telepathy* for communicating with the Crimson Covenant.

CULT OF LIFE SAFEHOUSE

GROUND FLOOR



Key

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Courtyard | 9. Vault |
| 2. Foyer | 10. Closets |
| 3. Closet | 11. Shrine to Vol |
| 4. Pantry | 12. Prisoner cells |
| 5. Kitchen | 13. Upper bedroom |
| 6. Dining hall | 14. Gallery |
| 7. Living room | 15. Randall's chamber |
| 8. Lower bedroom | |

UPPER FLOOR



One square = 5 feet

VARIANT SECTS

The Blood of Vol draws Seekers of many differing origins and behaviors. Not all are equally committed to (or indeed, aware of) the Crimson Covenant or Vol herself. The spread of her philosophy has grown far beyond Vol's ability to oversee directly, and she watches with interest as it grows and changes with each new Seeker who comes to the faith.

The Cult of Life: Despite its benevolent name, this subset of the Blood of Vol is filled with some of the most dangerous Seekers in the world. Its members are known as "thieves of life," and for good reason: The entire purpose of the cult is the pursuit of immortality, paid for with other living souls. Those at the highest levels of the cult are fully aware of their organization's connection to Vol and often take orders directly from the Crimson Covenant. Neophyte members are kept ignorant of these truths until they have earned their place.

The Hornblade Clan: This confederation of orcs and goblinoids has grown from a small tribe into the single largest community of Seekers on Khorvaire in the time since the end of the Last War. Before the war, the Hornblades were a large orc tribe in western Khorvaire, but they were decimated by infighting with druid cousins who felt they had lost their spiritual way. The clan's purpose was renewed by the return of a half-breed exile by the name of Janilya. After besting the former chieftain in mortal combat, she united the clan under the banner of Vol and made clear her vision for the future: The Hornblades would allow Seekers of other races to join the tribe, if their belief was strong enough. Since then, the clan's ranks have swelled with new arrivals (mostly goblins and other orcs) who come to hear the word of their new prophet, to be a part of her vision of unity, and in the case of those found unworthy, to become ritual sacrifices for the good of the community.

The Keepers of Blood: Few cults have caused so large a rift in their parent faiths as have the Keepers. Some Seekers welcome them, while others view them as heretics of the worst order. The Keepers of Blood revere both the principles of Vol and the Dark Six god known as the Keeper. Most cultists do not actually believe in the Keeper as an entity but revere his alleged portfolio. Only by recognizing and revering both primordial aspects can they be assured of divinity or life everlasting. In many ways, they are the most conservative sect of the Blood of Vol.

Order of the Emerald Claw: Not so much a sect as a paramilitary branch of the faith, the Order of the Emerald Claw does the will of Vol herself. Agents of the Order operate not only in their home state of Karrnath but all across Khorvaire, where they carry out the orders of the Crimson Covenant. Some of the rank and file in the Order are unaware of their organization's ties to the lich-queen, truly believing themselves to be the ostracized Karrnathi loyalists they portray to the outside world. Those in charge of cells or operations are faithful Seekers, doing work they believe is essential to furthering the Blood of Vol, and they would gladly die before spilling their secrets.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

The Seekers of Vol are a strange lot in the eyes of most god-fearing citizens of Khorvaire. Presented here is a Blood of Vol prestige class that, if commonly known, would add the term sinister to that notoriety. The entropomancer (appearing in *Complete Divine*) is another prestige class appropriate to this faith.

THIEF OF LIFE

"Blood is life, and for me to know life everlasting, I must know the blood that flows within your veins."

—Janilya Hornblade the Fearless, disciple of Vol

Every Seeker is fascinated by the twin mysteries of death and divinity. Not every believer seeks in the same ways, however. Some engage in exhaustive academic research, looking to uncover secrets hidden in long-forgotten lore. Others conduct experiments on both the living and the dead, hoping to discover a means to unite the two. Then there are those who seek to rip the secrets of life and death from the very souls of the living. These few Seekers are known as thieves of life. Like other Seekers, they long to understand the interplay between blood, death, and divinity; unlike their compatriots, they seek to harness personal power from that understanding, to startling and often gruesome effect. When the prize is immortality, there is precious little a thief of life will not do to grasp it.

BECOMING A THIEF OF LIFE

Almost all thieves of life begin as common rogues with an uncommon thirst for knowledge and experience, often leading them to multiclass. Some of the most accomplished thieves of life are rogue/clerics, although more martial-minded thieves of life might be rogue/barbarians or rogue/rangers. Nearly every ability score is useful to a thief of life: Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are vital to her martial success; Dexterity and Intelligence to her skills; Wisdom and Charisma both influence a thief's standing within her cult, as well as a number of her skills and abilities.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Heal 4 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 2 ranks.

Special: Any nongood alignment, humanoid or monstrous humanoid, must be a member of the Blood of Vol, sneak attack +2d6.

CLASS FEATURES

As you advance in the thief of life class, you combine some familiar rogue talents with a host of strange new abilities. Many of your abilities apply only to living creatures, which limits your capabilities against constructs and undead, though you are resistant to many special attacks favored by undead.

Lifesense (Ex): You first learn how to recognize the ebb and flow of life energy. You can sense the location of living creatures within 5 feet (as if you had blindsense), and can also determine the condition of creatures near death within this range (as if you were using the *deathwatch* spell).

TABLE 4–1: THE THIEF OF LIFE HIT DIE: D6

	Base				
	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	
Level	Bonus	Save	Save	Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+0	Lifesense (5 ft.)
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+0	Sneak attack +1d6
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+1	Lifesense (10 ft.)
4th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Borrow vigor
5th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Immunity to fear, lifesense (15 ft.)
6th	+4	+5	+5	+2	Sneak attack +2d6
7th	+5	+5	+5	+2	Immunity to energy drain, lifesense (20 ft.)
8th	+6	+6	+6	+2	Steal vitality
9th	+6	+6	+6	+3	Immunity to death effects, lifesense (25 ft.)
10th	+7	+7	+7	+3	Sneak attack +3d6, steal immortality

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Gather Information, Heal, Hide, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Profession, Search, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Spot, Tumble, Use Magic Device, Use Rope.

At each odd-numbered level, the range of this ability expands by 5 feet.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you deal extra damage when you are flanking an opponent or at any time when the target would be denied its Dexterity bonus. This extra damage applies to ranged attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. See the rogue class feature, *PH* 50). The amount of extra damage dealt is 1d6 at 2nd level, and it increases by 1d6 for every four thief of life levels thereafter (at 6th and 10th).

Borrow Vigor (Su): Once you reach 4th level, you can keep a portion of the life-force of fallen foes for yourself. Anytime you reduce a living creature to –1 or fewer hp with a sneak attack, you gain temporary hit points equal to the creature's HD. These hit points last for a maximum of 1 hour, and multiple quantities of temporary hit points gained from this ability do not stack.

If you have an *essentia* pool, you also gain 1 temporary *essentia* point, which you can immediately invest in any *essentia* receptacle (even *incarnum* feats). This *essentia* lasts for 1 hour; multiple uses of this ability do not stack. (See *Magic of Incarnum* for rules on using *essentia*.)

Immunity to Fear (Ex): By 5th level, your repeated exposure to death itself renders you incapable of feeling the emotion that so terrifies lesser mortals. You gain immunity to fear effects.

Immunity to Energy Drain (Ex): At 7th level, you gain immunity to energy drain effects.

Steal Vitality (Su): Starting at 8th level, you can steal the life energy of a dying creature to use as your own. Whenever you reduce a living creature to –10 or fewer hit points with a sneak attack, you draw all remaining vitality from its body as the creature's soul departs. The body

*Janilya the Fearless,
a thief of life*



shrivels swiftly to a husk, every drop of blood within drying up in an instant. You gain immunity to fatigue, exhaustion, and sleep effects for a number of hours equal to the creature's HD. Multiple uses of this ability do not stack (use only the longer duration).

Immunity to Death Effects (Ex):

At 9th level, you gain immunity to death effects.

Steal Immortality (Su): At 10th level, you can take advantage of a dying creature to (briefly) cheat death itself. This is the pinnacle of achievement for a disciple of Vol. Whenever you reduce a living creature to –10 or fewer hit points with a sneak attack, in addition to stealing its life energy (see *Steal Vitality*, above) you devour a small portion of its soul. The slain creature's HD must equal or exceed your own for this power to take effect. This has no further ill effect on the slain creature, but you become effectively immortal for the next year: Your body does not age (delaying the onset of ability score penalties due to age, but not mental ability score improvements), and you need not eat or sleep (though rest might still be required to regain spells and similar abilities).

If you have an *essentia* pool, you also gain temporary *essentia* points equal to one-half the slain creature's HD, which you can immediately invest in any *essentia* receptacle (even *incarnum* feats). This *essentia* lasts for 1 hour; multiple uses of this ability do not stack. (See *Magic of Incarnum* for rules on using *essentia*.)

Unlike with the *steal vitality* feature, any creature slain by this attack cannot be brought back to life except by means of a *miracle*, *true resurrection*, *wish*, or similar magic. Furthermore, you become instantly aware of any creature slain by you in this way returning to life (though you don't necessarily know where the resurrection occurs).

PLAYING A THIEF OF LIFE

You might or might not be devoted to (or even aware of) the lich-queen Vol, but you are undoubtedly committed to stealing the secret of life everlasting for yourself. You have trained and studied for this opportunity, and you let nothing stand in your way. You might have goals outside this, and even beyond those of the Blood of Vol, but enlightened self-interest is the order of the day for a thief of life. Other people fit into one of two broad categories: fellows driven to seek immortality or pawns to further your own pursuit of it.

Combat

You are a dangerous foe in combat, especially with surprise on your side. Even at low levels, you have a potent sneak attack, and since many thief of life class features play off the sneak attack, it is your most effective combat tool. Your lifesense ability allows you to fight more effectively in the dark, so maneuvering melees into such situations can play to your strengths. Regardless of the lighting conditions, getting yourself into flanking position is a combat must.

At higher levels, you become increasingly able to resist harmful effects wielded by your enemies, from fear and energy drain to sleep and even death effects. At the culmination of your path, you gain the ability to extend your life essentially indefinitely—as long as a supply of helpless prey exists.

Advancement

The thief of life is a demanding career path. It requires knowledge and skills outside the ordinary for the common rogue, and some hopefuls lack the patience to realize their dreams. Thankfully, you do not seek alone. The largest collection of thieves of life on Eberron forms a cabal known as the Cult of Life, a subset of the Blood of Vol. The euphemistic name deflects fear and suspicion from the cult's morally questionable activities. In the darkened halls of cult gatherings, master thieves of life train, educate, and test new Seekers.

You can pursue whatever avenues of study work best for you, but the Cult of Life values breadth of experience. A neophyte thief of life with something new or different to offer receives more favor from cult superiors than less interesting peers. Once you are able to arrest your own aging process, you become a mentor to neophyte thieves and take your place among the elite of the Cult of Life. Few below this exalted rank are inducted into the true nature of the Blood of Vol. When your path culminates in the transformation to undead, you enter the true inner circle of the Cult of Life, answering to none but Vol herself.

Resources

As an active member of the Cult of Life, you can expect to receive aid from your colleagues—on occasion. As with a proper thieves' guild, individual members are only as valuable as the risk they pose to the group, and should you get yourself into more trouble than you are worth, the cult has no qualms about cutting you loose. The largest concentration of cult activity is in the Aundairian capital of Fairhaven. This outfit is led by one of the Cult of Life's founding members, a man by the name of Torven d'Medani (LE male human rogue

5/monk 3/thief of life 10), formerly of House Medani. Thieves of life in Fairhaven who follow d'Medani's edicts to the letter benefit from his considerable power and influence.

THIEVES OF LIFE IN THE WORLD

"These thieves are but rumor, to the best of my knowledge. They had better be. . ."

—Bedesto the Gauntlet, dwarf paladin of Dol Dorn

Some of Vol's greatest servitors are thieves of life. Many have insinuated themselves into positions of power and authority across Khorvaire, either at her direct request or by way of their superiors in the Cult of Life or the Order of the Emerald Claw. Above all, thieves of life are careful to avoid implicating themselves in their superiors' activities—they would sooner take the fall for something unrelated than relinquish the secret of their fellowship. As a result, most leave false clues implicating other figures or groups.

Notables

Because their mandate is secret, few cult members achieve name recognition (at least not for being thieves of life). Within the Cult of Life, however, some figures have reached near-legendary status and serve as inspirations to those still advancing. In addition to Torven d'Medani, perhaps the most renowned thief of life ever to exist, the infamous include Sle'en the Ageless, a changeling prodigy raised from birth within the cult; Tzora the Black, an elf assassin famed for her betrayal of and subsequent flight from Aerenal; and the half-orc chieftain Janilya Hornblade, an outcast who returned to her clan not only as conqueror, but as the prophet who would eventually convert the entire clan to the Blood of Vol.

Organization

Most thieves of life are not aware of the true extent and goals of their organization. At the lowest level are those who find their own way onto this path. Such individuals typically serve neither goals nor interests beyond their own, and are typically neutral evil in alignment. Those thieves who are materially involved with active cults of Vol can be of any alignment (though lawful evil is common where the cult operates openly). They might or might not be aware of the religion's overarching connections, depending on their value to and involvement with the Crimson Covenant. The most powerful thieves of life knowingly serve Vol, the Covenant, and their interests. This includes almost everyone of 7th level or higher who is a member of the Cult of Life. Once a thief reaches this level of ability, she is bestowed the added title "dauntless" and is typically inducted into some truths of the Cult's activities by her local superior. On reaching 10th level of the class, she achieves the exalted rank of "ageless." For example, the head of cult affairs in Fairhaven is known as Torven the Ageless.

NPC Reactions

Many folk are familiar with the Blood of Vol, but few know of the thieves of life. Specific reactions depend on the individual cultist, many of whom specialize in dissembling or otherwise putting strangers at ease. An NPC who is aware of the cultist's ties to the Blood of Vol reacts

according to the prevailing attitude toward the sect. Worshipers of the Silver Flame, for example, would consider them part of a misguided and illegal religion, whether or not they have any specific knowledge about that individual cultist. Those who glimpse the thief of life's class abilities in action are likely to react with extreme fear, distrust, or both.

THIEF OF LIFE LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge can research thieves of life to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check or bardic knowledge check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: A particular type of roguish operative combines special powers with a focus on stealth. The name thief of life is whispered in the dark.

DC 15: Forming a subcult of the Blood of Vol, thieves of life are both feared and renowned for their ability to bolster their own health by stealing life energy from their victims.

DC 20: The most powerful thieves of life can enter a state of quasi-immortality by consuming the souls of those they kill.

THIEVES OF LIFE IN THE GAME

Most of the time, player characters will never know they have encountered a thief of life. Such characters are in the business of charade—so adept at masquerading as ordinary rogues that they are usually mistaken for them. Should a PC suffer the effects of a thief's steal vitality ability, however, or in the event that the PCs go up against a thief of sufficiently advanced level, the differences soon become apparent. Even so, all but the most learned of characters will still be at a loss to articulate what it is they have experienced.

Playing a thief of life is a roleplaying challenge. They are not necessarily evil, but they are bent on the pursuit of immortality, and their methods clearly bring them into conflict with certain character classes. Their combat effectiveness is undeniable, though, and the class offers many of the same attractions as does the rogue, with added benefits at the highest levels. Among parties of neutral or at least pragmatic characters, they make interesting PCs. The challenge lies in maintaining moral neutrality while progressing in the class.

Adaptation

The overall gestalt of the thief of life clearly links the class to the Blood of Vol in the *Eberron* setting, but it could be found in any campaign where rogues or the gods of death are influential. Adapting the class to other settings requires little more than changing some specific entry requirements.

Sample Encounter

One thief of life makes a terrific villain; a group of them is quite a challenge. Death is a fundamental principle of

nature. If evil beings find a way sidestep that eventuality—often by murdering and sacrificing sentient beings—heroic characters must step in to oppose them.

EL 10: Janilya was unpopular among the Hornblade Clan from an early age due to her mixed blood. Furthermore, she refused to condemn her human mother, who left her in the Hornblades' care rather than risk the shame of raising her in a conservative human community. Janilya was eventually ostracized from the clan for her outspoken views, particularly her contempt for the gods. Her desire for self-determination soon landed her in a cult of Vol, which inducted her into its ways. After amassing substantial money and power, she returned to her former clan, murdered the chieftain before the assembled elders, and took control.

JANILYA THE FEARLESS (RAGING)

CR 10

Female half-orc rogue 3/barbarian 2/thief of life 5
NE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., lifesense 15 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7

Languages Common, Orc

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 11; **Dodge**, **Mobility**, **uncanny dodge**
(+3 Dex, +3 armor, -2 rage)

hp 91 (10 HD)

Immune fear

Resist evasion

Fort +13, **Ref** +10 (+11 against traps), **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); **Spring Attack**

Melee +1 *greatsword of wounding* +13/+8 (2d6+8/19-20 plus 1 Con against living creatures)

Ranged longbow +10/+5 (1d8/×3)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +12

Atk Options borrow vigor, rage 1/day (8 rounds), sneak attack +3d6

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 20, Dex 16, Con 21, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding

Feats Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack

Skills Balance +6, Disable Device +6, Disguise +6, Heal +6, Hide +9, Jump +11, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +7, Ride +5, Spot +7, Survival +5, Tumble +9

Possessions masterwork studded leather armor, longbow, +1 *greatsword of wounding*, *amulet of health* +2, *gloves of Dexterity* +2

When not raging, Janilya has the following changed statistics:

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; **Dodge**, **Mobility**, **uncanny dodge**

hp 71 (10 HD)

Fort +11, **Ref** +10 (+11 against traps), **Will** +4

Melee +1 *greatsword of wounding* +11/+7 (2d6+5 plus 1 Con against living creatures)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills Jump +9

Eberon is one world that wears many masks. Its servants wear those that suit them best.



DRUID SECTS

When one thinks of druids, the Eldeen Reaches immediately come to mind. Indeed, this wild land supports many druids of differing sects. But the druidic traditions of harmony with nature and, especially in Eberron, defense against corruption are not confined to the Reaches. Any culture that is close to nature or to land with extensive undeveloped regions is likely to support druidic traditions.

Druids exist all across Khorvaire, and the other continents have their share as well (though less is known about them). In addition to the wild defenders most people think of, there also exist druid sects dedicated to the destructive aspects of nature. Although their followers are grim and dangerous, such traditions are not usually evil. Other druids do follow a dark path, incomprehensible to most, that honors ancient horrors or alien environments, seeking to change the very face of Eberron.

Certain druids do not distinguish between the Material Plane and any other. Far from being “alien” and “outside,” to them all the planes are natural parts of the whole of existence. Other druids, generally those of extraplanar origin, are dedicated to the primacy of their home planes over all others. Agents of these outsider sects are drawn to manifest zones on Eberron, where they try to strengthen the planar connection, or even try to create new manifest zones.

COMMON GROUND

Druidic doctrines are simple and unadorned. They each have one overriding goal or approach, which can be stated in few words in each sect’s entry. Differences are for conclave discussion, not scripture parsing or proclamation from superiors.

Druid sects do not have holy symbols in the way that clerics understand them; each adopts certain marks or objects that identify members to one another. These individual features are described in each entry. Nor do they use prayer in the way that more formal religions do; conversely, ritual forms a much greater part of religious life for the sects’ followers.

Most druidic traditions place little emphasis on the fate of the soul. They are by definition concerned with the worldly; life itself is sacred. Tacit in most sects is the concept of reincarnation, a belief that life is a finite quantity that reappears in the world in a new form after the old one ends. Druids honor the spirits of creatures killed for food so that they will not seek revenge in the next life; they aim

to disperse souls that were responsible for crimes against nature, to be reborn in scattered, mindless form. Some sects do have more developed ideas about the afterlife, and these too are presented in the appropriate sections.

Druid sects in general do not interact with other types of religions, except those that pose a direct threat. They believe nonhostile faiths are artificial constructs irrelevant unless a convert wishes to abandon them and follow a more natural path. Still, the various druid sects have firm attitudes toward one another. These impressions are presented in each sect’s description.

Druids do not keep a calendar in the way of more formal religions. The rhythms of sun and moon, the change of seasons—these are the natural accompaniment to life. Each sect observes these moments in their own way. Frivolous distinctions such as naming festivals and counting off days are not important to them.

PURIFICATION RITUALS

Each druid sect detailed in this chapter includes a sidebar that describes its purification ritual. Any character can take part in a druidic purification ritual, although the ritual itself can only be performed by a druid of at least 5th level who belongs to the appropriate sect. A druidic purification ritual requires one uninterrupted hour of meditation by all those participating. If anything interrupts the concentration of any participant, the entire ritual is disrupted and no benefits are bestowed.

When the ritual is completed, each participant who meets the listed prerequisite must attempt a DC 15 Concentration check (taking 10 is not possible). If he succeeds, he gains the listed benefit of the ritual. This benefit lasts for a number of days equal to that participant’s level, unless noted otherwise. If he fails the check (or does not meet the prerequisite), he gains no benefit and can’t repeat the ritual for thirty days.

Druidic purification rituals have no cost, but druids refuse to perform them on anyone who does not share their beliefs. A druid cannot be compelled (magically or otherwise) to perform a druidic purification ritual against her will, and any druid who performs one of these rituals on an undeserving character loses all druid spellcasting abilities, along with the ability to perform purification rituals, until she undergoes *atonement*.

A full-fledged initiate of the sect gains a greater benefit from the purification rituals listed here, though this extra benefit ends immediately if the recipient is expelled from the druid sect.

Additional druidic purification rituals specific to different traditions can be found on page 60 of *Player's Guide to Eberron*.

WARDENS OF THE WOOD

The largest druid sect in the world, the Wardens learned their traditions from the *awakened* greatpine Oalian, who guarded the deepwoods long before humans ever came to Khorvaire. This group protects the Reaches by destroying unnatural creatures (primarily aberrations and outsiders) and by teaching the inhabitants to respect nature as they harvest its bounty and cultivate the land.

SERVANTS OF THE WOOD

Roughly half of the Wardens are human, with the rest made up largely of half-elves and shifters, along with a smattering of other races. They are kindly intentioned and do their work out of a sincere desire to achieve perfect harmony with the world, in the belief that technological advancement and the wild can coexist.

Wardens dress in comfortable garments using leather, skins, and cloth woven from both plant and animal fibers. They have no problem with tailored items and feel no compulsion to make their own goods; a Warden ranger might bring the skins from a hunt to a leatherworker in a village of the Reaches, and while he is in town, pick up an embroidered cotton shirt and enjoy a well-cooked meal.

The Wardens often wear green and brown since they spend so much time in the woodlands. For special ceremonies, they adopt brightly colored robes attuned to the season: yellow for spring, blue for summer, flame orange for autumn, and white with silver thread for winter.

Becoming a Warden

The influence of the Wardens is so widespread throughout the Reaches that most inhabitants incorporate the sect's principles unconsciously in their day-to-day lives. Most are not active worshipers, but druidic gatherings take place right beside village markets and farmers' fields, and the Eldeen peoples actively engage their more religious neighbors. Thus the environment fosters the qualities most desired for those who wish to serve nature.

Those Reachers who live especially close to the land, such as farmers and hunters, participate most actively in the sect's activities. They attend seasonal ceremonies, pledge their assistance in times of danger, and make offerings of food. Most new members of the Wardens come from these families. During the cycle of spring observances, senior druids visit the villages to speak blessings over the land, while keeping a keen eye out for any who feel the call to nature's service.

The young hopefuls are taken to the town of Greenheart, the spiritual and administrative center of the Wardens. There they undergo a special ceremony of mass initiation. After being initiated, the youths scatter to various locales within the Reaches to begin their training. Each travels to an area far from his original home, both to broaden experience and to reduce distractions from family and friends.

Hierarchy

Each community has at least one druid to attend to its religious needs; these priests form loose circles numbering ten to twenty members, representing a wide area. One or two members of each such circle travel to Greenheart for consultation with the elders, although during important festivals all the druids are expected to attend. Larger towns are served by small circles of up to a half-dozen druids.

Individual worshipers and circles are self-sufficient and rarely deal with the higher administration of the sect. The hierarchy of the Wardens is fairly loose. However, they do have a fixed base of operation at Greenheart, deep in the Towering Wood.

Great Druid Oalian heads the order spiritually and still bestows his immense learning on followers, but in his great antiquity he is largely sedentary. He usually dreams in the deep grove but always stirs to welcome visitors. Faena Graymorn (NG female half-elf druid 13) handles the day-to-day management of the sect. She is assisted by a conclave of elder druids whose number varies according to the shifting population of the town: During high conclaves, thousands of worshipers converge on Greenheart, and the temples and other public places require extra personnel to handle the crowds. At other times, six to twelve administrators suffice. They in turn confer with the leaders of various small circles and itinerant members throughout the realm.

Religious Duties

Members of the sect regard their duty in different ways, depending on where they live and their special talents. Although the religion is druidic, most of the Wardens themselves are not druids. Many are commoners or experts, toiling in the fields and forests alongside their neighbors and guiding them in honoring nature as they earn a living. Others are lone hunters, often rangers, who patrol against incursions by hostile creatures and enemies of the natural order.

Circle representatives consult the elders several times a year, usually between the major rites. They report on the situation in their districts and request assistance if needed. They also spend time in meditation on the latest teachings of Oalian, as relayed by the elders. After spending several days in Greenheart, they disperse again to their communities to spread the word. If a serious threat faces the Reaches,

THE EMBLEM OF THE WARDENS

The greatpine Oalian is the progenitor of all the Wardens, and many wear a stylized pine tree somewhere on their garb out of respect to the Great Druid. Orcs and half-orcs often bear a scar shaped like a tree.

The bracken fern is another token of the Wardens' role within the world. Its spreading fronds represent welcome, and its humble status as forest undergrowth emphasizes humility and harmony.

the local druids also bring word of the danger and call for aid from the local population. Extremely grave threats demand a grand conclave (see below).

Fallen Wardens

Those who join the Wardens of the Wood are already committed to its ideals, so the concept of falling from its principles is difficult for Wardens to grasp. When someone does abandon the sect, it is usually to follow a more narrow or extreme druidic tradition—particularly the Ashbound. Such people simply depart the Wardens and begin worship in the new sect. Eldeen druids share the same basic tenets, so this is usually not sufficient cause for a former Warden to lose access to her druid class abilities. Even leaving the Reaches entirely to enter a lesser druidic organization need not strip a druid of her powers, if she still holds to the ideals of balance with nature.

Only turning to actively evil worship, such as one of the Cult of the Dragon Below, brings on the Wardens' enmity. This qualifies as ceasing to revere nature for the purpose of losing access to druid class abilities, and such renegades are considered enemies of the natural order. They are now fair game for rangers and others who protect the Reaches. These ex-druids can regain their class abilities only through the *atonement* spell and undergoing initiation into their new sect; they are never again welcome among the Wardens.

Quests

Quests are not a requirement of most druid sects. Some Wardens set themselves difficult tasks, such as clearing an entire district of aberrations, but they do so to challenge themselves and grow stronger. A few take on the self-imposed burden of bringing the teachings of Oalian beyond the boundaries of the Reaches. For them, returning to Greenheart is a spiritual cleansing that they must perform every few years so that they might return refreshed to their duties.

rites and rituals of the wardens

In addition to the purification ritual of the woodland bond (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 60) and the rites of passage common to any religion, the Wardens undertake certain special rites as described below.

Initiation

Initiation into the Wardens takes place in the Great Druid's grove. The initiates are brought into the presence of

Oalian, who speaks to each individually for a moment, then presides over the religious ceremony. Participants wear robes of deep green; at the height of the ceremony they throw back the robes to reveal bright red tunics. This symbolizes the harmony of animal and vegetative life, as well as the initiate's new awareness of the world. Each initiate then receives a sprig of young bracken in token of her new status. As the fern shoot begins tightly rolled and eventually spreads into a broad frond, so the young initiate will eventually grow to embrace her role within nature.

Major Rites

Ceremonies observing each of the seasons are held on the solstices and the equinoxes. These are daylong observances, beginning at sunup of the seasonal change and lasting until the following dawn. Along with songs and prayers, these days feature great feasts. The participants eat and drink to satiety, the meal consisting of foodstuffs appropriate to the season: young shoots, lamb, and early wines in spring; berries, fish, and corn in summer; nuts, apples, venison, and squash in fall; ale, root vegetables, and smoked meats in winter.

The most important ritual of the year is the ceremony of thanks to Oalian. This takes place during the autumn feast, and the greatpine imbibes a special draft prepared from honey and wine brought by all druids participating in the rite. Each druid speaks words of blessing over the mixture, adding a pinch of soil from his or her native region, and then all the celebrants carry the large barrel to Oalian's grove. They carefully pour it out onto the ground, some distance from the greatpine's trunk so that its feeder roots can absorb the liquid. At the same time they sing songs of thanks and ask the High Druid to help them with his wisdom in the coming year.

This draft is only mildly alcoholic, so it doesn't damage the greatpine's roots. It does make Oalian even more somnolent, though, for the next few days.

THE WARDENS OF THE WOOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Inhabitants of the Eldeen Reaches live and work side by side with the Wardens. The sect is so firmly ingrained within society that it is barely noticed; rather, the absence of the Wardens would cause concern.

As noted above, most followers of the sect are not druids, and many are not even active worshipers. They live their lives according to its principles because that is how they have lived for centuries uncounted.

RITUAL OF OALIAN'S VOICE

Oalian speaks to you of harmony between civilization and nature, granting you a measure of confidence in dealing with inhabitants of both realms. This ritual can only be performed by a druid of the Wardens of the Wood sect.

Prerequisite: Nonevil alignment.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Diplomacy, Handle Animal, and wild empathy checks.

If you deal damage to an animal, or magical beast, or plant, or humanoid native to the Eldeen Reaches that has not already dealt damage to you or to one of your allies, this benefit ends immediately.

Special: If you are an initiate of the Wardens of the Wood, you can make wild empathy checks with magical beasts as though they were animals.

The Wardens and Government

The druidic administration also serves as the spiritual capital of the Reaches, but it is no theocracy. Government, just like the sect itself, is loosely organized, with decisions usually made at the local level. People generally do as they wish, but most communities make small offerings in food or goods to the druids at Greenheart. The town is completely devoted to religious duties and has no market, so its inhabitants depend on such offerings to supplement the supplies provided by local hunters and gatherers. Since the Wardens actively maintain order within the Reaches, its inhabitants consider such offerings a small price to pay and make them willingly.

The Wardens and Other Sects

The Wardens are generally easygoing about other druid sects, believing that they all serve the same ends but have different visions. They are relentlessly hostile toward those who deliberately worship evil, however.

Specific Attitudes

The Ashbound: It is regrettable that these servants of nature are so hostile toward even innocuous activities, but their hearts are in the right place. When it comes to defending the world from unnatural invaders, none are fiercer.

The Children of Winter: They too eagerly expect the end of all things. True, death is natural and an end must come, but there is no need to hasten its advance.

The Gatekeepers: Noble servants of the wild, they taught Oalian itself and thus all druids. How sad that their numbers have dwindled so far; they are the only thing that stands between us and another Age of Demons.

The Greensingers: They are *of* nature, more than any of us, and like nature they are beyond reason. We honor them for what they are, but we do not understand what they stand for—if anything.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE WARDENS

Because the Wardens do not condemn using nature's bounty to create technology, they are comfortable with buildings, furniture, and other trappings of civilization. For example, the High Druid's grove remains undeveloped, but Greenheart contains simple buildings of earth or platforms built in trees. A sacred grove is the common location of the sect's high observances, but local rites might be held in barns, village halls, even manor houses. Each regional circle of druids does maintain a small grove as well, mainly for seasonal rites by those who have not traveled to Greenheart.

THE ASHBOUND

This sect is small in number (around 1,700 members) but compensates in its sheer fanaticism. Not for them the careful balance between nature and civilization—all that is artificial or unnatural is dangerous, with arcane magic at the top of the list. Nature's purity must be defended at all costs.

SERVANTS OF THE ASHBOUND

Most Ashbound are humans or shifters. This sect attracts more shifters than any other for its devotion to the harsh laws of nature. They see the Wardens' attempt to balance nature and "progress" as foolish, and most do not hesitate to destroy anything they see as unnatural. What constitutes the unnatural varies from one individual to the next, but they are united in their opposition to arcane magic, unnatural beings such as fiends and aberrations, and the ravages of civilization.

Ashbound in general do not wear armor, even if they belong to martial classes, scorning it as a civilized crutch. They might use manufactured weapons, but many are drawn to unarmed combat styles (especially shifters). They eschew woven cloth, worked leather, and crafted jewelry, and they use no dyes to alter the natural colors of the hides and furs they wear. They survive entirely by hunting, fishing, and gathering, for they believe cultivation wounds the earth.

While going about their vital tasks, the Ashbound wear only what they need to survive, unadorned except for the emblem of their faith. They do take trophies from their campaigns, however, such as the horns of demons or wizards' staffs, which they fashion into ornaments for use at major ceremonies. The most senior members have accumulated the most trophies—they have fantastically ornate headgear, cloaks, and the like, made from dozens of their greatest foes.

Becoming an Ashbound

The best candidate for the Ashbound is someone who has experienced firsthand the destructive power of civilization. Typically, such a person is not a native of the Eldeen Reaches, coming instead from a city or place devastated by fiendish incursions, such as the Shadow Marches or the Demon Wastes. Quite a few are refugees from now-dead Cyre, for whom the nightmare of the Mourning never ends. But some who inhabit the Reaches have experienced assaults from their demon-haunted neighbors or by horrors that leave the Gloaming, and this is enough to convince them of the need for eternal vigilance against the unnatural.

The Ashbound do not actively seek new members, believing that nature must call the prospective defender. Potential initiates come of their own accord, out of disgust

THE EMBLEM OF THE ASHBOUND

Initiates smudge their faces with wood ash to represent the damage civilization has done to nature, and they sometimes display the skeleton of a fire-ravaged tree.

Most commonly the Ashbound wear a claw or fang strung on a leather cord (taken from a creature that died

naturally or was honorably slain) to emphasize that they are the avenging hand of nature itself. Since many of its members are shifters, this emblem reinforces their wild nature.

with civilized excess or the trauma of fiendish assault, and seek refuge within the deepest part of the wilds. There they come upon the local Ashbound, who approach only after observing them from secrecy. Initiation is simple and brief: The chief druid of the area anoints the new member and then assigns him to a patrol group. Initiates who perform well have a chance to display their prowess at the next grand conclave, and advance within the sect's hierarchy if they are deemed suitably dedicated.

Hierarchy

The Ashbound exist in scattered groups that patrol ceaselessly within the Reaches or embark on raids against what they see as threats to the natural order. They have no central base or even a high druidic council. Individuals advance in personal power through their exploits, and those who are especially charismatic attract followers. The most influential become the de facto leaders of the organization, which means only that others are more likely to listen to them. During grand conclaves, these competing leaders speak to the assembled and shape the sect's overall policies. The speaker who most sways the crowd assumes the mantle of leader, although this is by no means a lifetime position. The next year's conclave might see another catch the sect's attention and become the high druid with no further ado.

The current high druid is Gharull (N male shifter druid 10), whose passion and personal magnetism are irresistible. He is responsible for attracting many followers to the sect, and his voice has prevailed in the last eight grand conclaves. He sees himself as the voice of nature, and his outlook is fierce and uncompromising. The Ashbound sect has become even more radical under his leadership, with attacks against farmers in the eastern Reaches, raids on arcane academies in Aundair, even incursions against Brelish industries. He has the support of shifters within the sect as well as the Cyran refugees. His voice does not speak for all, though. Other local leaders are influential within their districts, most notably Collas (N male human druid 4), who takes a more moderate message to the eastern plains dwellers. He is a proponent of atonement ceremonies over the purifying flame. Should his philosophy dominate at a future conclave, most of the sect would moderate their attitudes as well.

Druids make up about one-quarter of the sect, a very high proportion compared to most religious organizations. The Ashbound count many rangers, Eldeen rangers, and barbarians among them, all fanatically devoted to the uncomplicated life. A local Ashbound leader might not even be a druid, especially in the western Reaches. There, war parties of rangers and barbarians are the rule. Around the borders of the Gloaming, on the other hand, the ratio of druids to others is much higher than elsewhere, in an effort to keep that region's slow expansion in check. This often brings the Ashbound into conflict with the Children of Winter, who patrol its boundaries to protect what they see as sacred ground.

Most Ashbound spellcasters are druids, owing to the sect's fierce antipathy to any sort of magic outside that of nature, but a few are adepts. Their primitive magic is acceptable to the Ashbound, as long as it is used for the correct purposes. Occasionally a spirit shaman (*Complete Divine* 14) joins the sect, seeing this as her responsibility to the spirits of nature. Many Ashbound, however, distrust the "spirits" she calls on as forces outside the natural order.

Religious Duties

There is but one duty for the faithful: to cleanse the world of all that is unnatural. Each follower has her own idea about how to accomplish this task, and as long as her methods do not bring further harm to nature or to others of the Ashbound, she is free to follow her heart. General directives are sometimes set out at a grand conclave, so that destroying fiends might be the highest priority in winter, whereas sabotaging farm equipment might take priority in spring.

The Ashbound operate in small groups, usually numbering half a dozen and led by a druid of 3rd to 7th level. In areas rife with magical danger, up to half the group might be druids. The rest are mainly rangers with a barbarian or two. Each group is expected to undertake missions regularly (the interval depends on the difficulty of the task) and to report back on progress at conclaves. Merely destroying the unnatural is not enough, though—it must be clear that this is the work of the Ashbound. In addition to taking trophies, the group leaves unmistakable evidence of its work, usually the outline of a skeletal tree scorched, gouged, or outlined in a heap of wreckage.

Individual groups hold their own observances. The completion of a mission demands a commemorative rite (often concurrent with leaving behind the mark of the tree). Those groups who are less radical in their outlook lead townsfolk in periodic rituals of atonement, especially at planting and harvest.

Fallen Ashbound

People join this severe sect out of absolute conviction that their cause is just. So many bear scars from the devastation of nature that they can never think differently. Some, though, advocate a more reasonable approach that advises and instructs people in how to minimize their "footprint" on the world. The sect tolerates this to a degree, but the Ashbound shun those who are overly indulgent toward civilization. Such a person's followers desert her for another group, and she is barred from attending conclaves. With her influence so weakened, she usually chooses to leave. She retains her druid abilities, for she is still dedicated to nature; she might become a lone practitioner or seek out the gentler embrace of the Wardens.

Any Ashbound who practices arcane magic, no matter what the reason, is immediately expelled from the sect and loses all druid abilities until she atones. If the offense was not too severe (for example, consuming a potion created by a wizard or using an arcane scrying device to seek out threats), she can gain re-admittance as a new initiate. This also applies to those who engage in structured divine spellcasting; that is, cleric magic. More severe infractions, in particular studying arcane magic by taking levels in a spellcasting class, merit not only expulsion but also designation as an enemy of nature. Such a criminal's life is forfeit, and any Ashbound would gain prestige from destroying the apostate. Enemies who survive usually become the sect's most implacable foes, even if they do not follow an evil philosophy.

Quests

On first being initiated into the Ashbound, each new member receives his first mission. He is expected to carry this out alone and bring back proof of his success to the local sect leader. These initial assignments are intended

A Soul Forfeited

The Ashbound consider no crime more heinous than the desire for immortality. This is the root of the sect's fanatical hatred of arcane magic that creates undead abominations, and they are little more tolerant of divine spells that raise the dead. To them, a life's measure is sacred and brooks no interference; unnaturally extending it deprives the world of its precious vitality and keeps new life from being born as it should be.

A tantalizing scrap of lore concerning the sect explains this unrelenting attitude. According to this legend, a high druid of the Ashbound who called herself Breakwinter explored the arcane arts to broaden her power against the threats posed by the Children of Winter. She began by summoning fiendish horrors in battle against the twisted life of the Gloaming rather than risk natural lives, and proceeded to reanimate the fallen enemies to bolster her forces against the Children of Winter. But she could not control them well, and the undead things began to terrorize the surrounding lands as much as, and more than, the fiendish vermin they were made to fight. She would not listen to the remonstrations of the other high druids, and became increasingly fanatical in her campaign. Ultimately, she decided to undergo the foul rites of transformation to a lich so that she could continue the fight long after the end of her natural life span. This so alarmed the other Ashbound that they mounted an attack on her grove, managing to interrupt the ritual before she could become the monster, then destroying both her and her terrible servants.

Within a few months of Breakwinter's death, the Reaches saw an unprecedented population boom. Animals and people alike produced bountifully, and their offspring were particularly strong and healthy. An unbiased observer might have attributed this to reduced environmental damage following the destruction of the army, but the Ashbound saw it as proof that continued unnatural existence had deprived the world of vitality. This cemented their conviction that any magic other than druid magic was a crime against nature, and they declared its use a capital offense. It's unlikely another leader can ever soften that attitude.

to challenge, not endanger. A typical mission is to investigate and report on threatening activity, or sometimes to destroy a fairly weak creature, such as a twisted vermin from the Gloaming.

The seasonal directive set at a conclave in effect prescribes a quest for followers of the sect. Each group is free to interpret this according to its own beliefs and set its own pace, with the most zealous driving themselves to exhaustion in pursuit of its goals.

rites and rituals of the Ashbound

Ritual is intensely personal for the Ashbound. Supplementing the ritual of arcane opposition (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 60) are the following rites.

Initiation

The act of initiation is brief and to the point. By the time a prospective initiate contacts the Ashbound, they are already aware of his character. Had they not approved, he would never have made contact. The local leader, or the highest-ranking druid if the leader is not one, requires the candidate to swear an oath on his life and on the life of the earth. Should he fail in his duty, goes the oath, may he be struck to ash. The ritual concludes with the smearing of ash onto the initiate's face, usually in the shape of the skeletal tree. He does not wash or remove this mark until he has completed his initiate's quest.

Minor Rites

Individual groups of Ashbound hold their own observances, and most practitioners perform private rituals at personally meaningful times. However, completing a mission demands a commemorative rite (often concurrent with leaving behind the mark of the tree). The exact nature of this ritual is up to the individual Ashbound, but it always contains an element of mourning for the earth's pain. This might entail a small sacrifice at a sacred grove, or a libation to the spirits of nature, accompanied by a promise to ease the suffering of the world by whatever means necessary.

Major Rites

Grand conclaves take place at the equinoxes and solstices. Each group's leader, and all druids within a group, attend these ceremonies, which are held in an unspoiled region within the Towering Wood. The exact location changes with each gathering and is set at the end of the previous season's conclave. Group representatives report on progress, display trophies, and discuss policy for the coming seasons. The winter conclave prescribes the campaign for winter and spring, while the summer conclave deals with summer and autumn. Usually a great quest is set for all adherents to follow: Its goal is broad, so that each member can decide in her own way how to accomplish it. For example, a summer conclave might prescribe the "destruction of the scythe," which could mean sabotaging a harvest, destroying farm implements, or even attacking servants of death and undeath.

THE ASHBOUND IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The farmers, woodcutters, and traders of the Reaches respect the purity of the Ashbound and try not to draw their ire. Most members of the sect, although they disapprove

of such civilized activities, are occupied with more important causes. Towns don't have Ashbound circles, but no part of the Reaches is far from the wild lands from which they watch. These neighbors undertake periodic rituals of cleansing to apologize to nature for their necessary damage, under the direction of the local Ashbound druid.

The Ashbound and Government

The Ashbound sometimes come into conflict with the pseudogovernment of the Reaches in Greenheart, influenced as it is by the Wardens. The Wardens regard the Ashbound zealotry with sadness and attempt to dissuade them from more extreme actions; the Ashbound in turn scoff at the perceived weakness of the Wardens. Much of the time, however, the two sects' goals are aligned, even if their methods differ.

The local governments of the eastern Eldeen plains regard the Ashbound as enemies of their people. They issue warnings and treat the druids as wanted criminals; even a more moderate adherent of the sect might be attacked before being allowed to speak.

Aundair considers the Ashbound to be a terrorist organization. The Arcane Congress in particular sponsors freelance expeditions to take the war to the sect within the Reaches. Other neighboring governments do not adopt such an extreme position, but they view the sect as dangerous and react quickly to incursions against their territory.

The Ashbound and Other Sects

The Ashbound consider most other sects to be soft and weak, except for the Children of Winter, whom they revile as traitors to nature.

Specific Attitudes

The Wardens of the Wood: They are too willing to accept assaults upon nature in the name of peaceful coexistence. The rapers of the world would not hesitate to raze their groves if doing so were useful to them, coexistence or not.

The Children of Winter: They at least understand that nature is harsh. But they would unleash horrors on the land and are thus no better than its avowed enemies.

The Gatekeepers: We honor them as the first druids, but their focus is too narrow. They tend those ancient gates and do not see the present danger.

The Greensingers: Silly and inconsequential. They claim to honor nature but do nothing in its defense.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE ASHBOUND

The Ashbound observe an austere version of druidic worship. Individual circles establish their own meeting places, usually isolated groves far from inhabited areas. The grand conclaves are held in similar gathering spots, large enough to encompass several hundred members, but these locations change from one gathering to the next. The sect has no fixed center of worship, and in fact its members frown on construction or other alteration of the natural landscape.

THE CHILDREN OF WINTER

Death. Disease. Rot. Most see these afflictions as unpleasant at best, evil at worst. The Children of Winter know that they too are part of the natural cycle, things not to be feared but to be embraced. They do not worship destruction, but they do anticipate a great cleansing to come, allowing nature to start again on a blank canvas. Not a few do what they can to hasten that great day.

Winter is coming. Whether it is imminent, as many believe, or still far in the future, this certainty is shared by all the Children.

SERVANTS OF WINTER

The majority of the sect's adherents (totaling around 1,100) are human, with shifters making up almost all the rest. Those who join the Children of Winter hold to a cruel and unforgiving view of nature, in which only the strongest deserve to survive. They come from harsh environments or have been tested and proven by uncommon challenges. Nondruid members of the sect often have military backgrounds, and some are refugees from Cyre who have seen the rise of winter firsthand.

The Children dictate no formal dress, nor do they enjoin members from the use of arcane magic. Whatever serves the ultimate goal of bringing on winter is acceptable to the sect. It even includes a handful of warlocks, including the influential leader Raven, which observers attribute to the touch of the Gloaming. The sect also comprises an abnormally large number of vermin lords (*Book of Vile Darkness* 73), who enter dark pacts with the twisted creatures of the Gloaming to further the coming winter.

Becoming a Child of Winter

Those who choose to become druids of this sect gravitate on their own to the Gloaming. This dark and savage

RITUAL OF AVENGING ASH

You are daubed with ashes, reminders of the earth's injury, and are filled with the fury of nature's avenger. This ritual can only be performed by a druid of the Ashbound sect.

Prerequisite: Must not be capable of casting arcane spells.

Benefit: Choose a creature type or subtype from the following list: aberrations, constructs, outsiders (choose one subtype: air, chaotic, earth, evil, fire, good, lawful, or water), and undead. You gain a +1 bonus

on damage rolls made against creatures of that type (or subtype).

If you knowingly encounter a creature you have so designated and do not attempt to destroy it immediately, this benefit ends.

Special: An initiate of the Ashbound sect can treat creatures of the chosen type as favored enemies, just like the ranger class feature. If you already have the chosen creature as a favored enemy, the bonus against that enemy increases by 2.

place is slowly spreading, bringing the cleansing plague to a corrupted world, and they want to be at the heart of it. They usually display disturbing signs of this fascination beforehand, which makes them unwelcome in their communities and encourages their migration. However, the sect is also spreading out from the Gloaming, preparing the world, and so it is attracting new members from other nations. These initiates might never have seen the Reaches at all, but they recognize the coming winter in their own lands and feel the call to join.

The new prospect is drawn into the orbit of the most powerful group in the area (usually the only surviving group) and undergoes a harsh initiation to test his strength. If he survives, he immediately joins the pack and begins the task of bringing on the winter.

Hierarchy

Even more so than the Ashbound, the Children of Winter have no formal organization. They exist as independent packs that rove a chosen piece of territory. Each follows a strong leader, who generally has some levels in a fighting class, usually barbarian, in addition to druid abilities. Some leaders are not druids at all but are attended by druid followers. Strength is the sole criterion by which a leader is chosen, whether it be force at arms or conviction of character. A pack's leader directs it until successfully challenged; the winner automatically earns the mantle of leadership by virtue of nature's uncompromising standard of survival.

Individuals with the greatest reputation become known throughout the sect, so they lead the largest and most-feared packs. Word of their exploits travels throughout the sect, inspiring some to imitate them and others to warn against their overzealousness. New followers gravitate to the leader whose outlook most fits their own.

There are no grand conclaves, no central pronouncements within the Children of Winter. Each pack undertakes what its leader sees as its duty and sets its own rituals. The only criterion is the pack's acceptance; a leader who loses the ability to convince or coerce followers quickly loses her position as well.

In the Fullness of Time

As mentioned above, some Children of Winter believe that the great cleansing is not imminent, but will come only in the fullness of time. This patient outlook, espoused most publicly by the druid Frost, is distinctly in the minority, but it does draw adherents. The common people do not support even these moderate Children, but they fear them less than the more zealous ones, which helps the moderates spread into new areas and acquire more initiates. Proponents of this viewpoint hope that, in the fullness of time, this philosophy comes to dominate the entire sect.

THE EMBLEM OF THE CHILDREN

The Children of Winter are not big on ceremony, and so they rarely employ tokens or signs to identify themselves. Many, though, wear bones as part of their garb, and sometimes the image of a gnawed femur (or an actual bone) marks a site of the sect's activity.

Religious Duties

All the Children of Winter look forward to the coming doom. For a long time, they were content to observe the Gloaming and worship the mysteries of death in this, their most holy place. Some still do so. For them, maintaining what is natural is their highest duty. They do not interfere, even when the natural world is at its most bloody and cruel, and they ensure that no one else does either. Each Child would lay down her life for this principle, for death too is part of the natural order.

Since the Day of Mourning, though, most of the Children believe that winter is nigh. Their duty is to assist in bringing it on, which they do by encouraging the spread of the Gloaming and its inhabitants. This typically involves spreading disease, poisoning wells, or introducing vermin to destroy crops. On rare occasions, the Children use direct violence to cleanse a region. The most powerful druids lay *unhallow* spells over the newly cleansed areas to speed its expansion. Should an area require immediate purification and no druid of sufficiently high level is nearby, a delegation travels to the closest pack with a powerful leader and exhorts their assistance. In the view of all Children, purification by any means is the highest duty that a druid owes to the world.

For those few who still believe that winter is not yet imminent, the most important task is to show the others that they are in error. If the Children move rashly, inciting disaster in the name of a catastrophe that was not natural at all, they will betray everything they stand for. These druids travel the land, pursuing any clues that could solve the mystery of the Mournland or prove that it is not yet the time of Winter. Finding that crucial proof is more important than anything else to them.

Fallen Children

To fall from the Children of Winter is to die. In the severe mathematics of nature, one being's survival requires another's death. Any member who does not display strength of conviction is quickly overwhelmed—even consumed—by the others. A pack leader can be challenged at any time, and if the challenger wins out, he is the word of nature's law from that point on.

Sometimes a fallen Child is driven from the pack rather than killed outright. This is done in times of harsh weather or in an extremely dangerous environment; in this way, nature is the judge and executioner. The exile has no equipment, no means of survival beyond his wits, and usually succumbs quickly. The very few who do survive are now even tougher and meaner than they were before. Such an exile usually establishes a new pack, sometimes challenging (and defeating) the leader of the one that expelled him. The more embittered dedicate themselves body and soul to dark forces, sometimes even giving themselves over completely to the evil of the Dragon Below or the Lords of Dust.

Fallen Children retain their druid abilities unless they completely abandon the winter's path. Merely falling in with evil beings is not sufficient, but taking actions that threaten the Gloaming instantly revokes a druid's powers. A few give up their druid abilities to become blighters (*Complete Divine* 23), consumed with a need to bring as much destruction as possible upon the world.

Quests

Besides the initiation quest, which takes the lives of many prospective Children, members of this sect engage

in destructive missions that seem suicidal and mad to anyone else.

A common quest is that of the Plaguebird. A Child of Winter volunteers to be the carrier of some deadly disease, then travels into a crowded area to spread this "blessing." Although Children of Winter have exceptional resistance to disease, taking on this role is still very likely to kill the bearer. They have no fear of such a death, however, since it is in the service of nature's law.

For those who seek to prove the Mournland is not a natural phenomenon, there is no higher cause than investigating the devastation and bringing back evidence of a mortal hand. Such questers have not ceased their search since the Day of Mourning—unless death ended it prematurely.

RITES AND RITUALS OF THE CHILDREN OF WINTER

A common theme for all rituals of the Children of Winter is imminent risk of death, whether bringing it or surviving it. Along with the ritual of blight's embrace (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 60), the sect performs the following.

Initiation

The Children of Winter know that life is tough, and that only the strong can survive. Someone wishing to join their faith must prove his strength. The candidate undergoes a sort of vision quest, in which he faces nature armed with nothing more than his wits. He is stripped of all clothing and gear, and is kept awake for 24 hours amid a revel of drink and dance to ensure the loss of all spellcasting ability. Then, exhausted and hungry, the candidate is turned out into the wilderness. He must cross the Gloaming, passing through each of its rings. Many prospective initiates never come out the other side.

Surviving candidates immediately undergo the *ritual of winter's heart* to mark them as fit to survive.

Minor Rites

The Children of Winter do not engage in much formal ritual outside of initiation and the grand ceremony of the solstice. Those who cannot attend this great ritual perform their own observances in the name of winter.

Individual packs might have a specific mode of operation, such as attacking at midnight or targeting a specific sort of victim. Following a ritual attack, the pack leader marks the spot with a token of the Children—typically a gnawed bone.

Major Rites

The winter solstice marks the most solemn ceremony of the Children, the Bringing of Winter. As many of the scattered Children as possible congregate at the edges of the Gloaming for this observance, which is intended to strengthen and spread the oncoming doom of the world. They spend the first week of Zarantyr in macabre chants and dances to invoke the spirits of death. Ritual battles to the death also take place during this festival; it is the favored time for challenges to a pack's leader. The blood of the loser soaks into the soil of the Gloaming, there to feed the twisted life it harbors, and the winner leads the others in a cannibalistic feast on the loser's corpse.

THE CHILDREN OF WINTER IN EVERYDAY LIFE

For most inhabitants of the Reaches, or anywhere the sect is active, the Children are a dangerous but limited force of nature. Like tornadoes, they are immensely destructive but very few in number; the average inhabitant is not touched by them. Being prepared is the best defense, so people always seek information about the sect's activity in nearby areas. News of a great plague usually heralds the presence of the Children, whether as observers or carriers. And the Children flock like crows to scenes of destruction visited by nature, perhaps to contribute more of their own. Should an incursion by a pack seem likely, the locals usually try to be elsewhere during that time. Some have established secure shelters in the villages or beneath their houses where they can hide out until the threat has passed.

The Children and Government

The governments of civilized nations view the Children as crazed killers and terrorists, a view that is not entirely fair. The unpredictable nature of the sect's activities and its widely scattered adherents make military responses infeasible, though. The northeastern Brelish border, being fairly close to the Gloaming, sees increased patrols against both incursions by the Children and by the Ashbound. Generally, though, the nations of Khorvaire have more pressing matters to deal with—things over which military might and diplomacy have some real influence.

Droaam's Daughters of Sora Kell are interested in the implications of the Children's beliefs. No one knows the hag covey's ultimate purpose, but the trio might find something useful in promoting the coming of winter—or at least using the sect to further its own ends.

RITUAL OF WINTER'S HEART

You have become a messenger of the coming doom. You are more attuned to the negative energy at the heart of the Gloaming. This ritual can only be performed by a druid of the Children of Winter sect.

Prerequisite: Nongood alignment.

Benefit: Once per day, you can choose to empower (as the Empower Spell feat) any spell you cast that uses

negative energy (such as *inflict light wounds*). This does not alter the spell slot or casting time of the spell.

If you deal damage to a vermin or an undead creature that has not already dealt damage to you or your allies, this benefit ends immediately.

Special: If you are an initiate of the Children of Winter, you can use this ability three times per day instead.

The Children and Other Sects

The Children have little patience with most other druid orders, seeing them as hopelessly stuck in the past.

Specific Attitudes

The Wardens of the Wood: Whether nature and civilization can live in harmony is irrelevant to reality. Both are doomed, and the sooner the Wardens come to realize this, the more use they can be to the world as it is.

The Ashbound: Such grim determination to hold back the hands of time. Pathetic.

The Gatekeepers: Their day is past. Perhaps they even stopped the winter that should have come, and doomed the world to thousands of years of needless suffering.

The Greensingers: They at least understand that all things have their place in creation. I wonder how sanguine they will be when winter comes to their twilight groves.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE CHILDREN

Individual packs do not establish shrines. They consider land they have "purified" to be dedicated to the forces of destruction, laying the way for the great rebirth to come. However, the sect as a whole considers the entire Gloaming to be sacred ground. Numerous packs patrol the borders of the wood to keep out intruders. The very heart of the Gloaming, though, is a dark mystery that even the Children fear to breach. They are aware of the Nightbringers and are suspicious of these breakaway druids, so some packs also patrol the inner ring to watch for activity.

The Nightbringers

Mabar, the Endless Night, is a realm of darkness and negative energy. Most inhabitants of Eberron see the plane as inimical to life, and its inhabitants as wholly evil. The Children revere the darkness, seeing it as the necessary balance to light and life, and see no contradiction in including Mabar in their worship. And a few, believing that darkness is the ultimate destiny of the universe, work to hasten its conquest of the other planes. These maverick Children call themselves Nightbringers.

Those who follow the Nightbringer path are drawn to the dark places. They are natives of or seek out Mabar manifest zones, especially the Gloaming in the Eldeen Reaches. These druids prefer to operate at night or within a Mabar manifest zone. They remain within the Gloaming as long as possible, preferring to grow closer to the darkness, rather spreading the coming winter into the rest of the world.

Nightbringer leaders call themselves Nyctarch, while the most senior of those who follow take the title Darksinger.

Nyctarch's Cave

This Nyctarch is a shadow wildhunt shifter named Taralok Ebonsong (male shifter druid 9/scout 3/planar shepherd 4; see page 105) who inhabits a sacred cavern in the innermost ring of the Gloaming. He slipped through the boundaries between the planes when Mabar was last coterminous with Eberron and brought with him new insight into the Endless Night.

The sacred cave contains a weak spot between the planes that allows instantaneous travel during Mabar's coterminous phase, and greatly improved casting of *summon*, *planar ally*, and *gate* spells even when Mabar is remote. The Nyctarch's simple quarters are right beside the Mabar vortex. The cave's location at the heart of the Mabar manifest zone provides substantial protection, but shadow beasts and lesser yugoloths also guard this valuable point.

Taralok makes frequent journeys to the shadow plane, where he communes with elder ultraloths (*Monster Manual III* 204) on matters of strategy. Taralok is aware of their selfish reasons for cooperating with the Nightbringers, but believes he can manipulate the yugoloths into advancing his own goals as well.

1. Senior Darksinger's Abode. The highest-ranking of the Darksingers also acts as the voice of the Nyctarch, and dwells nearby to be at hand when needed. The current senior Darksinger is Belas Ivytangle (female shadow human druid 12; see page 167 of *Lords of Madness*), who has a shadow dire bear as her animal companion and also works with the shadow mastiffs who guard the cave (see area 4). Her home is a simple hut built from gnarled branches of the night-twisted trees at the heart of the Gloaming, just outside the cave.

2. Nyctarch's Quarters. For all his power, Taralok the Nyctarch lives ascetically, his personal living area little more than a cleared space on the cave floor. He often spends time in the form of a shadow mastiff and is indistinguishable from the ordinary beasts that defend the cave. A cookfire pit and a nestlike mound of straw and moss for sleeping are the only signs of habitation. Taralok is in the cave about 60% of the time; otherwise he is on Mabar consulting with the yugoloths. During his absence, a nycloth (*Monster Manual III* 202) inhabits the cave and deals with any matters brought to him by the Darksingers.

3. Gathering Circle. This portion of the cave floor, directly in front of the vortex to Mabar, has been

RITUAL OF NIGHT'S TOUCH

You are favored by the forces of Mabar in a ritual of the Nightbringer cult, and temporarily gain protection from life-draining effects.

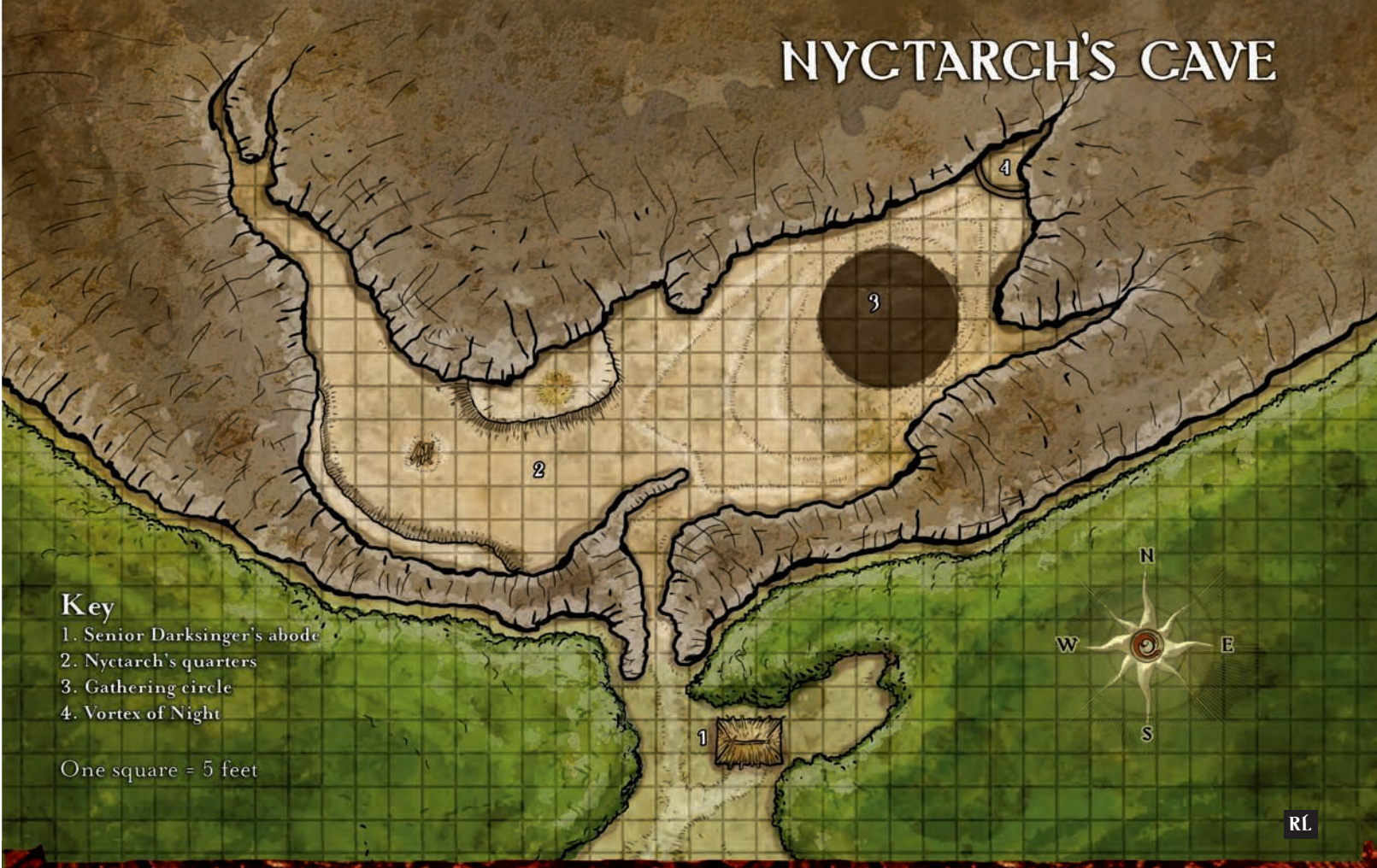
Prerequisite: Initiate of the Nightbringers.

Benefit: You are immune to the damage dealt by exposure to a minor negative-dominant plane. (If the duration of this effect elapses while you are still on such

a plane, you begin to take damage as normal.) You gain a +2 bonus on Fortitude saving throws to avoid gaining a negative level from the effects of a major negative-dominant plane.

If you deal damage to a native of Mabar that has not already dealt damage to you or to one of your allies, this benefit ends immediately.

NYCTARCH'S CAVE



Key

1. Senior Darksinger's abode
2. Nyctarch's quarters
3. Gathering circle
4. Vortex of Night

One square = 5 feet

smoothed down and marked with charcoal. The circle itself is an area of blackened floor about 20 feet across, large enough to accommodate the Nyctarch and five Darksingers. This is the anchor point for an *unhallow* spell that covers most of the cave interior and has a *darkness* effect tied to it.

4. Vortex of Night. The rearmost part of the cave must once have been a channel carved by an underground stream, now dry. The interior of the channel is no longer visible; an unearthly darkness fills the area. Eons ago during a coterminous phase, a portion of Mabar extruded itself into this weak spot between the planes. Four shadow mastiffs guard the vortex, lurking in the magical darkness to catch intruders unaware. Two others are on watch at the narrow entrance to the cave.

THE GATEKEEPERS

Once the Gatekeepers were the guardians of the world. Taught by the dragon Vvaraak, they prepared for the coming disaster: an invasion from the outer planes. When the gates to Xoriat opened and the daelkyr flooded into Eberron, the Gatekeepers were able to end the incursion—at a terrible cost. Very few are left now (fewer than a thousand), but they remain vigilant against future assaults.

SERVANTS OF THE GATEKEEPERS

Well over half the Gatekeepers are orcs or half-orcs. The orcs of Khorvaire's western shores had always been close to nature, which is why Vvaraak chose them to learn

druid magic. Many were lost in the Daelkyr War, and many more turned away from nature in its aftermath. New members are rare, so the sect takes in members of any race who share its intense dedication. The sect enjoys widespread support both in the Reaches and the Shadow Marches, even if most inhabitants are not actually members.

Very few Gatekeepers are druids. Most carry the title of "hunter," and these consist mainly of barbarians, rangers, scouts, and the like. They are ever vigilant against unnatural horrors. Low-level druids, or aspirants, lead small groups of hunters. Unlike many other sects, among the Gatekeepers the title "initiate" does not denote a new recruit but is reserved for aspirants who have proved themselves in service. Only the most senior initiates earn the formal title "gatekeepers."

Orcs join the Gatekeepers largely out of racial pride. They also fear that the young nations are leading the world perilously near to a final catastrophe. The destruction of Cyre was the warning bell that has sent the Gatekeepers into the world. They can no longer afford the luxury of isolation; the next assault might happen anywhere.

Vvaraak and other members of the Chamber established several Siberys observatories within the Eldeen Reaches and the Shadow Marches, and instructed the first Gatekeepers in their operation. To this day, Gatekeepers monitor the movements of the heavens, always on guard for perilous alignments. They maintain communication with each other through the observatories' enhanced divination magic.

The Gatekeepers proudly display their heritage by wearing garments of the ancient style. These consist of deep red tunics, the color of dried blood, trimmed with deerskin and rabbit fur. They favor the axe, a traditional orc weapon, and light leather armor if they wear any at all. Many wear ornate bracelets and torcs, a taste of luxury inherited from their dragon tutor. Gatekeepers are friendly toward the draconic Chamber, since one of its members taught their order. From time to time, a Chamber scholar comes to the Reaches to use the observatories and to converse with the druid elders.

Becoming a Gatekeeper

Many admire the Gatekeepers' work, but very few are willing to undertake such a lonely and dangerous existence. Most new Gatekeepers are inhabitants of the Shadow Marches or the western Eldeen Reaches, and often they follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. A few goblinoids are attracted to the sect, out of a cultish fascination with ancient Dhakaan (though the orcs consider these members poseurs); several groups of hunters patrol the Khraal in Darguun.

The Gatekeepers go about their work quietly and do not actively seek out new members. They do travel through or near the orc settlements, hoping to set a compelling example for the youth. Sadly, most youths are not interested in thankless patrols in the wilderness, favoring instead the excitement of adventure and conquest. Thus, some hunter groups have taken to emphasizing the thrill of tracking down and destroying monstrous threats rather than focusing on a solemn obligation to defend the world.

A new hunter need do no more than be accepted into a group. No formal initiation is required. Would-be aspirants, though, must receive formal recognition from a druid of at least initiate level. Usually an aspirant brings the candidate forward. Initiation consists of swearing solemn oaths, followed by tattooing. A new aspirant is assigned to guide a hunting group at first; once she has proven her worth, she begins instruction in the use of observatories and maintaining the seals on the portals to Xoriat.

Hierarchy

Being few in number and widely scattered, the Gatekeepers have little formal organization. The most senior druids are usually occupied with studying the heavens, but when a threat arises, they quickly call the others. Individual bands of hunters are widely scattered in the world, many in far-flung reaches such as the Mournland and even across the seas, which makes contact difficult.

THE EMBLEM OF THE GATEKEEPERS

The Gatekeepers revere their favored status as the first students of druid magic, and they honor Vvaraak as a prophet. Senior members of the sect, and those favored due to some heroic action, tattoo a stylized dragon head on their skin.

The constellation Bahamut sometimes appears on Gatekeepers' garb, representing the powers of protection.

Still, the Siberys observatories enhance *scrying* spells, greatly aiding communication.

The elder Gatekeeper of the Shadow Marches, Saala Torrn (NG female half-orc druid 14) is as close to a leader as the sect has. She does not command others or set policy, but those in search of wisdom seek her out. It is said she carries the last words of Vvaraak to his pupils, recorded in a mystic crystal passed down through generations of Gatekeepers in her clan.

Other gatekeepers and initiates serve their regions as authorities on the sect's history, preside over initiation ceremonies and major rituals, and help to pool aid against common dangers. Only a handful of gatekeepers proper exist, and perhaps three dozen initiates. No more than two hundred members of the sect are aspirants, generally not exceeding 3rd level. Most aspirants are druids, but some are adepts, and the orc culture contributes quite a few spirit shamans (*Complete Divine* 14).

A typical hunting group comprises three or four combatants led by an aspirant. It's unusual for a member to exceed 5th level. In more dangerous areas, or where the hunters are called together against a specific threat, a group might number up to a dozen, with two aspirants and an initiate or even a gatekeeper in command. Such groups might contain moderately high-level rangers or barbarians. A hunting group operating out of the Green Spire (a Gatekeeper bastion located in the Shadow Marches) might even include a symbiont-wearing impure prince (*Magic of Eberron* 73).

Religious Duties

The Gatekeepers were charged long ago with the defense of the world, and they have never shirked this responsibility. Primary among their duties is tending the planar seals. If left unattended, the interplanar stresses would slowly drain the magical weaves that hold the bindings in place (not to mention whatever efforts the daelkyr might be making to undo them). Regular ceremonies are necessary to reinfuse the seals with power. Only the gatekeepers are advanced enough in power to conduct the necessary ritual, but all participants can contribute magical energy toward it.

Most Gatekeepers are concerned with more mundane matters, mainly destroying aberrations and extraplanar horrors wherever they might lurk. The boldest join the Maruk Ghaash'kala guardians in the Demon Wastes to combat the fiends of Khyber. A few dare the Mournland; some even explore Xen'drik for clues to the ancient wars against the fiends and signs of further calamities to come. Aspirants and initiates keep their senses open to supernatural disturbances resulting from planar instability. When such a weak point is detected, they send messages to nearby hunter groups to patrol the dangerous area. They sometimes communicate with the Greensingers, whose expertise on planar phenomena is invaluable to the Gatekeepers' work.

Defenders or Chauvinists?

In the view of some individuals, Gatekeepers have a pretty inflated sense of their own importance. True, they helped fight the daelkyr invasion, and they ultimately sealed the planar portals. But, as their critics argue, they learned that magic from dragons—it was never part of their culture. The Gatekeepers are far from numerous nowadays, but still these orcs see themselves as the protectors of the

world, and they don't especially welcome nonores into their ranks. It's easy for skeptics to read more than a little racial pride into this tradition. Those critics also claim that the Gatekeepers don't have much to do now with the planar seals keeping Xoriat out of alignment. Maybe they just don't want to acknowledge that fact, and their elaborate "strengthening" rituals are little more than psychological props.

Fallen Gatekeepers

Maintaining the sealed gates to Xoriat imposes severe strain on the gatekeepers charged with that task. The magical energies are tremendous, and the taint of that mad plane still leaks through into the vicinity. A Gatekeeper too long in contact with a Xoriat gate becomes twisted by its influence. The strengthening rituals take place annually, but in between someone must stand sentry against unexpected breaches. To minimize the risk of corruption, the Gatekeepers rotate duty among their senior druids. Theoretically, no one should be exposed to the seal for more than a month at a time. In practice, too few druids of sufficient power exist to allow such frequent rotation, and sentry stretches of several months occur all too often. After years of even intermittent exposure, the strain begins to take its toll. Should a Gatekeeper succumb, he is lost irretrievably; he falls into the madness of Xoriat and becomes an engine of destruction. Now enemies of the natural order, such renegades are destroyed as soon as possible.

Fallen Gatekeepers lose their druid powers. Many become blighters (*Complete Divine* 23) or turn to the Cults of the Dragon Below. They bring a dangerous experience to such enemies of the world, and they might be able to strengthen the Xoriat manifest zones that already exist within the Shadow Marches and elsewhere.

Quests

Although becoming an aspirant or a lay member of the sect is a simple matter, advancing to the rank of initiate requires instruction in deeper mysteries. The Gatekeepers restrict nondragons' access to the observatories, allowing entry only to those who have passed these higher rites. The rite culminates in the new initiate entering an observatory and becoming attuned to its dragonshards. This requires staying alone within the observatory for three consecutive days and nights, observing the movements in the Ring of Siberys. At the end of this period, the initiate can enter and activate the powers of any such observatory. Those who have not passed through the ritual are wholly unable to use the scrying and divination abilities granted by the observatory (*ECS* 272–273).

Advancing to the rank of gatekeeper requires a more demanding test. The candidate must learn the ritual of replenishment, which keeps the planar gates sealed, and then conduct the ritual with no assistance from the other senior druids (who do, however, observe the proceedings). He must contact other members of the sect on his own and organize a ceremony to draw on their collected energy. If he successfully stabilizes the portal, he attains the rank of gatekeeper; if not, the others move to correct the problem, and the candidate must wait one year before he can try again.

rites and rituals of the gatekeepers

This ancient sect takes no action without appropriate observances. Everything the Gatekeepers do is crucial to the world's survival, even if it appears inconsequential to an observer.

Initiation

Joining the sect requires swearing oaths in the name of Vvaraak to protect and serve the natural order. Those seeking to become aspirants must vow never to use their magic to inflict disease, madness, or poison—not even against evil beings. The Gatekeepers must show themselves to be of a higher calling.

Minor Rites

At the beginning and the end of each day, a Gatekeeper takes a moment to reflect on the teachings of Vvaraak and to give thanks for the bounty of the world. Gatekeepers commemorate noteworthy life events in the same way, praising Vvaraak and blessing the earth at times of birth, death, union, and the completion of important tasks.

Major Rites

Annual ceremonies are necessary to reinfuse the seals with power. Only the gatekeepers are advanced enough in power to conduct these rituals, but all participants can contribute magical energy toward it. This is a daylong ceremony, led by the gatekeeper. All participants give up their entire allotment of spells for the day, channeling the divine power through the gatekeeper directly into the planar seal. A total of 200 spell levels' worth of magical energy renews the seal, barring any deliberate efforts to weaken it.

There are many seals within the Shadow Marches, and not enough Gatekeepers to maintain them all simultaneously, so groups of portals are assigned to

RITUAL OF WATCHFULNESS

You become on guard against unnatural attacks against the world. Your senses are exceptionally heightened. This ritual can only be performed by a druid of the Gatekeeper sect.

Prerequisite: 1 rank of Knowledge (the planes), Listen, or Spot.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Knowledge (the planes), Listen, and Spot checks.

If you voluntarily cast a spell that creates poison, disease, or confusion, this benefit ends immediately.

Special: If you are an initiate of the Gatekeepers, all divination spells you cast are extended (as the Extend Spell feat). This does not alter the spell slot used to prepare or cast them.

given gatekeepers. They form traveling circles that move continually between assigned portals to renew the seals.

THE GATEKEEPERS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The Gatekeepers go about their duties quietly and do not often interact with anyone outside the sect. An inhabitant of the Reaches and the Shadow Marches might never encounter a Gatekeeper in a lifetime. Communities that exist near a planar seal are very much aware of the debt they owe the druids, and these are most often the source of new recruits into the sect.

The Gatekeepers and Government

Within the Shadow Marches, individual orc tribes form local governments; there is no national leadership. The orcs who adhere to the ancient traditions are strongly supportive of the Gatekeepers, and senior druids often are leaders of their clans. But many orcs, as well as the goblins who inhabit the land, have turned to the travesty of religion that is the Dragon Below. The worshipers of fiends and madness are generally hostile to the Gatekeepers, who seek to destroy such abominations.

Eldeen's nominal government is strongly tied to the druidic cultures of the region, especially the Wardens of the Wood, who acknowledge the Gatekeepers as their ancient teachers. Relations with the various druid sects are generally tolerant.

Other governments have no interest in a few hundred orcs wandering in the wilderness of savage lands. Not many who hold power know the truth of their work.

The Gatekeepers and Other Faiths

The Gatekeepers work well with any other sect devoted to protecting the natural world, including followers of Balinor.

Specific Attitudes

The Wardens of the Wood: They are our heirs. Their gentleness and tolerance, however, blinds them to the real threat that Xoriat still poses.

The Ashbound: Grim though they are, they are as faithful to nature as the ancestral champions who turned away the daelkyr. They can be counted on in a crisis.

The Children of Winter: Has Xoriat tainted these druids somehow? They are mad to think that encouraging the end of the world will somehow heal it.

The Greensingers: We honor the faerie and their kin. But we fear they do not recognize the threat of unrestricted planar contact.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE GATEKEEPERS

Although the Gatekeepers do not establish fixed areas of worship, each of the sealed planar portals within the Eldeen Reaches and the Shadow Marches is perforce a sacred place. Groups of druids visit the seals, ensuring that each is replenished annually. In areas where portals are more numerous, these groups meet and cooperate in the replenishment rituals, and discuss what they have learned in their travels.

THE GREENSINGERS

In the Twilight Demesne, where Eberron and Thelanis intertwine, the Faerie Court holds sway more than any mortal organization. This is the realm of the Greensingers, who embody the fickleness and the many faces of nature: both lovely and dangerous at the same moment. Beyond any overriding purpose, they simply *are*. But should their land be threatened, they come to its defense with the fury of nature unleashed.

SERVANTS OF THE GREENSINGERS

Nearly all Greensingers are elves or half-elves, with a scattering of humans. They are habitués of Thelanis, if not natives of that plane, spending more time among the fey court than in the material world. Although some learn the sect's ways on Eberron, most go to Thelanis and return as emissaries and defenders of the fey. Those with elf blood are most closely attuned to the wild freedom embodied by the sect, but anyone who chafes at the strictures imposed by civilization, or even the limitations of another druid sect, is a candidate for the Greensingers.

Unlike the other Eldeen sects, most members of the Greensingers are druids, with rangers making up virtually all the rest. The sect contains a smattering of spirit shamans as well. "Lay" membership does not exist: Greensingers are magical beings who are all spellcasters of some sort (or at least hold the potential). Quite a few have some levels in an arcane spellcasting class, usually sorcerer.

Greensingers dwell only within the Twilight Demesne and Thelanis, although they might travel to other realms. When they send an ambassador to Eberron, the meeting occurs within the Towering Wood. Communication with far-off nations is through magical means (facilitated by Gatekeepers and the Siberys observatories) or messages carried by emissaries of those lands. It is possible the Greensingers would emerge into the world if a sufficiently great threat demanded it, but so far nothing has met that criterion (whatever it might be).

There is no official costume for the Greensingers; that would be anathema to their fierce individualism and wild nature. They present themselves as the spirit takes them, and might change their appearance many times, even in quick succession. Some adopt outlandish garb of bright colors and unusual materials; some are clad in leaves; some wear the richest robes and drape themselves with jewelry; some are as naked as the twilight sky of Thelanis. They do not care if they shock the sensibilities of "mundanes," for only the great dance matters.

What motivates the Greensingers as a group, let alone each member, is a mystery to all who are not part of the sect. Indeed, the sheer chaos of the faction is inimical to

THE EMBLEM OF THE GREENSINGERS

The chaos that embodies the Greensinger sect does not lend itself to formal identification. However, when there is need to send an emissary to other lands, that messenger wears a brooch in the shape of a green leaf with a thirteen-pointed star superimposed upon it, representing the planes of existence.

establishing an overriding philosophy. The Greensingers do have one shared ideal, however, which they reveal only to those who are fit to enter their rarefied circle.

The great purpose of the Greensingers is this: All the planes of existence are part of nature, and all should be made manifest. Unlike every other druid sect, they have no horror of outsiders, considering them to be as natural as earthly creatures. If a thing exists, they say, it was meant to exist. Even such universally reviled monstrosities as daelkyr and undead creatures are obviously intended to be. And existence itself is the highest authority to the Greensingers.

Thus, the Greensingers are fascinated by manifest zones of other planes, and they seek the knowledge of creating new ones near or even *within* the Twilight Demesne. They also seek more connections between Thelanis and all the other planes, not just Eberron. They are most active when another plane becomes coterminous with Eberron, trying to anchor a portion of its essence to the material world even after its orbit takes it away. They also study the movements of the outer planes with respect to one another, and the effects of their being coterminous with and distant from other planes. Few are more expert on planar matters than the Greensingers.

Becoming a Greensinger

The sect is generally reclusive, with no formal organization, and its members never go in search of new recruits. Those enraptured by the rhythms of the great dance of life eventually make their own way to the Twilight Demesne. Sooner or later, the walls between the planes grow thin, and they step into the Faerie Court. They might never return, content to spend the endless evenings in revelry while centuries pass on Eberron. Only a very few are interested in becoming official agents of the fey, and only a few of those become Greensingers.

Simply being attracted to the Faerie Court is not sufficient for membership, nor even is spending time in Thelanis's revels. Not even expressing admiration for and devotion to the fey qualifies someone. There must be an ineffable spark, something of the unearthly, within a petitioner's psyche. Those who have such a spark recognize it in others, and they actively encourage such people to visit Thelanis in the hope of bringing them to the sect. They expose the potential recruits to the concept of planar solidarity, showing them Thelanis's manifest zones and watching their reactions carefully. Candidates who accept this wider view of reality are approached for membership; those who are too narrow-minded remain as guests of Thelanis but never learn the inner mysteries of the Greensingers.

Hierarchy

There is none. The Greensingers are fiercely independent, and no one voice directs the sect's policies. Major decisions are undertaken by the entire group, and every voice has equal weight, whether that of the rawest initiate or a respected elder druid.

The sect does not even operate in circles as others do. Each member does as he wishes, furthering the overall ambition of the Greensingers in his own way. Even if the purpose is not readily discernible, his actions are not questioned. The only exception is behavior that obviously threatens Thelanis, such as allying with the Puritan sect

of the Silver Flame (who believe that fey are abominations not far down the scale from fiends). Even then, the Greensingers are more likely to call an emergency meeting to question the transgressor's intention than take immediate, radical action.

A Greensinger undertaking some sort of activity usually attracts others among the sect who have similar outlooks. So, for example, a druid who has begun to lay the groundwork for locating a Syrania manifest zone in the Towering Woods might be assisted by other spellcasters, both arcane and divine. Rangers who see the wisdom of this act gather to protect those who are engaged in it.

Religious Duties

Contrary to the purpose of the Gatekeepers, the Greensingers welcome the opening of planar connections between the worlds. To them, the gates to Xoriat and even Dal Quor were meant to be, and expending effort keeping them closed is a waste. That is not to say that effort should be expended on opening them either—if they are a natural part of the world, they will open regardless of others' actions.

Their fascination with discovering and creating manifest zones seems to be a contradiction to this idea, but to their way of thinking, it is not a contradiction.

Greensingers and Souls

Learning the true motivation of the Greensingers was difficult enough. Divining their attitudes toward death, souls, and the afterlife has been nearly impossible.

On the one hand, they are fey and fey-touched. One common belief is that such creatures have no souls, being near-immortal spirits of nature. Their fascination with all the planes of existence seems to bear this out. They seem interested in them, not as destinations for the soul, but simply as other parts of the world.

But even if that is so, it does not explain the many elves and elvenkin who inhabit the Twilight Demesne. We have seen the resurrection of dead elves, so it would seem an independent soul of some kind exists, whether it travels to Dolurrh or elsewhere upon death. Perhaps entry into the Greensingers confers some sort of immortality, in exchange for anchoring the soul forever to its body? Does one, in effect, join the faerie folk by taking up the green?

Those of the Faerie Court do not discuss it.

A manifest zone allows the attributes of another plane to mingle with this one, sharing its distinctive features without breaking the boundary. The strange and wondrous are irresistible to Greensingers, and magical locations attract them most of all.

All forms of existence, even if it is not technically "life," are worthwhile to the Greensingers. They espouse no duty to destroy certain kinds of creatures. On the other hand, an individual member might embark on a campaign to eradicate, say, all the displacer beasts in an area. The reason might be to maintain ecological balance, to keep the creatures' presence from interfering with magical energies needed to form a manifest zone, or to accomplish some other goal incomprehensible to most. Unless the group as a whole sees grave danger in such activities, it does not interfere. Each member performs his duties to existence as he sees fit.

Fallen Greensingers

The do-what-thou-wilt mentality of the Greensingers makes expulsion from the sect extremely difficult and unlikely. Even activities that seem inimical to the sect's aims do not result in immediate retaliation. But if the group decides it has been wronged, there is no limit to the retribution it might take. Nature is cruel, as are

enraged Greensingers. Mere death is not usually enough punishment. The offender might be "pinned to the sky" (trapped on the Astral Plane) or turned into a block of stone, then left for the elements to erode.

Someone who actively turns against the Greensingers never does so openly until he can make his escape to a likely refuge. The Greensingers' talent for planar travel makes hiding from them a challenge, but serious renegades are surrounded by strong allies. The most infamous betrayer of the sect is Anthelmas ir'Phiarlan "the Pure," who was converted to the Silver Flame in 820 YK and joined the Puritan crusade against lycanthropes, even laying waste to portions of the Towering Wood in his zealotry.

Quests

The Greensingers do not set quests for their members. The process of selection and initiation is rigorous enough that further proof of devotion is not necessary. Each member is expected to serve the sect's interests according to his own nature. Occasionally the Faerie Court calls on a senior Greensinger to act as a go-between to one of the outside worlds. Such requests are not mandatory, but refusing incurs the displeasure of the fey.

rites and rituals of the Greensingers

Ritual is too formal an activity to capture the wild hearts of the Greensingers. Specific activities appeal to given followers—at least until something else takes their fancy—but no liturgy or prescription can ever apply to them.

Initiation

Initiation of a new Greensinger is not a formal process—nothing within the sect is—but requires that the entire organization meet at the heart of the Twilight Demesne. Given their small numbers (only a few hundred) and limited travels, calling such an assembly is relatively simple. All of the assembled are free to question the candidate and satisfy themselves as to her qualifications; this interrogation can be intense and might last for many hours. Finally the assembly votes. Only on unanimous consent does the candidate become a Greensinger.

Immediately on joining the sect, the new initiate undergoes the ritual of the timeless soul (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 60) to enable her to pass between the planes easily.

Minor Rites

Greensinger rites, such as they are, express personal quirks. One member might plant reath vines (*ECS* 92) wherever she travels; another might sing continually. Such pursuits can end suddenly, to be replaced by the latest interest, but while the Greensinger is intent on them, she pursues them to the point of obsession.

the Greensingers in everyday life

The sect is so isolated, and its goals so unfathomable, that most people are unaware of its existence. If its goal of planar mingling were better known, the likely result would be alarm. And should the group succeed in creating new planar accesses, the world would become aware of them soon enough.

Joining the Planes

Although the magic of creating new manifest zones escapes the sect as a whole, individual explorers have accumulated lore of an ancient, mighty ritual perfected by the giants of Xen'drik. Their studies suggest that the giants found a way to thin the walls between the worlds, and that their experiments led to the Quori invasion. Greensinger scholars are deeply divided on the matter of reopening such investigations. Some argue that creating manifest zones is not the same as opening portals, and agitate for making the attempt as soon as possible. Others resist the idea of forming artificial connections between the planes, especially if they should end up threatening the Twilight Demesne or Thelanis. (Like anyone else, the Greensingers can be self-contradictory when their own safety is at stake.)

Some Greensingers have taken it on themselves to attempt creation rituals. Those who agree follow their leaders to isolated regions, often in places where the planar barriers seem already thin (such as the Shadow Marches, the Mournland, and Xen'drik). There they spend years experimenting with group magic to produce manifest zones.

The Greensingers and Government

Other than the nominal government of the Eldeen Reaches, which maintains contact with most of the druid sects, other nations know almost nothing of the Greensingers and their activities. On rare occasions, the Faerie Court has need of a messenger to travel to another realm, but this is more in the nature of a private consultation than a full diplomatic mission. Human governments receive the fey emissaries with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension; Aerenal elves (especially the ancestors) relish the intellectual exchange; what the dragons think, only they and the Greensingers know. Other governments of Eberron seem to hold little interest for the Faerie Court, but they do send emissaries to other planes from time to time.

The Greensingers and Other Sects

The Greensingers do not pay attention to much outside the Twilight Demesne. Even cults dedicated to destroying their way of life mean little to them.

Specific Attitudes

The Wardens of the Wood: They seem harmless and pleasant enough. Many have stepped into Thelanis and found welcome in the court. They are perhaps too fond of iron, though.

The Ashbound: To them, Thelanis does not belong to the natural world. How strange. Are not all the planes of existence of necessity natural?

The Children of Winter: While their effort to enhance Mabbar's manifest zone is fascinating, their obsession with but a single facet of existence makes them weird and dangerous.

The Gatekeepers: They have the patience of the immortal folk, though their lives are short. But they do not understand the balance of all planes.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE GREENSINGERS

The Twilight Demesne is the eternal meeting place of the fey and the Greensingers on Eberron. It is as close to a temple as exists for the Greensinger sect. Here, two planes meet and mingle, their borders uncertain. It is a model for other planar joinings. The Greensingers spend most of their time here, when they are not exploring other planes and manifest zones. They travel freely to Thelanis to tell tales of their adventures there, and to hear wondrous lore in return.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

Some druids are drawn to the animal lord, beastmaster, or master of many forms prestige classes (see *Complete Adventurer*). Stormlords and void disciples are also common and, as mentioned, a number of fallen druids join the ranks of the blighters (*Complete Divine* 23). The following prestige class is particularly fitting for druids of Eberron.

PLANAR SHEPHERD

"There's no place like home. I just have more than one."

—Findelas, devotee of Kythri

Some druids, especially among the Greensingers or those who have dealt extensively with that sect, reject narrow interpretations of what constitutes the "natural" world. They see the great dance of the planes as the full expression of existence and are fascinated by these other realms. Such persons become planar travelers and even adopt another plane as a second home as they delve ever deeper into these natural mysteries. Dubbed "planar shepherds" for their proselytizing on planar tolerance, they work to open the minds of others to the reality of nature.

BECOMING A PLANAR SHEPHERD

Druids are the usual candidates for the planar shepherd class, because the wild shape ability is a requirement. Druid/rangers are also common. Sometimes a blighter (*Complete Divine* 23) enters this class to further his exploration of the planes of death, madness, or destruction. Nearly all candidates for the class have interacted with the Greensinger sect, since the fey friends focus on the interconnection between planes, but some Nightbringers have discovered the secrets of the planar shepherd, as well.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Knowledge (nature) 8 ranks, Knowledge (the planes) 4 ranks.

Feats: Greensinger Initiate* or initiate of Nightbringers (at DM's option).

Special: Wild shape class feature.

CLASS FEATURES

As you advance in level, you become more and more attuned to your chosen plane, until you are indistinguishable from its natives.

Spellcasting: At each level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if

RITUAL OF FICKLE TWILIGHT

You become stealthy and deceptive, taking on aspects of the fey of Thelanis. This ritual can only be performed by a druid of the Greensinger sect.

Prerequisite: Chaotic alignment.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Bluff and Hide checks.

If you deal damage to a fey that has not already

dealt damage to you or to one of your allies, this benefit ends immediately.

Special: If you are an initiate of the Greensingers, once per day you can choose for any enchantment (charm) spell you cast to be extended (as if by the Extend Spell feat), but with no adjustment to the casting time or spell slot.

applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming a planar shepherd, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Animal Companion: Your planar shepherd levels stack with your druid levels for the purpose of determining the abilities of your animal companion.

Planar Attunement (Ex): At 1st level, you must choose a single plane of existence other than the Material Plane, such as Irian the Eternal Day. Once selected, your planar shepherd features are forever attuned to this plane. You cannot choose a plane with an alignment trait opposed to any component of your own alignment. For example, a neutral good planar shepherd cannot choose Fernia (because that plane is mildly evil-aligned).

You and your animal companion ignore any harmful effects derived from your chosen plane's elemental or energy traits, as well as any natural environmental affects associated with the plane. For instance, if you are attuned to Risia, the Plain of Ice, you are not affected by the plane's cold temperatures; on Fernia, you do not take fire damage for being on a fire-dominant plane. You are also immune to the entrapping effects of planes such as Dolurrrh. If you choose, you can share this benefit with a number of allies equal to your class level; these allies must remain within 100 feet of you to gain this benefit.

This immunity does not extend to the plane's physical traits (including gravity and time), alignment traits, or magic traits.

Detect Manifest Zone (Sp): Starting at 2nd level, you can use *detect manifest zone* (see page 150) at will.

Wild Shape (Su): Your druid levels stack with your planar shepherd class levels for the purpose of determining the number of daily uses, the maximum HD and size (but not creature type), and the duration of your wild shape ability.

At 3rd level, you are able to use wild shape to change into a magical beast native to your chosen plane, with the same size restrictions as for animal forms. For example, if you chose the plane of Fernia, you could become a zezir (*Monster Manual III* 205). This includes creatures whose type changes to magical beast as the result of applying a template (such as celestial or fiendish).

When you attain 9th level, you become able to use wild shape to change into an elemental or outsider native to your chosen plane, although it costs two of your daily uses of wild shape to do so. For example, if you chose the plane of Mabarr, you could become a barghest. In addition to the normal effects of wild shape, you gain all the elemental or outsider's extraordinary, supernatural, and spell-like abilities.

Plane Shift (Sp): On reaching 4th level, you can travel freely between your chosen plane and the Material Plane once per day. You can bring up to eight other creatures with you, provided all link hands with you. This ability otherwise works like the *plane shift* spell. You can use this ability twice per day at 8th level.

Planar Bubble (Su): Beginning at 5th level, once per day you can create an area around yourself that emulates the environment of your chosen plane. This area mimics all traits of your chosen plane, including physical traits, elemental and energy traits, alignment traits, and

magic traits. This area has a 20-foot radius and lasts as long as you concentrate (up to a maximum of 1 hour per level) plus 1d10 rounds.

At 10th level, you can use this ability three times per day.

Intensify Manifest Zone (Sp): At 7th level, you can use *intensify manifest zone* (see page 151) once per day, using your divine caster level. You can affect only manifest zones of your chosen plane.

Planar Self: At 10th level, you are a focus for the energies of your chosen plane. You become an outsider native to your chosen plane and gain damage reduction 10/magic. Whenever you are in a manifest zone of your chosen plane, you gain a +1 bonus to your caster level for all divine spells.

EX-PLANAR SHEPHERDS

If you change to an alignment incompatible with your chosen plane, you lose access to planar shepherd class abilities. You can no longer advance in this prestige class until you atone (*PH* 201). If you decide to choose a different plane, you must begin again at 1st level of the prestige class and do not benefit from abilities associated with the former plane.

PLAYING A PLANAR SHEPHERD

Your concept of the natural world extends to all the planes of existence, although you have a special affinity with only one besides your native plane. Your work centers on the balance of nature as it relates to these two planes, and you are an excellent emissary, translator, and negotiator.

Given your attunement to a plane outside your native one, you spend at least as much time there as on your home plane. Your outlook perforce mirrors the characteristics of that realm of existence; if you are affiliated with Mabarr, you have a dark outlook, usually evil-aligned, while if you are attuned to Kythri, you are a wild creature of mercurial disposition. As you advance in this class, you become more and more acclimated to the weird environment of that other world, eventually becoming a creature native to it and imposing part of its nature upon your home plane.

You might attach yourself to an existing druid sect or form a subject devoted to your chosen plane. You have a natural affinity with extraplanar creatures native to that plane but are generally unprejudiced toward other planar inhabitants—other than those whose aims directly oppose your own, or who threaten the existence of your native or chosen plane.

Combat

Your ability to use wild shape already makes you more formidable in combat than most spellcasters, since you can assume the form of powerful animals. Adding magical beasts, and eventually elementals or outsiders, to this mix allows you to exploit combat abilities not available to ordinary druids.

At lower levels, you are limited to animal forms in combat, but you also have good offensive and defensive spellcasting ability. You can manage fairly well on your own if necessary, especially when backed up by an animal companion, but your spellcasting is more effective boosting fellow combatants.

As you become able to assume extraplanar forms, you can bring more powerful melee abilities to the field. You also can assist your companions in surviving the hostile environment of your chosen plane.

TABLE 5-1: THE PLANAR SHEPHERD

HIT DIE: D8

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Animal companion, planar attunement, wild shape	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	<i>Detect manifest zone</i>	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Wild shape (magical beast)	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	<i>Plane shift</i> 1/day	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Planar bubble 1/day	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	—	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	<i>Intensify manifest zone</i>	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	<i>Plane shift</i> 2/day	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Wild shape (elemental or outsider)	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Planar bubble 3/day, planar self	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (the planes), Listen, Spellcraft, Spot, Survival.

At the peak of your career, you can take the form of mighty elementals or outsiders, and ultimately, become an outsider yourself.

Advancement

Your holistic view of existence likely comes by way of the Greensingers, who either took you in as an initiate or made a deep impression on you. If you joined the Greensinger sect, you have already undergone its initiation requirements, which are as onerous as they are informal. Most likely you have also completed quests that required travel to different planes, often Thelanis but others as well, depending on the task set before you.

Even if you are not part of the Greensingers, you are going to run across them frequently in the course of your interplanar travels. It is wise to stay in contact with the sect. They might offer assistance in times of crisis, and they welcome new information about all matters planar. If you are a Greensinger, expect to be assigned ever more challenging missions to discover planar truths.

Nightbringers who follow this path have a different outlook. They invariably attune themselves to Mabar, the Endless Night, and seek only to promote and advance the influence of that plane. Though not necessarily evil, you have no particular reason to ally yourself with the Greensingers. You also can't count on much support from your fellows, due to the small size of the sect.

Although Knowledge (nature) continues to be important to you as a preacher of the natural order, you should allot plenty of skill points to Knowledge (the planes) and Survival. Your extradimensional adventures often demand finding your way through unfamiliar and physically dangerous conditions. Depending on your affiliated plane, consider choosing heritage feats (*Planar Handbook* 37) to boost your resilience against its effects. The Planar Touchstone and Personal Touchstone feats (*Planar Handbook* 41) can also be useful, allowing you to hop quickly between zones of power associated with your chosen plane. Feats that improve your wild shape ability, or give you more flexibility in using it, are always valuable.

Resources

Those who rove between the planes are often considered exceedingly strange, and many are loners. However, the

Greensingers are able to offer some information and even diplomatic assistance, depending on which plane you are visiting. Their capricious nature makes it difficult to anticipate the exact nature of such help, however.

Adventurers who wish to travel the planes can benefit immensely from your assistance if you offer it. Academics in particular are always hungry for planar knowledge; if you contact such a scholar, she can put you in touch with trusted "associates" in need of experienced guidance. In return, you have access to the extensive research facilities that only large universities, or organizations such as the Twelve, can offer.

PLANAR SHEPHERDS IN THE WORLD

"They're strange, no doubt about that. Most of them make the fey court look humdrum. But you'll find none better for watching your back when you have to retrieve a flame jewel from Fernia or hunt down a rogue fiend on Shavarath."

—Solemi ir'Tollan, hardened Margrave archeologist

An NPC planar shepherd is easy to introduce into the campaign. They are very uncommon, and often off-world, so most people have never encountered such characters. If a party member is friendly with, or a member of, the Greensingers, the chance of encountering a planar shepherd increases greatly. The party might meet one who is sent as an emissary from the fey court, or seek one out through academic connections to guide them in a hostile planar environment.

Player character planar shepherds make excellent adventure opportunities. As they travel between the worlds, whether in search of knowledge or on more pragmatic business, they offer the chance for exotic experiences and perhaps inside information on extraplanar threats.

Organization

The fey court is barely organized, and the Greensingers only slightly more so. Still, some of the most influential members of the sect belong to the planar shepherd class. Their extensive knowledge of specific planes makes them natural teachers and leaders among the others who wish to learn more of the planes.

Some within Thelanis and the Twilight Demesne are suspicious of those who exhibit too strong an interest in a specific plane. They especially fear the dangerous folk who have affiliated themselves with the darker planes; although they recognized that all are part of the natural order, some planar inhabitants have declared their intent to overthrow Eberron. An undeclared conflict pits the blighters and the dark druids against those who see themselves as defenders of nature, and the two camps vie for political control within the fey court.

The fey also greatly mistrust the academic institutions that call on the expertise of planar shepherds. They fear that overzealous exploration and acquisition on a given plane can end up tipping the delicate balance among the planes as a whole. A shepherd who seems too eager for material things might be called before the highest Greensingers to justify his actions; if he cannot satisfy their concerns, they might forbid further exploration for a prescribed time, or even send him on a quest into a different plane.

Creation of manifest zones is a sensitive topic. Although no formal rules exist to govern their location and number (and not many planar shepherds attain the ability to create them), the Greensingers strongly influence the process. They are especially concerned that no one plane be overrepresented, and that a given area not contain too many manifest zones. Someone who wishes to establish any sort of planar connection is expected to present the proposal to the fey court and the senior Greensingers and obtain their approval first. Those who ignore the sect's concerns find themselves shunned and unwelcome within the Twilight Demesne, and the druids sometimes send expeditions to the unauthorized zones to harass inhabitants or even block access.

NPC Reactions

Unless he is a blighter or a "rogue" (that is, someone who does not abide by the Greensingers' wishes), members of the Greensinger sect and inhabitants of Thelanis and the Twilight Demesne are generally friendly to planar shepherds. Their attitude becomes helpful if the character's goals intersect with their own—though finding out what they truly intend is a challenge in itself.

Those who consider the other planes to be unnatural have unfriendly attitudes toward the Greensingers because of their extraplanar ways. Planar shepherds, who openly advocate interplanar "contamination" and go so far as to pollute the natural world with their blasphemous auras, receive their greatest hatred. The Pure Flame fanatics and the Ashbound sect are the most hostile; most other druids are generally unfriendly. They do not see messing with foreign environments as conducive to the good of nature.

Scholars who specialize in extraplanar subjects are usually helpful, and they hope to secure the character's aid in their research. On the other hand, those who watch for extraplanar threats are at best guarded toward him.

Most people in the world have never heard of planar shepherds. Unless he makes his interest known, such a character can travel freely within the cities of Eberron.

Off-world, planar shepherds are obvious. They are not native to the plane (at least, not until attaining the pinnacle of their career) and rarely blend in among other inhabitants. Some planar natives do not mind travelers, but in hostile environments (anywhere in Shavarath, for example), it is better to keep a low profile.

PLANAR SHEPHERD LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (the planes) or bardic knowledge can research planar shepherds to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check or bardic knowledge check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Some druids who associate with the Greensingers become experts in specific planes.

DC 15: Called planar shepherds, these specialists travel off-world frequently.

DC 20: Planar shepherds are naturally protected against the harmful effects of their chosen planes and can extend this protection to those traveling with them. It's said that some even become outsiders in their efforts to discover ways to harmonize the planes.

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nature) can learn something of planar shepherds by way of their knowledge of the Greensingers. Add 5 to the listed check DCs when using this skill.

PLANAR SHEPHERDS IN THE GAME

A planar shepherd offers a way to use manifest zones to suit the needs of your campaign or to flesh out an area of the world that is still mysterious, such as the Mourland or the jungles of Xen'drik. As well, in a world where manifest zones and planar gates are disturbingly common, a character class with the ability to safely travel and explore in these places becomes very useful.



HL

*Findelas,
a planar shepherd*

If you are looking to make your Eberron campaign more planes-spanning, and introduce elements of *Planar Handbook* into the game, this class (in concert with the Greensingers or even the Nightbringers) provides an excellent opportunity. An NPC planar shepherd can escort the party on a dangerous mission, and a PC druid with planar ambitions can take levels in this class to further that interest. It is especially attractive to players who enjoy exploration and discovery; those with a diplomatic bent might also find the class appealing, since it leads naturally to interaction with strange and exotic beings. But planar travel has no shortage of opportunities for combat against bizarre enemies who threaten the natural balance.

Adaptation

If you do not envision the Greensingers as planar scholars, or your campaign is not set in Eberron, you can easily adapt the planar shepherd to suit your own needs. Drop the Greensinger Initiate feat and replace it with initiation into a different organization specializing in the planes; alternatively, leave any such requirement off and allow characters to enter through personal interest. If manifest zones do not exist in your campaign, the 10th-level ability to create one could instead allow creation of a planar touchstone (*Planar Handbook* 153).

Sample Encounter

Findelas started out in the Wardens of the Wood, helping to balance the needs of civilization and the wild. From the Gatekeepers he learned of the ancient planar breach that had nearly destroyed Eberron, and he thirsted to learn more. But the druids did not share his fascination with planar matters, seeing outsiders in general as threats to the natural order. It was only on meeting a half-elf ranger of the Greensingers that he found a kindred spirit. Having elf blood himself, he had little difficulty entering the Twilight Demesne and meeting with others who shared his fascination. Eventually he simply remained in the fey woods, tacitly left the Wardens, and became an initiate of the Greensingers. He is interested in the raw power of creation and therefore became an expert on the plane of Kythri.

EL 14: The PCs have answered a request from a researcher at Margrave University to learn more about the influence of Kythri on Eberron, especially during tumultuous periods. Findelas has told her of a strangely stable location within the Churning Chaos, almost like an eddy in white water, where odd materials coalesce for a time. This "calm within the storm" never lasts very long, but another one forms not long afterward. He has been employed to guide the party safely through the unpredictable fury of the plane of chaos.

FINDELAS, DEVOTEE OF KYTHRI

Male half-elf druid 6/planar shepherd 8
CN Medium humanoid (elf)

Action Points 3

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; **Listen** +7, **Spot** +7

Languages Common, Druidic, Elven, Sylvan

AC 22, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 19

(+3 Dex, +5 armor, +2 shield, +2 deflection)

hp 81 (14 HD)

Immune sleep

CR 14

Resist +4 against spell-like abilities of fey
Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +17 (+19 against enchantments)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); woodland stride

Melee +1 shock spear +12/+7/+2 (1d6+1/×3 plus 1d6 electricity)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +10

Special Actions planar bubble 1/day, wild shape 5/day (14 hours)

Combat Gear wand of cure serious wounds (40 charges)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 14th; 1d20 +16 to overcome SR):

7th (2/day)—animate plants, cloud-walkers†

6th (4/day)—crumble†, find the path, greater dispel magic, tortoise shell†

5th (4/day)—animal growth, binding winds† (DC 21), death ward, greater vigor†

4th (5/day)—energy vortex (2, DC 20)†, flame strike (DC 20), ice storm, mass camouflage†

3rd (5/day)—call lightning (2, DC 19), daylight, greater magic fang, protection from energy

2nd (7/day)—briar web† (2, DC 18), bear's endurance (2), cat's grace (2), lesser restoration

1st (7/day)—faerie fire (2), goodberry (2), longstrider (2), magic stone

0 (6/day)—create water, detect magic (2), flare (2, DC 16), read magic

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th):

2/day—plane shift

1/day—intensify manifest zone

At will—detect manifest zone

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 22, Cha 13

SQ animal companion, planar attunement (Kythri), link with companion, share spells, trackless step, wild empathy +9 (+5 magical beasts)

Feats Greensinger Initiate*, Heroic Spirit, Natural Spell, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Concentration +8, Diplomacy +4, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +8, Heal +8, Knowledge (nature) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +7, Ride +6, Search +0, Speak Language (Sylvan), Spot +7, Survival +17 (+19 on other planes, +19 in aboveground natural environments)

Possessions combat gear plus +3 leather armor, +1 light wooden shield, +1 shock spear, brooch of shielding, gloves of Dexterity +2, periapt of Wisdom +4, ring of protection +2

Wild Shape (Su): 5/day—Tiny to Large animal (no magical beasts are native to Kythri), maximum HD 14.

PLANESTRIDER, FINDELAS'S COMPANION (DIRE LION) CR ~ N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +7, **Spot** +7

AC 18, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 15

(−1 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 69 (10 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee 2 claws +16 (1d6+8) and bite +13 (1d8+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +19

Atk Options pounce, rake +13 (1d6+4)

Special Actions improved grab

Abilities Str 26, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ 3 bonus tricks, evasion

Feats Alertness, Multiattack, Run, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Hide +5 (+9 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth), Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Spot +7



In the far corners
of Eberron . . .



Beneath the very noses
of its rulers . . .



A myriad lesser cults flourish—
some breathtakingly
beautiful, others nightmares
with no waking.

OTHER CULTS

The world of Eberron is filled with distinct cultures, and within them, even more distinct subgroups. If anything can be said in general about this world, it is that generalizations are even less reliable here than usual. A dragon's color tells you nothing of its alignment, the most horrid-looking creature might be a champion of the highest moral principles, and a noble-looking elf could well be a servant of corruption.

Religion crosses the boundaries of racial identification and national borders. Not only the major sects, but lesser or hidden cults too can be found across Khorvaire and embedded in the distant continents. Some are racially based (but might still attract adherents of other races); others are focused on a particular location (but might have mystical connections to other regions).

WARFORGED MYSTERIES

Ever since the warforged developed independent thought and self-awareness, they have quested for the meaning of existence, especially as it relates to artificially created beings such as themselves. A few follow gods of the mortal pantheons (especially Onatar) or dedicate themselves to the Silver Flame; some deluded individuals are seduced by the Blood of Vol and its promise of eternal life beyond the limitations of an artificial body. Many warforged simply do not understand the idea of religion or of faith in things that cannot be seen or grasped. Others have created their own religious reality; these include the Lord of Blades, the Becoming God, and the Reforged.

THE LORD OF BLADES

Most people believe that this fanatical prophet of the warforged is gathering an army in the Mournland. Stories abound of his zealous attendants and his apocalyptic speeches, promising death to the fleshborn and the ultimate ascendancy of the warforged. Little is known about his whereabouts, his movements, and his actual plans. Some even doubt whether this construct bogeyman even exists.

There are those who are certain of his existence, and draw strength from it. These fanatics call themselves Blades, and they view their charismatic leader as more

than just a prophet. To them, he is a divine presence. Their worship sustains him, and in return, he provides them with a sense of purpose and inner strength.

The Blades are not a typical faith, for they place no special value on spiritual existence. They waste no time on questions about the nature of souls and whether warforged have them; they have awareness and free will, which is enough. They see no purpose to imagining spiritual energy that comes from a distant god; they receive a tangible benefit from proximity to their leader and increase his power by their own obedience.

Such materialism seems to be oxymoronic in a religion. Yet there can be no doubt that the Blades are a religious organization: All the ritual, the prayer, and the spiritual sustenance is present. Oddly enough, in the view of some outsiders, it appears to be a worship without faith. Still, for those who have met him, their god's existence is undeniable.

SERVANTS OF THE LORD OF BLADES

The cult of the Lord of Blades has a simple but clearly defined hierarchy. It starts with the Lord of Blades himself. His followers have memorized his every word, repeating them over and over, and they see his pronouncements as unassailable fact. When the Lord says, "We were made to rule Eberron," the Blades know it to be true. They await only his direction to make the future real.

But who is the Lord of Blades? History tells of the warforged Bulwark, an outstanding servant of King Boranel of Breland, who was thought to have influenced that man's thinking in the matter of warforged freedom. After the Treaty of Thronehold was signed, Bulwark headed east and was never seen again. Not long afterward, stories of the Lord of Blades

THE LORD OF BLADES

Lawful Evil

The Lord of Blades is a real being rather than an abstract divine principle. Yet he has his clerics, few though they be, who draw inspiration from their worship and can cast divine magic in his name.

Portfolio: Battle, racial pride, rulership, vengeance.

Domains: Artifice, Evil, Law, War, Warforged†.

Favored Weapon: Greatsword.

began to circulate. Many warforged (and others) believe that the two are one and the same. This is but one of the many origin stories told about the Lord of Blades, however.

Wherever he came from, the devotion of the Blades to their Lord is clear. This might simply arise because their Lord is the most charismatic of his kind. Alternatively, he could have something extra—some divine authority or even supernatural ability that sets him apart from the rest. Perhaps this power derives from an ancient artifact, or even from an all-consuming obsession with finding such an item.

The cult's organization is military, as befits the warforged mindset and the religious war espoused by their leader. The entire cult is the Legion, with the Lord of Blades at its head. Below the Lord himself are his captains. Each captain is responsible for a company of followers, each company containing several hundred warforged. Below the captains are lieutenants who direct squads of around fifty followers. The chain of command is enforced rigidly, which warforged find comforting and familiar. Insubordination does not exist among the Blades—the very concept cannot even occur to



This holy symbol represents the awesome power of the Lord of Blades and his proud construct nature.

them, for the orders of their Lord are absolute.

Religious Duties

The clergy—really more the military hierarchy—of the Lord of Blades has the primary duty of transmitting their master's words to all members of the Legion. This takes the form of long harangues, which followers memorize and repeat as a mantra. Such repetition is typical of any warforged worship, and indeed of all warforged daily routine.

The captains and lieutenants also lead their followers in military exercises, honing tactics and devising group maneuvers to assure victory when the holy war finally begins.

Some among the high-ranking Blades are tasked with evangelism. These individuals are dispatched in all directions from the Mournland to warforged enclaves across Khorvaire. They have been focusing especially on Karrnath and Thrane, which have large populations of indentured warforged to whom the promised freedom of Thronehold never came. Among these downtrodden folk they find their most zealous converts. The most passionate of these heralds spend many years as evangelicals in their adopted lands, to better awaken

The Ephemeral Leader

The theory of Bulwark as the Lord of Blades is supported by little more than rumor. Indeed, Bulwark has been the origin of several cults. Some warforged revere Bulwark as the liberator of their people, giving him the sort of respect normally reserved for gods, and they pledge their lives to his service. As he departed soon after they were freed, these loyalists were left to choose between remaining in their old lands and following their savior into the east. Those who stayed behind have cultivated small areas of worship and ready the warforged populace for his return. They call themselves the Preparers of the Way, and peacefully integrate themselves into whatever larger society exists around them. Others, known as the Converts, abandoned their former homes and try to retrace Bulwark's steps to join him in whatever great destiny awaits. Both such groups claim to be followers of Bulwark the Liberator, and have no truck with the Lord of Blades. By contrast, the Blades pay homage to a leader in the Mournland, denying that he has anything in common with the subservient Bulwark.

A more logical theory dismisses the task of finding the origin of the Lord of Blades. Instead, it posits that many such Lords exist. Reports from adventurers and scavengers have in common the sightings of warforged juggernaut squads moving purposefully in the Mournland. Perhaps the Lord of Blades is no more than a title, carried by whichever leader claims it at the time. Thus, any squad of warforged encountered in the Mournland could contain the Lord of Blades, even though none of them actually do. This theory certainly accounts for the mystery and elusiveness of the Lord far better than any other.

and lead others to their destiny. They do not tire of their self-imposed exile from their lord and god; they know that when the signal is given, all will gather in the Mournland to begin the conquest of the flesh-ruled lands.

Quests

The militaristic nature of the Blades does not lend itself to individual growth, and the personal quest of discovery has no place within it. The missionary function of high-ranking clergy is a questing of sorts, but with a purely practical function.

Being tireless and built of durable materials, a warforged can undertake no meaningful test of physical endurance. However, strength of spirit (though the materialistic Blades would scoff at such a word) is valued. Warforged do experience mental fatigue without sufficient stimulation, and in such a state cannot function most efficiently as soldiers. Their ability to conduct repetitive activity nearly endlessly is used by the cult leaders to condition Blades to better follow the Lord's orders. Thus, trials and drills form part of a follower's regimen. These might entail support tasks, such as hauling materials

back and forth, or tests of individual development, such as standing watch for a week without relief (and making regular reports to prove the time was actually spent in watching). Those who perform the most strongly usually end up being promoted to the higher ranks.

Good intelligence is vital to any military operation, and those Blades who demonstrate the keenest powers of observation and analysis are sent on missions to gather information about the activities of their fleshly neighbors. Such missions might also scout out suitable areas for battle or seek contact with potential allies among the unenlightened warforged populace.

rites and rituals of the Lord of Blades

For the Blades, military drill and religious ritual are indistinguishable. Where the follower of a distant and unknowable deity might ask for help through ritual behavior, these materialistic worshipers automatically receive their Lord's instruction and physical benefit by obeying orders.

Blade Communion Rituals

Only warforged belonging to the Blades can take part in a Blade Communion ritual. The ritual itself can be performed only by a Blade cleric of at least 5th level, and can only occur on the first day of the appropriate month (see *The Calendar*, page 114). A Blade Communion ritual requires one uninterrupted hour of meditation by all those participating in the ritual, and each participant must exchange a small portion of his body with another participant (usually a minor item of decoration). If anything interrupts the concentration of any participant, the entire ritual is disrupted and no benefits are bestowed.

When the ritual is completed, each participant who meets the given prerequisite must attempt a DC 15 Concentration check (taking 10 is not possible). A participant who succeeds gains the indicated benefit, which lasts for a number of days equal to that participant's level, unless noted otherwise. If he fails the check (or does not meet the prerequisite), he gains no benefit and cannot repeat the ritual until the next year. The benefit ends immediately if the participant deals damage to a warforged who has not already dealt damage to that participant or to one of his allies, or if the participant is expelled from the Blades. Multiple rituals of the same kind do not stack.

Blade Communion rituals have no cost, but Blade clerics refuse to perform this ritual on anyone who does not share their beliefs. A cleric cannot be compelled (magically or otherwise) to perform a ritual against his will, and any Blade cleric who performs one on an undeserving character loses all cleric spellcasting abilities, along with the ability to perform Blade Communion rituals, until he undergoes atonement.

A Blade Communion can be performed normally outside the presence of the Lord of Blades. When he does participate, however, he gains the normal ritual benefit as well as a measure of divinity from his subjects.

Blade Communion of Handling

You partake of the martial prowess of the Lord of Blades, increasing your ability to wield weapons and deal damage.

Prerequisite: Weapon Focus.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on damage rolls with weapons to which your Weapon Focus applies.

Blade Communion of Scribing

You partake of the Lord of Blades' skill with artifice, enabling you to benefit from a minor infusion.

Prerequisite: Must not be capable of casting infusions.

Benefit: Choose one 1st-level infusion from the artificer infusion list. This infusion must be one that could be imbued upon you (such as repair light damage). The chosen infusion is stored within your body, and you can activate it once during the duration of the ritual's benefit as a standard action.

Blade Communion of Sentinel

You partake of the Lord of Blades' observant watchers, Hilt and Pommel, improving your ability to detect threats.

Prerequisite: Wis 11.

Benefit: You gain a +2 benefit on Listen, Search, and Spot checks.

Blade Communion of Warding

You partake of the defensive prowess of the Lord of Blades, increasing your ability to withstand damage.

Prerequisite: Damage reduction.

Benefit: Your existing damage reduction increases by 1. If you have damage reduction against more than one kind of damage, choose which one gains this benefit.

Prayers

Prayers as such are unknown to the Blades. One does not beg a commander-in-chief for succor or favor. Instead, they obey the Lord of Blades and his commanders, and return to him the assertion of warforged superiority. Ritual statements are not so much prayers as they are slogans or even battle cries. A typical example is, "We are the blade; you are the fist."

Minor Rites

Ritual sharpening of weapons forms the basic religious activity of the Blades. When not actively drilling, mobilizing, or preaching and being preached to, these militant warforged keep their blades bright and finely honed. Many have affixed armlades or additional weaponry to their bodies, and keeping them in top condition occupies much of their "downtime."

Those Blades who are away from their god on missionary or intelligence-gathering quests suffer from the separation. They are unable to share in the strength that comes from being at his side, and to compensate, they perform small acts to recreate a portion of that aura. These are personal rites, meant to bolster individual spirit, and take place at the same time each day.

Major Rites

The major ritual activities of the Blades are large-scale military exercises. Unlike typical armed-forces war games, though, these are highly formalized. Group tactics are practiced over and over, until all members are performing exactly in synch; then larger-group coordination is perfected in the same way. The overall effect is more of a great dance than a military action. An opponent observing these exercises would quickly be able to memorize and predict the movements of the warforged army—thus, the Blades go to extreme lengths to ensure secrecy. They send out advance agents into the practice area to exterminate any living beings they find (other than warforged, who are forcibly recruited or taken prisoner).

In addition, all the Blades engage in the Blade Communion, a periodic adoration of their spiritual leader. This is not some offering of flowery words but a physical communion in which all receive the Lord of Blades blessing and in return confer upon him some of their own strength, thus increasing his power.

The Calendar

The Blades mark time according to the first appearance of the Lord of Blades, punctuated by his most evocative pronouncements. They care little for the calendar of the fleshborn, instead marking the moons with quotations, which change each year as determined by the scribes. For example, the rising of Therendor is called in the current calendar, "We endure." The transition from one day to the next is less important for people who need no sleep and conduct no commerce. Each quarter, however, begins with a Blade Communion. Once a year, following the Blade Communion of Scribing, the official recordkeepers transcribe the Lord of Blades's pronouncements for the year and also name the next twelve months.

998 YK corresponds to the First Year of Thirteen Blades, according to the cult's accounting. This might

refer to the number of blades on the body of the Lord of Blades, to the number of companies working within the Mournland, or perhaps even to the rising of the moons (though this last is unlikely).

Galifar Month	Blade Communion
Olarune	Sentinel
Dravago	Handling
Rhaan	Scribing
Vult	Warding

THE LORD OF BLADES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

To follow the Lord of Blades is to do so completely. Many warforged think about the movement, but few commit themselves to the rigors of membership. They might listen to a sermon from an evangelical Blade, or be drawn into a conversation by an agent, but they are not true worshipers unless they travel to their leader's side. Invoking the name of the Lord of Blades sometimes serves as an imprecation, usually in a sarcastic and disrespectful way: "Tell it to the Lord of Blades!" or "Blades take you!"

The life of a true believer is worship. The drills and recitations structure day-to-day (or, more accurately, moon-to-moon) existence. All is preparation for the glorious campaign to come.

It's ironic in the eyes of some observers that in championing freedom, the movement has as a practical result completely subsumed individual warforged to its cause. As with all faiths, it is not the dogma or the preaching that one should consider most carefully to gain full understanding—it's the actions and, in this case, the interactions of the faithful.

The Lord of Blades and Government

King Boranel of Breland is obsessed with the idea that his onetime aide Bulwark might now be the Lord of Blades. He is tormented by the thought that he might have unleashed such a threat upon Khorvaire. Still, he also wants the best for his old companion. He wonders whether Bulwark (if indeed that is the warforged messiah) would even listen to his former patron—if he could get word to the Mournland stronghold. He compulsively collects information about the Lord of Blades, and his intelligence agents seek out independent investigators to bring the latest news.

Karnath and Thrane feel most threatened by the Lord of Blades' message of freedom, for their economies rely heavily on indentured warforged labor. Thus, those nations' leaders have declared the Lord of Blades to be an enemy of the state. Followers of the religion are destroyed immediately, whether they are property of the state or outside agents apprehended in their evangelism.

The Lord of Blades and Other Faiths

Thrane is particularly intolerant of religions other than the worship of the Silver Flame, and its high priests continually strive to enlighten the warforged. The Pure Flame sect has declared the Blades creed to be a heresy, and members of the Pure Flame call loudly for its complete extinction. Some few have taken matters

into their own hands, exploring the Mournland for the warforged stronghold and dispatching any Blades they encounter there.

Followers of Dol Arrah admire and respect the military fervor of the Blades, but they consider those warforged to be misguided in their reverence for an earthly being, as well as in their fanatical belief in racial superiority. The priests of the faith wish to bring these “lost” into the fold of their Lady to harness their passion for more wholesome causes.

Specific Attitudes

For their own part, the Blades have no interest in the religions of flesh creatures, and they do not care what followers of those faiths might think of them.

The Godforged: These worthy wanderers hold a curious and completely unnecessary belief in souls. If they are willing to follow orders and work toward our ultimate triumph, their potential as recruits is great.

The Reforged: It is an offense of the highest order to deny one’s own nature. These fools must either recognize the truth of warforged destiny or die in ignorance.

The Lord of Blades in the Last War

The Last War birthed the Lord of Blades. It was the Treaty of Thronehold that gave warforged the freedom to choose as they would, including matters of religion. The war might even have literally created the Lord of Blades, if Bulwark and the Lord of Blades are the same.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE LORD OF BLADES

The center of the Blades’ worship is the hidden stronghold of their Lord, somewhere deep within the Mournland. Its location is unknown to any outside the cult, and even new recruits do not visit this headquarters until they are well established in the cult’s organization. The scribes and evangelicals, as well as the Lord of Blades’s personal bodyguard, travel to the stronghold frequently and return with the latest pronouncements. The Blades are certain that their leader possesses a creation forge and that he swells the ranks of his followers with new warforged, but no one beyond the inner circle has actually seen the inside of the temple.

Blades Base Camp

Individual companies establish base camps that serve as training grounds, armories, and religious precincts. A camp moves at frequent, irregular intervals to thwart observation and prediction of the company’s activities (this in addition to regular patrols to eliminate intruders).

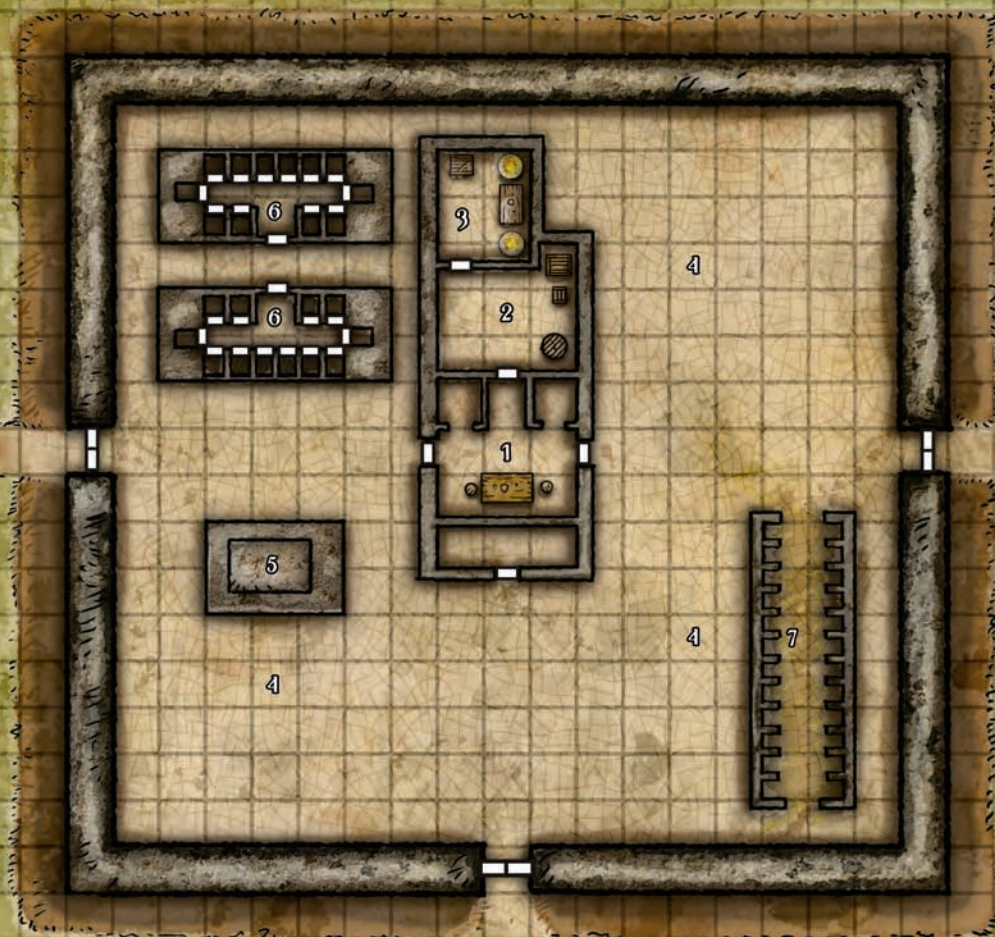
All Blades camps adhere rigorously to a single plan. Each is exactly the same in layout—the only differences being size and orientation. The camp is square in form, surrounded by a 10-foot-high earthen wall studded with sharpened stakes and pieces of metal (sometimes damaged weapons). On the outer edge of this rampart is a 5-foot-deep ditch, which encircles the camp. Double-gated entrances pierce three of the four sides; when the gates are open, a simple bridge of planks spans the ditch.

BLADES CAMP

Key

1. Captain’s offices
2. Armory
3. Workshop
4. Parade grounds
5. Punishment square
6. Prison blocks
7. Shelter

One square = 10 feet



Each gate has a group of six Blades assigned as guards, usually 1st-level warriors with a 2nd- or 3rd-level warrior supervising. A fourth group of six Blades patrols the outside of the camp at all times.

Because warforged do not eat or sleep, many of the typical structures of a military camp are absent, such as barracks and food storehouses. The Blades use the extra space for military training.

1. Captain's Offices. This square building is at the exact center of the camp, its three doors aligned with the camp's gates. One 3rd-level warforged fighter stands guard outside each door. Most of the building is one large room, from which the captain supervises camp operations, and where he meets with lieutenants, dispenses punishment, and assigns missions to scouts. The symbol of the Lord of Blades is prominent, not only on the captain himself but on the small shrine built into the northwest corner of the building. This shrine contains a small reproduction of the bladed fist, surrounded by gleaming weaponry (that wielded by the captain in battle).

The northeast corner of the building contains a locked storeroom that holds magic items and other top-security materials. The captain's authority is required for access; this is reinforced by the special lock, which has a shaped space that matches a specific component of the captain's body. It does not open without admitting the correct shape (Open Lock DC 35 without proper component).

A door set into the north wall connects with the camp's armory.

2. Armory. The company's weaponry is stored here. At any given time, a dozen or so Blades are in the building, tending to the equipment. Usable items seized from enemies are also stored here.

3. Workshop. This building is for crafting and repairing weapons. Minor repairs to damaged warforged can also be performed here. It is supervised by a warforged artificer (3rd to 5th level is typical) who also creates oils of repair damage for the company's use. Five lower-level Blade warriors assist; typically at least one has some artificer training.

4. Parade Grounds. Much of the company's time is spent drilling, and with no need for barracks, there is space for many warforged to practice at the same time. Drilling takes place around the clock, each squad practicing for 12 hours each day. A typical company contains five squads, so while three are drilling, the other two are performing assorted tasks, standing guard, and so forth.

5. Punishment Square. When a Blade commits an infraction, the company captain immediately makes an example of the miscreant. Discipline is harsh among the Blades, and even minor infractions merit severe punishment. A typical penalty for disobedience (whether intentional or not) is the removal of a small portion of the offender's body, such as a finger or a piece of ornamental plating; the intent is to humiliate rather than to maim,

and the soldier must still be capable of fighting. The separated piece is displayed on a platform in the midst of the square, labeled with the offender's name, rank, and squad. An offender who redeems himself in service to the Lord of Blades can win back the severed piece, which the company's artificer reattaches in the workshop.

6. Prison Blocks. These blocks contain tiny cells barely large enough for an occupant to turn around. The anguish of separation from the rest of the Legion, and by extension from the Lord of Blades himself, makes such punishment dreadful indeed. Only the most severe crimes (such as outright mutiny or questioning dogma) merit imprisonment, and even then the period of incarceration rarely exceeds one week.

7. Shelter. Although warforged have no need of sleep or food, they are uncomfortable in inclement weather. Each of these long sheds has room for dozens of warforged to stand out of the worst of the elements.

THE BECOMING GOD

Rumors persist of a warforged battalion that deserted its Karrnathi masters and entered the Mournland. Calling themselves the Godforged, they are unified by a belief that warforged have souls—and that these souls were bestowed upon them by a construct god. How the Godforged conceive of such a deity is unknown to those outside the cult—whether the philosophical ideal of “construct” can exist without a created body is a matter for the scholars—but they are not content to worship a distant concept. The Godforged are dedicated to the great task of building a body to let their god walk the world as a comrade. The construction of this vessel—the Becoming God—is the project of lifetimes.

Over time, the Godforged movement has gained more adherents. Warforged seek definite goals in life, and they fear ultimate destruction as much as any living being. For some, belief in a thing greater than themselves

addresses both issues, but in typical warforged fashion, they require something tangible. Hearing the stories,



This holy symbol depicts the new awareness of the construct soul and its creator.

THE BECOMING GOD

Neutral

Although the Becoming God does not yet have a body, he exists as a real being to those who believe, and they can draw on their faith to create miracles.

Portfolio: Life, discovery, growth, self-sufficiency.

Domains: Artifice, Meditation*, Strength, Warforged†.

Favored Weapon: Slam/gauntlet (including battlefist).

these curious individuals gradually make their way to the heart of the Mournland in search of truth. There, they find one another and form small groups, called "assemblages," devoted to learning more of the Becoming God. Within each group, the warforged with the strongest personality naturally assumes a leadership role and begins to direct the activity of the assemblage.

Religious and philosophical arguments have raged over the question of whether warforged have souls. They cannot become undead, but they can be resurrected. Is the ability to be aware and to reason sufficient evidence for a soul? For the Godforged, there is no question.

Consciousness is what separates them from mere machines and their mindless precursors, and if other conscious beings have souls, the warforged do, as well. They have no difficulty conceiving of a soul that is separate from the body: The Becoming God is surely the most powerful construct soul, and the source of their own. However, the Godforged also believe that a soul is built into a body, and that it increases as a life advances. (Hence, placing their god into its own body will let it grow even more powerful.) This belief is reflected in a propensity to add pieces to themselves, whether as magic components (*Races of Eberron* 175) or simply as ornament.

If the Godforged believe in an afterlife, they do not subscribe to the idea of Dolurrh as the soul's destination. The warforged soul is bound within the body, and without one, it exists as mere potential. Most Godforged hold that unbound souls form part of the Becoming God until they once again find bodies, or become part of his physical entity.

Some religious scholars have noted what they consider an odd parallel between the Becoming God's devoted and the Church of the Silver Flame. Both believe that souls departed from their fleshly confines join their god. Although the Church of the Silver Flame views the journey as a one-way trip and the Godforged see more interaction, it would be interesting to these same scholars to know if any Godforged or Flame scholar has investigated other similarities between the two presumably separate gods.

SERVANTS OF THE BECOMING GOD

The primary task for a Godforged assemblage is to discern the nature of the Becoming God, and to contribute to its embodiment. In this, each leader has its own conviction, and the others, built to serve, follow without question. The leader chooses its own title, which is usually a variant on or synonym for "Architect" or "Builder," recognizing its role in the progress of construction. A large group might contain one or two subordinate leaders (often called "Planners") who direct the activities of the assemblage according to the Architect's vision.

Religious Duties

Above all, the leaders of Godforged assemblages guide their followers in understanding their god and in actively creating its earthly container. Repetition is natural to warforged life and instruction, so the life of a cult beats to the rhythm of the leader's chant, much like a marching cadence. This liturgy tells of the Becoming God and the origins of warforged souls, of the future that

Nonwarforged Cultists

The Godforged movement is of living constructs, for living constructs. A few highly deluded nonwarforged beings are fascinated by the cult, becoming lay followers of a sort, even though the Godforged do nothing to encourage or welcome them.

Many of these devotees began as scholars studying the movement from a psychological or sociological perspective, who became obsessed with their subject and lost academic detachment. They trail behind the trudging column of the questers, intent on observing everything, and send back raving dispatches filled with the language of revelation. Some, more fascinated than the others by the idea of a growing, built-in soul, even try to emulate the worshipers. They might submit to construct grafts, for example, or even try to rebuild their own bodies. This desperate option usually backfires, resulting in a crazed half-golem, an abomination that is quickly destroyed—often by the Godforged themselves. A few renegade mastermakers find a home—if not support—within the Godforged.

Some who are not driven mad or destroyed by their passion become strange underground preachers. They haunt the most wretched slums to spread the word of a new life in an unbreakable body. Such a life can only be granted by the Becoming God once it is manifest on earth. Most listeners mock their insane message, but any message of hope might find fertile ground among the poverty-wracked and desperate.

A relatively new heresy dubbed the "Incarnate Lord of Blades" was born from the fevered sermons of these nonwarforged cultists. According to their ramblings, the warforged messiah began existence as a flesh-and-blood being who rebuilt his body—and his soul—with mechanical parts. To warforged devoted to either the Lord of Blades or the Godforged, the idea is ridiculous: The construct form is the most perfect. To most mortals, it is ghastly. The proponents of such a bizarre idea rarely speak of it openly for long; their voices are soon silenced . . . one way or another.

is to come, and of the duty of every follower to its god. The group literally marches in beat, scouring the ruins of the Mourmland for materials and relics suited to the great project.

Assemblage Architects are responsible for collecting and recording the knowledge of the group. They note the place from which god-pieces come, and the nature of each. When a member shares an insight with the group, this enters the records as well. Landmarks, encounters with other groups, and significant events all go into the plan (as the record is called). Architects continually update the plan, especially during periods of inactivity, and keep the record within a special container fastened to (or incorporated into) their own body. Older records are never destroyed but are maintained as an archive to check against the current plan. Mundane ink and paper usually suffice, but the more fanatical Architects might go so far as to engrave their plans on sheets of thin metal.

Quests

The Godforged's existence is to quest. They search for the Firstforge, the damaged Cyran creation forge, which some claim is operated by the Lord of Blades. They also quest for materials that will some day help realize the body of the Becoming God.

The Godforged see the Lord of Blades not as a divine being in himself but as a true prophet of the Becoming God. If he indeed controls the Firstforge, he is the only one of their kind to build bodies that hold living souls. Moreover, a soul attached by this prophet cannot help but

have a firmer bond to its body. Many argue that to find the Lord of Blades is to find the way to the Becoming God. Still, none know how to locate the warforged Lord, nor he they, although he would welcome such followers.

The Godforged movement is not evangelical: Each member hears the call within itself and seeks the truth.

rites and rituals of the becoming god

Warforged are practical folk; being reverent does not require acts of empty ritual. The Godforged know that their god awaits its body, and they are confident in their role in bringing about the ultimate merger. Thus, their rituals have a purpose and an outcome.

Prayers

The Godforged do not ask for their deity's intercession. After all, it has already granted them souls. Rather, they believe they owe the same to their god. Their prayers take the form of promises: "I vow to open your eyes that you may look on your creation." Sometimes a prayer is an offer of thanks, especially at times when the warforged believes he has added to the soul: "What you bestowed on me I have now augmented, thanks be to your vision."

Minor Rites

The first ritual any Godforged undertakes is that of recognizing that it has a soul, which leads it to the Becoming God. The triggering event could be almost

*Priests of the Becoming God
carry a double burden:
the souls of their followers
and the body of their god*



anything: an emotional response to an artistic creation or a beautiful landscape, the death of a comrade and thoughts of afterlife, an intellectual challenge posed to it directly, and so forth. Whatever the form, this event leads the warforged to consider for the first time something bigger and more enduring than its own body. Different warforged respond in varying ways. Some enter an extended period of "shutdown," in which they appear inactive but are in fact engaged in intense thought with no physical activity. Others add a ritual activity to each other action they take, such as a repeated phrase ("in the name of the Becoming") or a flourish after a combat move or more mundane activity.

One uniquely Godforged rite that is followed by all members of an assembly is to engrave, stamp, attach, or otherwise permanently affix the Mark of the Becoming to their bodies. The warforged are aware of the dragonmarks that set apart certain members of the humanoid races, and some have heard of the draconic Prophecy that they embody. The Godforged know that they fulfill a destiny, so marking themselves in the same way seems completely logical. An assemblage's Architect chooses the precise form of the mark, but all such marks share the central feature of an opening construct eye.

Major Rites

The cult of the Becoming God does not hold festivals in the usual sense, but the heart of the religion is its ongoing ritual. It is the duty of each Godforged to bring a piece of the god's body to add to its construction. A typical group travels for several hours a day, then its members search the rubble, taking shifts to avoid mental fatigue. A warforged who has excavated a suitable component presents it to the assemblage's leader for examination and approval. If the Architect finds it good, that follower carries the piece of its god, attached firmly to its own body, for the remainder of its existence or until it finds the Firstforge, whichever comes first. Should a Godforged fall while on the quest, its piece of the sacred body is taken up by the Architect (along with those of all the others lost along the way). Some of the older leaders carry so much material that they have a bizarre, over-mechanized appearance.

Those not actively searching engage in contemplation of their god, often absent-mindedly fashioning doll-like objects as they do so. Adventurers returning from the Mournland have brought back specimens of this warforged art, which has a ready market among collectors in Breland. The elders of certain churches have also acquired some of these figurines and are studying their

meaning with some concern; the Scions of the Forge (see *Hierocrats*, page 27) are especially interested in them, for obvious reasons.

Because there are so many small assemblages, each following its own interpretation of the divine quest, it would be impossible for the cult to maintain uniform worship without the exchange of information. When the Godforged first began to wander in the wastes, they formed assemblages from random meetings, and they encountered other such groups by happenstance. Whenever groups met, they would discuss the great task and their own activities in its furtherance. They then separated, each incorporating portions of the other's ritual into its own. As more assemblages formed and came into contact, the awareness of a larger movement spread, and one of the more perceptive Architects recognized the value of regular updates on the search. Each time its assemblage encountered another, that leader proposed a Great Assemblage to be held at a landmark within the Mournland. Eventually the idea of an annual gathering spread through the assemblages, and it is now a tradition. At a Great Assemblage, the Architect of each group presents its assemblage's plan so that all members can synchronize the record. Items of note might become central missions for the assemblages in the coming year, such as gathering more material from a particular ruin or observing a magical phenomenon in more detail.

The Calendar

The Great Assemblage meets on the first day of the month of Eyre (associated, appropriately, with the Mark of Making) and remains in convocation until all matters of importance have been discussed, usually about a week. The location changes from year to year; the gathering place for the next Assemblage is decided at the close of the current one.

The Godforged do not mark the passage of years with the Galifar calendar. Instead, they record the years spent in search of the Firstforge and the full awakening of the god. Sentient warforged have existed since 965 YK, and they gained recognition as free folk thirty-one years later. The concept of a construct god predates the emancipation of the warforged, but the great task itself began only then. Thus, the 998 YK corresponds to the second year Before the Becoming, or 2 BB. If and when the god is embodied, the reckoning will shift to After the Becoming.

THE BECOMING GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Unlike many of Eberron's religions, the cult of the Becoming God consumes a worshiper entirely. Discovering the soul is a life-changing event, and it is not undertaken casually.

Most who learn of the Becoming God can no longer continue in their former existence. They depart to join the assemblages working to bring their god into physical existence. A very small number of awakened warforged, however, are still exploring the ramifications of this event. They have not yet broken with mundane life but contemplate the decision in the long hours while the fleshmade sleep. Such individuals are prone to slow and careful examination of issues, and they make the most

MARK OF THE BECOMING

Most dragons pay no attention at all to this tiny cult, but some in the Chamber have noticed the new mark. Although the Mark of the Becoming is created, rather than appearing spontaneously, observers wonder if it might still reveal something new of the Prophecy. As the dragons themselves can testify, it is difficult to discount even seemingly irrelevant events when it comes to interpreting the Prophecy.

convincing Architects when they finally join or create their own assemblage. Those who remain undecided serve as conduits of the faith to others, as they discuss the idea and solicit opinions. Thus, word of the cult spreads in a population, despite the isolation of its committed members. One well-known venue for discussion of the Becoming God is The Red Hammer Inn, in the undercity of Sharn (*Sharn: City of Towers* 100).

The Becoming God and Government

The leaders of House Cannith have heard about the Becoming God from their contacts in The Red Hammer, among other places, but do not take them seriously. This is generally the attitude of most in power. Baron Merrix d'Cannith, who maintains secret experiments (and a surviving creation forge) in the undercity of Sharn, is very interested in the future of "his children," however. He believes the faith can lead them to a new, brighter future—and he is working on the idea of building and improving souls in his latest warforged designs. Still, Merrix's influence does not extend to the rest of the family's holdings, and he keeps his interests secret.

The Becoming God and Other Faiths

The cult's existence is little more than a rumor to most. Those who hear the stories generally scoff at the idea of a construct god—the phrase is an oxymoron to them. However, the clergy of Onatar (especially the Scions of the Forge) have taken a special interest in the Becoming God, seeking out whatever information they can find. They examine the worshipers' doll sculptures, trying to infer the form of the divine body, and wonder if their god could have made another on his holy forge. Some see the possibility as exciting, proof that Onatar is more powerful than the rest. Others fear that if one god can forge another, there is no limit to potential deities—and challenges to the authority of the established pantheon.

Specific Attitudes

Warforged attitudes toward other faiths are generally nonexistent. At best, they might hold some bemused curiosity about such things. However, the Godforged have strong opinions about other warforged cults and mysteries.

The Lord of Blades: To worship this being as a deity is terribly misguided, bordering on dangerous. The Lord of Blades is the conduit to the god but is not a god himself. Blind devotion to him only detracts from the great task of building the Becoming God's body. Such delusions must be corrected.

The Reforged: Why should we seek to change our bodies to weak flesh? We were created in the image of our god, and it is our duty to create for him the most perfect body. It is blasphemous to think that the body he gave us is not sufficient.

The Becoming God in the Last War

During the Last War, warforged were the property of the nations for which they fought. Whatever their personal beliefs, they were made to serve in battle. No doubt some began to conceive of their own god during this time, and their own servitude likely intensified the need to ensure the god had a free body of its own. But the cult itself did not exist until after the Treaty of Thronehold gave warforged the freedom to pursue such goals.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE BECOMING GOD

The Godforged do not erect temples. Rather, the central tenet of the cult is that the created body is itself a shrine. The most sacred edifice possible is the god's body-to-be. In the meantime, each wandering assemblage, excavating and toting its contributions to the task, is in effect a mobile shrine.

THE REFORGED

The Reforged movement is more of a philosophy than a religion. It does not posit a warforged god, but it does share with the Becoming God a belief in the living soul. Rather than building or improving on that soul, though, they prefer to embrace the living part of their nature.

The Reforged eschew mechanical enhancement. Instead, they seek to become as much like natural beings as possible, experiencing all of life more intensely than many born to flesh. Pious humanoids—or those simply given to prejudice—resent the Reforged, seeing them as foolish poseurs who have no business pretending to be "real people."

THE FOUR MAXIMS

The Reforged honor Hatchet as the first of their kind. This philosopher formulated simple rules for living that the Reforged continue to follow and preach. He taught others in his philosophy, and they in turn spread the word. Hatchet himself no longer lives; a tragic misunderstanding resulted in his killing a human in self-defense, and a human mob then tore him apart. Thus, the truth of his life has become obscured by hagiography after the fact. Hatchet has taken on semidivine status among the more fervent Reforged, as an inspired prophet or even an agent of a god.

Hatchet set forth a few simple precepts by which the Reforged live.

1. I choose, therefore I live.
2. The purpose of life is living.
3. All living beings have the right to choose.
4. Some choices demand punishment.

All Reforged take the Second Maxim deeply to heart, honoring Hatchet by living as intensely as possible.

MAJOR RITES

The big occasion in the life of a Reforged is the "birthday," the moment of entering the movement, and the annual commemorations of it that follow. A new Reforged adopts a male or female personality if it did not already have one, and obtains colorful clothing appropriate to the chosen gender and surrounding society. Some go so far as to celebrate at a tavern or restaurant, ordering a meal and at least going through the motions of consumption. This celebration is attended by other Reforged and sometimes fleshly friends and companions, if they are welcoming and open-minded about the warforged's new existence. Annual celebrations then become much like human birthday parties, although as the Reforged discards more and more of its

construct nature, additional commemorations might form part of the festivities.

HAVENS OF THE REFORGED

A typical Reforged enclave is a haven of sensation, made for warforged exploring their living nature but filled with the best of the fleshly world. It is decorated in bright colors and filled with life of all kinds: lush flowers visited by myriad butterflies, singing birds in cages, jewel-like lizards basking on the walls, as well as domesticated household animals such as dogs, cats, rabbits, even snakes and turtles. Comfortable furniture with surfaces of various textures—rough, sharp, luxurious—abounds, all to provide a greater range of sensation. An enclave is also filled with works of art and literature, accompanied by music (provided by hired bards or even more advanced Reforged).

Although warforged have no need of food and drink, and indeed lack the sensory organs to enjoy them, the Reforged indulge in such pleasures nonetheless. Enclaves are stocked with a wide variety of foodstuffs, wines, teas, and the like. Some Reforged go so far as to purchase or craft magic items to gain an artificial sense of smell or taste, but most simply practice the unfamiliar motions of eating and drinking so as to fit in more comfortably at human gatherings, which so often involve such activities.

An enclave also includes a quiet space, often a garden or library, to allow uninterrupted meditation on the nature of life. The best location for an enclave is a former inn; if no such building is available for purchase, Reforged instead gather in rented facilities once a week or month. (Although some humans refuse to deal with warforged, most innkeepers are persuaded easily enough by coin.)



This symbol, representing a seed from which the soul will be reborn, also recalls the enormous monoliths that dot the landscape of Riedra.

QUORI FAITHS

When the quori completed their conquest of Sarlona eleven hundred years ago, they cemented their hold on the continent by setting themselves up as quasidivine beings. In the guise of the Inspired, they wield absolute control over lowland Sarlona and are turning their covetous attention to Khorvaire. For now, they primarily use intrigue and diplomacy to advance their aims, having established a treaty with the embattled frontier nation of Q'barra.

Opposing the beautiful and cruel invaders are the kalashtar, a group formed from the merger of humans and renegade quori, who strive to atone for their terrible error in exposing Eberron. The most devoted of the kalashtar are the *Yannahilath* of the Path of Light, a spiritual movement that focuses on a universal principle of positivity rather than a specific deity or pantheon.

Somewhere in between are the Dreamwalkers. This small, hidden sect believes that the Quor Tarai, the dream

that shapes Dal Quor, is not evil but incomprehensible. Dreamwalkers seek to understand the Quor Tarai perfectly so as to enlighten both the Inspired and the *Yannahilath* and thus unite their people.

THE INSPIRED

When the quori first came to Sarlona, they used infiltration, psionic manipulation, and cunning politics to throw the continent into bloody chaos. Then, presenting themselves as divinely inspired saviors, they came to the “rescue” and now maintain absolute control over Riedra. As psionically modified humans tinged with fiendish blood and possessing elflike beauty, the Inspired are a breed apart from normal Sarlonan humans. They act as and are treated as such. Although few in number, the Inspired are nobles within Riedran society, and those of highest rank rule as divine monarchs.

Over the course of centuries, the quori created a religion as a means of controlling the common citizens of Riedra. Known as the Path of Inspiration, this faith is based around the concept of reincarnation and spiritual evolution. By living lives of devotion and service, the faithful hope to improve their lot in the next life. After passing through cycles as beast and human, a Riedran hopes to eventually become one of the *il-altas*, the “great spirits” that guide others toward perfection. The Inspired are believed to be vessels of these *il-altas*. Thus, the Riedrans know that their leaders are possessed by spiritual entities, but they believe that this possession is a great honor and treat the Inspired with the reverence other religions offer their gods. And so the quori maintain their power.

SERVANTS OF THE INSPIRED

The ordinary citizenry of Riedra follow the instructions of their overlords with great devotion. These near-gods walk among them, smiling on the faithful and dispensing terrible punishment to their enemies.

Certain favored worshipers are promoted by the Inspired to lead the others. This is a great honor. It is believed that a human priest who serves faithfully can be reborn as one of the Chosen (empty vessels not yet possessed by a quori spirit) in his next life. No priest has power that even approaches that of the lowest-ranking quori noble, but the position does have its rewards. The clergy receive a touch of the divine blessing. Each carries a special seed-shaped crystal, engraved with the Inspired’s sigil, marking his status and storing a portion of divine energy.

Riedrans dress in black, white, or brown clothing. They highlight this garb by weaving designs along the hems, using this embroidery as a form of meditation.

Complex designs are reserved for the Inspired. The colors blue and red appear only on the robes of the Inspired, which the faithful cover with labyrinthine patterns of color.

Becoming a Priest

The Inspired keep careful watch on their subjects through the Riedran internal police force, the Thousand Eyes. These elite watchers not only move swiftly to eliminate potential threats, but they also take note of community leaders who can be exploited to strengthen their hold on society. Whether a respected elder who teaches submission to the Inspired or a sergeant who inspires her soldiers to bravery in the name of the Riedran overlords, loyal and devoted persons make excellent candidates for the priesthood.

The Inspired tightly control any source of power that could threaten their rule, especially magical ability. Arcanists are eliminated whenever they are discovered—Riedrans believe that arcane magic is derived from fiendish sources, pointing to the Adarans as examples. Only the most loyal priests are trusted with the ability to wield divine magic. The Inspired are not gods and cannot control a priest's ability to perform magic, but if the devotion of a spellcasting priest ever comes into question, that priest is swiftly eliminated. Most Riedran priests are experts trained to offer spiritual guidance and inspiration to the people. Actual spellcasters are valuable tools, often assigned to serve in the military or the Thousand Eyes.

Innate psionic ability is also discouraged in Riedra's human populace, although it is not so dire a threat as magic. The Inspired cull those who demonstrate substantial power, often killing them but sometimes holding them for breeding experiments to improve their bloodlines, possibly even elevating them to the ranks of the Chosen. A priest, though, could be left with a wild talent or a natural aptitude for psionics, which could actually help in guiding the congregation.

Hierarchy

The priesthood has just one rank—priest. Priests report to the lower-ranking nobles who serve their Inspired overlord and receive instructions through these subordinates. A priest might go a lifetime without ever entering the presence of the one that he serves, although the hope of being so honored drives him to serve ever more faithfully.

Priests might assign the most devoted members of their congregations to act as assistants. These fortunate people are likely to be chosen as priests, since being

selected to assist a priest is tantamount to a recommendation. Beyond such minor administrative decisions, priests have no authority other than the respect conferred by their office.

As the vessels of higher spirits, all the Inspired stand above the priests, and any Inspired can issue directives to a priest. Inspired must answer to the Dreaming Dark and rarely act against the interests of their people. However, Inspired lords occasionally pursue personal schemes to prove their abilities to those above them.

Fallen Priests

Fallen priests of the Path of Inspiration do not exist. Those who do not obey their masters die, without exception. Nor is it likely someone can maintain a pretense of devotion while secretly advancing a personal agenda, for the Inspired telepathically monitor their servants to ensure such threats never emerge.

Quests

The priesthood serves a vital role in the administration of Riedra. Priests are responsible for indoctrinating the common folk and constantly reinforcing the people's respect for the Inspired and fear of the outside world. Inspired often dispatch priests to areas believed to harbor dissidents, to quell potential uprisings and to assist the Thousand Eyes. Rare and trusted priests with spellcasting ability are often called into military service, and they might be sent to take part in the siege of Adar or an attack on a dromite city-hive. The Inspired have difficulty mastering divine magic, and they could send one of their treasured clerics on any number of special missions requiring divine power. However, should the cleric ever come to believe that his magic makes him equal or superior to the Inspired, he quickly disappears.

rites and rituals of the Inspired

The Inspired cement their hold over the populace through pseudo-religious ceremonies that not only reinforce their role, but also have the more valuable function of focusing psychic energy. Most of these rituals involve the monoliths that the quori are erecting all over Riedra. These monoliths are known as the *hanbalani altas*, the "sanctuaries of the soul"; they are said to provide a resting place for spirits awaiting reincarnation, although the truth is far more sinister.

Prayers

For a Riedran, work is prayer. Through his unrelenting toil, the Riedran peasant believes that he is honoring the Inspired and furthering his spiritual evolution. Such devotion is reinforced by the subtle influence of the monoliths. These thoughts feed the psychic energy of the quori, who in turn use the monolith network to encourage the citizens' religious submission with telepathic suggestions. But Riedrans do invoke the names of the Inspired when in distress, believing that doing so attracts benevolent attention to the problem. Riedrans also occasionally worship at their local monolith, hoping for success or aid as any worshiper might.

PATH OF INSPIRATION

Lawful Neutral

Those who follow the Path of Inspiration draw strength from their devotion to Riedra and its people, as well as their belief in the cycle of spiritual evolution.

Portfolio: Civilization, discipline, duty.

Domains: Community, Law, Meditation.

Favored Weapon: Flail.

Minor Rites

The priests oversee typical ceremonies that cement the community, such as namings, weddings, funeral services, and the like. They or their assistants fulfill the role of minor functionaries, completing paperwork and maintaining central records.

The Inspired mandate monthly celebrations of thanks, which are conducted by the local priest, to further reinforce the population's subservience. Citizens sing hymns of praise and sometimes make special requests for divine assistance. The rite usually lasts about an hour, after which the celebrants share a simple meal.

Major Rites

Once per year, on the anniversary of the unification of Riedra by the Inspired, all of Riedra observes the Feast of the Founding. The celebrations occur within each fortress-complex that controls a group of villages, and the noble of the region convenes them. At dawn, the village priests lead processions to the central complex and usually to the monolith within. Once the throngs have assembled, a lengthy ceremony offers praise to the Inspired for their vision and thanks for their generous shepherding of the people. Individual worshipers might step forward, overcome with religious fervor, and offer testaments to personal experiences of the love of the Inspired, such as a sick child who recovered or a failing crop that suddenly began to thrive after the peasant invoked names of the Inspired. Proceedings might last several hours.

While the ceremony goes on, the monolith glows and hums in a low tone, capturing and reinforcing

the powerful psychic energy of the fervent worshipers. During these times, high-ranking Inspired convene within the monolith and draw strength from the psychic radiation. Sometimes the region's overlord shows himself atop a tower, shining like a star with manifested psionic energy and speaking in thunderous tones about the great future to come. Such a display usually causes the worshipers to become even more emotional, setting up mutual psychic feedback.

The Calendar

Except for Inspired, quori do not use the Galifar calendar. Instead, they mark time according to the cycles of the *Quor Tarai*—the Dream of the Age—which is currently a nightmare centered around *il-Lashtavar*, the Dreaming Dark. The heart of Dal Quor sends out powerful psionic emanations at regular intervals, which the quori can feel intensely. Each period of "wakefulness" lasts three terrestrial days; in the flowing time of Dal Quor, this translates to roughly one month. This is followed by a long "sleep" cycle of two terrestrial weeks (or about four months in Dal Quor). During a "waking" cycle, quori experience tumultuous visions of *il-Lashtavar*, becoming highly agitated and hypersensitive to sensual and psychic stimuli. Whether the possessing quori is "asleep" or "awake" according to the rhythms of Dal Quor, however, the Inspired vessel follows a human's normal 24-hour sleep cycle.

For the benefit of human followers, priests lead celebrations of thanks at the time of each month when that month's moon is full. (The Riedran calendar is lunar and named similarly to Galifar's—humans from Sarlona originally conceived both.)

The Feast of the Founding gives thanks to the Inspired but also serves a darker purpose—charging the monoliths with psionic energy

The Feast of the Founding takes place at daybreak on the day of Therendor's new phase in the month of Therendor. This also corresponds to a period of especially intense wakefulness within the *Quor Tarai*, so that the psionic energy manifested in this ritual resonates even more strongly with the Inspired.

THE INSPIRED IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The typical followers of the Path of Inspiration are humans and Chosen. Farmers, tradespersons, and merchants—these people are convinced that the Inspired, through the spirits that installed them, hold a great vision for the rebirth of the world. Failing to obey the requirements of that vision endangers the spiritual health of everyone. Thus, worshipers follow orders without hesitation and are highly intolerant of any who question authority or speculate on the nature of these near-divine beings. Riedrans are willing to die in the service of their overlords and fight to the death in battle.

The Inspired and Government

Within Riedra, of course, the Inspired *are* the government. The few in Riedra who do not obey these nobles have long since died, left the land, or hidden themselves to carry on their resistance or preferred practices.

The Inspired have begun to send ambassadors to the nations of Khorvaire. Although conquest is their true goal, this diplomatic exercise lets them gather information on the resources of their targets. At the same time, agents of the Dreaming Dark have infiltrated every rank of society in Khorvaire's larger cities, nudging public opinion here, supporting or eliminating key figures there.

Riedran emissaries receive a warm welcome from most governments, although only one nation has entered into a treaty with the Inspired—Q'barra's King Sebastes eagerly accepted their offers of assistance in pacifying his frontier land. In general, other rulers hearken to these exotic foreigners, whose beautiful appearance and reassuring words are difficult to resist, and whose resources have proven most useful as the nations recover from the Last War. Still, Khorvaire's leaders are not in the thrall of the emissaries' religious fervor and telepathic conditioning. Sarlona represents a great unknown that the governments of Khorvaire wish to learn more about before committing to diplomatic relations. Dreaming Dark agents are attempting to apply appropriate conditioning where it does the most good, but this might take as many centuries as the ultimate conquest of

Riedra did. Quori have the patience of immortal spirits. They can wait.

The Inspired are wary of other powerful, supernatural forces. Dragons remember the quori invasion that shattered the realm of giants, as well as the dragon magic that exiled Dal Quor. Lords of Riedra know that their psionic powers are vulnerable to draconic sorcery. So concerned are the Inspired that they might be willing to eliminate this threat by any means. However, the Inspired also know of and fear the great rajahs that sleep under Sarlona, and they would never trust any force allied with such beings. In fact, the Inspired could be a force for "good" against organizations such as the Lords of Dust and the Cults of the Dragon Below. Inspired might employ or aid heroes who oppose dragons or fiends.

The Inspired and Other Faiths

Those who worship dragons as living gods are especially hostile toward the Inspired, because they see the Inspired as relative newcomers who presume to challenge the obvious divinity of the dragons, and because the Inspired are enemies of magic. However, most such worshipers (Seren barbarians and Q'barran lizardfolk) live in a state of savagery, knowing little of the outside world and the threat of the Inspired. Some of the wiser dragons, mostly those of the Chamber, are gradually revealing this danger to the dragon-worshipers.

The Lords of Dust that know the true nature of the Inspired view the puppets of the quori as even more foolish than mortals who truck with fiends, for the rajahs truly are near-divine beings (some rakshasas see themselves similarly), not just parasites occupying human bodies. Rakshasas envy and hate the quori and the Inspired for being able, to some degree, to accomplish what they have not. A knowledgeable rakshasa might arouse heroes to action against the Riedran overlords.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE INSPIRED

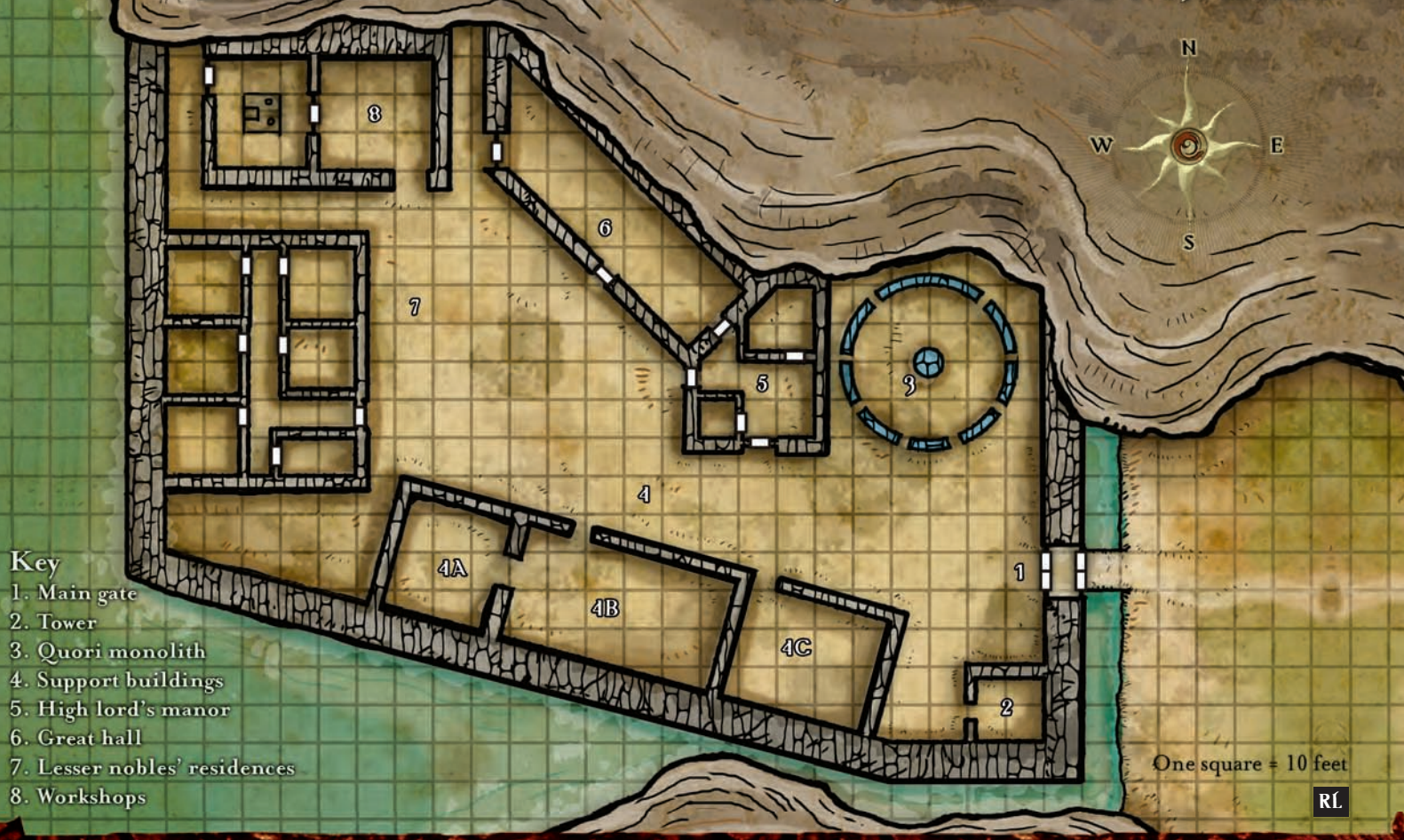
The monoliths that dot the Riedran landscape are tools of Inspired control over their empire, but to the worshipful population, they are sacred monuments that hold the spirits of the dead until they move on to a new existence or are reborn. Many but not all of these monoliths stand near or within the Inspired fortresses. In addition to the annual Feast of the Founding, held at the feet of the local *hanbalani*, worshipers sometimes

QUORI RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Although they would not describe it as such, the reverence the quori hold for the darkness within the Dal Quor has typical features of a religion. The quori have faith in reincarnation, they acknowledge intelligence and power greater than theirs, and they hope that acts of service can influence the Dreaming Dark. Indeed, the Devourer of Dreams is seen as the prophet of *il-Lashtavar*—one who can help lesser quori communicate

directly with the Dreaming Dark. The quori use the Inspired to transform Eberron, bringing it into closer alignment with Dal Quor and fulfilling the destiny of the Dark. If an Inspired becomes a cleric, she gives her devotion to *il-Lashtavar*, not the Path of Inspiration. The Dark is lawful evil, and its domains are Law, Evil, and Shadow. Its favored weapon is the mind blade.

INSPIRED COMPLEX



travel to a nearby monolith to offer special prayers and wishes for success. The Inspired tacitly encourage such activities, since even the minute amount of psychic energy from an individual's worship becomes significant when multiplied.

The monoliths serve an even darker purpose—they are anchors for Dal Quor and can eventually align Eberron completely with the Region of Dreams. The convergence might be irreversible. It is also possible, however, that the quori's meddling could have unforeseen consequences.

Inspired Complex

A typical fortress-complex of the Inspired serves as a gathering point for the Feast of the Founding. It includes a monolith, where minor religious observances sometimes take place. Riedran citizens perform much of the guard duty and mundane work. They are extremely loyal to their Inspired masters and follow orders without question.

This complex is on the eastern shore of the large lake in the center of Sarlona. Rugged hills and steep cliffs that serve as natural defenses enclose it. A psionically reinforced high stone wall encloses the areas bordering the lake. A water-filled ditch, dug from the lakeshore, helps defend the eastern side of the complex.

1. Main Gate. This is usually open so that worshippers and local villagers can enter the complex to offer prayers at or take shelter near the monolith.

2. Tower. A guard tower keeps watch over the approach road. The walls facing outward are pierced by

loopholes for ranged attacks (often psionic). A conventional ballista rests on the rooftop.

3. Quori Monolith. Within 600 feet of this structure, psionic powers are enhanced as if under the effect of the Empower Psionics feat. This still requires a user to spend 2 extra power points and expend her psionic focus. At its center is a glowing crystal column that acts as a 17-point cognizance crystal (Expanded Psionics Handbook 167). See *Explorer's Handbook* 132 for information on quori monoliths.

4. Support Buildings. This group of structures contains essential supplies. The stables (4a) can hold a dozen mounts, mostly for use by Riedran scouts who patrol the region. An armory (4b) is for storage and soldiers' weaponry. Adjacent to this is the workshop and forge, for crafting and repairing weapons and armor, as well as shoeing mounts. Because of the Inspired prohibition against magic, no artificers work here, only smiths, leatherworkers, and the like.

5. High Lord's Manor. The quori high lord (female Inspired telepath 10) inhabits this well-fortified and sumptuously appointed residence. During the Feast of the Founding, she stands on the roof to present herself in her full glory to the assembled crowd. The building connects to the great hall.

6. Great Hall. This great chamber hosts feasts for the area's nobility and visiting Inspired. These events are not open to the Riedran population, not even the priests. During the Feast of the Founding, Inspired gather here to bask in the heightened psychic energy.

7. Lesser Nobles' Residences. The lower-ranking nobles of the region have quarters here. Many have manors in the countryside as well. They stay in these quarters only when summoned by the high lord or during festivals. A guard tower in the northwest corner overlooks the coastline and is surmounted by a ballista.

8. Workshops. These buildings, reserved for the use of Inspired, support psionic research and the creation of psionic items. A side room also serves as a place of quiet meditation on the Dreaming Dark, especially during its wakeful cycles.

The Inspired in the Last War

For centuries, Riedra had no contact with Khorvaire. But the outbreak of the Last War brought the Inspired to its shores, both as traders and as secret operatives. Even as Inspired merchants began to sell exotic foodstuffs and open up relations with the warring nations, the quori laid their plans of conquest, sending Dreaming Dark agents across Khorvaire. These operatives studied their prey carefully and began to exert influence, both psionically and through selective assassination and manipulation. Meanwhile, the beautiful Inspired emissaries charmed their way into courts and assemblies. They swayed leaders and populations toward attitudes that would lead to more bloodshed, in the hope that a continent shattered by conflict would be easy to overwhelm. Khorvaire suffered terrible upheavals and could have quickly fallen, but the Day of Mourning was a catastrophe unexpected even by the quori. Suddenly, the war was over, the squabbling nations horrified into negotiating a treaty. Now that Khorvaire has fragmented into a dozen young states, the Inspired are pursuing opportunities in those that seem most malleable.

THE PATH OF LIGHT

The quori Taratai was the foremost among rebellious thinkers who believed that the *Quor Tarai* was not the proper state of being. The Dream of the Age has been reborn three times and, according to scholars, will continue to pass away and rise again. Each rebirth destroys the living quori and gives rise to an entirely new generation. Taratai found that these rebirths swung between two poles. The current incarnation of the *Quor Tarai* contains a heart of darkness, but the next should be light. She became the speaker for those who rejected the Dreaming Dark, and she urged them to work toward that blessed transformation. But the servants of the Dark had no desire to see an end of their world and set about eliminating all the rebels, forcing the kalashtar into exile.

Every one of Taratai's hosts has perished, although the ultimate fate of her spirit is unknown. The kalashtar mourn her as one dead, but most followers of the Path of Light believe that she is still bound somehow to the Dream and can help to effect its rebirth. Believers

have continued to practice and to spread her teachings. Only through cultivating the Great Light, *il-Yannah*, can the adherents to the Path save the world from an eternity of nightmare and evil. Devotion to this principle even inspires divine magic in some.

SERVANTS OF THE LIGHT

In Khorvaire, those who follow *il-Yannah* are almost entirely kalashtar, although a few other beings are also drawn to the idea of a universal force of positive energy and purity of spirit. In Adar, most people show at least some respect to the Path of Light.

The kalashtar race was born of the quest for the Light, and they remain devoted to the principle with every fiber of their being. Many of the followers of *il-Yannah* are known as lightbringers (*yannahsur*), and these persons spend much of their time meditating and taking small but positive actions to reinforce the Light. Others not only meditate, but also train within the fortress-monasteries of Adar for the ongoing battle with the Inspired, or actively seek out agents of the Dreaming Dark in Khorvaire. These are the shadow watchers (*sheshantol*). Those with the strongest personalities and the finest talents often become leaders in the quest for the Light. They become priests known as *yannahilath*—light-speakers. Some of these priests are clerics, but most are psions of advanced ability.

All kalashtar seem unnaturally beautiful. They radiate a sense of grace and calm, particularly the lightbringers, who reflect the Light within. Path of Light priests are as far beyond the other faithful as ordinary kalashtar are beyond humans, fairly glowing with their dedication and powerful psionic abilities.

Many devotees to the Path of Light carry a small quartz crystal, usually on a fine chain about the neck. Among psions, this often doubles as a psicrystal. The priests bear distinctive, swooping headbands studded with crystals, which are often power crystals made from Siberys shards, and might have other crystalline adornments on their clothing. These visible tokens of the Light are openly displayed only among kalashtar or within a protected area such as Adar. Followers who mingle with nonbelievers take great care to blend in, even as they promote the Light, lest they be noticed and taken by the agents of the Dreaming Dark.

Becoming a Priest

To lead others along the Path of Light requires more than great devotion or force of personality. Such a leader must be able to change reality. Not quite as daunting as it sounds, "changing reality" can mean something as simple as performing good works that transform a neighborhood. Most priests of the Light, though, take office upon attaining expertise in a

discipline of psionic or martial training (in game terms, reaching 5th or higher level). The rare cleric who draws inspiration from *il-Yannah* usually becomes a priest.



The brilliant crystal represents the purity of il-Yannah and its reflection in all beings

In Khorvaire, a potential priest is usually a kalashtar, but extraordinary individuals of other races might be so honored. Humans are often priests of the Path of Light in Adar, and even dromites and other races of Sarlona have joined the Path. Such a person must be nominated by an unrelated believer in the Path of Light and must then be seconded by an active priest—even among enlightened folk, a few promote personal agendas over the common good. A council of elder priests (as many as are available) then interviews the candidate and conducts a thorough psionic examination, with the candidate's permission. Afterward, they confer telepathically on the candidate's merits, then announce the acceptance or rejection of the nominee.

The responsibilities of a lightspeaker are few but burdensome. She must lead the fight against darkness, whatever form it takes. The militant shadow watchers are usually expert psychic warriors, atavists (*Races of Eberron* 133), or fists of Zuoken (*Expanded Psionics Handbook* 144), who lead strike teams against selected agents of the quori. Other priests, particularly those who are lightbringers, are teachers and masters of mental discipline who teach the deep meditations that they believe strengthen *il-Yannah* and work toward the coming new age. A lightspeaker runs a special risk because her role makes her visible, and therefore a prime target for Inspired attacks.

Hierarchy

The most powerful lightspeakers all dwell within Adar, protected by natural fortifications, capricious storms, and well-defended monasteries. There they lead the war against darkness through regular meditation. They focus their energies together on establishing a zone of peace and harmony right at the heart of Riedra. As this "bubble" of the Light grows, it saps the current *Quor Tarai* of strength and begins to transform it for the next incarnation. The lightbringers believe this is the most direct, effective attack against their enemies. It has the additional benefit of counteracting the monoliths' tightening of the connection to Dal Quor.

Because they spend most of their time in such meditation, the high priests do not often communicate with others. When they do, it is only on matters of critical importance. They telepathically contact those they need to speak with, if possible, or they contact those who pass the word to other followers or to the intended receiver.

IL-YANNAH (THE PATH OF LIGHT)

Lawful Neutral

Those who follow the Path of Light gain divine inspiration from its principles, revering the positive force they call *il-Yannah*.

Portfolio: Light, compassion, discipline, psionics, righteous action.

Domains: Balance‡, Law, Meditation*, Mentalism‡, Protection.

Favored Weapon: Unarmed strike.

Beyond the borders of Adar, individual priests carry on the secret war in whatever way seems best to them. No dogma or strict religious offices exist. Each priest has the same duties that all followers of the Light ascribe to—bringing in the Light.

Fallen Priests

Should a lightspeaker somehow turn away from the Light, that person becomes an object of both pity and fear among the followers of the Path. Madness is surely the cause of such folly. When it happens, every other priest knows within moments of its discovery. Such a person is a threat, because the tainted one can influence the positive consciousness created by meditations on *il-Yannah*. A fallen priest is immediately cut off from all mental contact as a preventive measure—shadow watchers and lightspeakers are charged with seeking out and eliminating the danger. Elimination often requires killing a fallen lightspeaker, but the shadow watchers avoid this if possible. Lightspeakers would rather not lose a soul if it can be redeemed, so they first attempt to capture the renegade and mend any wrong thinking.

A fallen lightspeaker who manages to evade discovery and capture can cause tremendous damage. Such a one might become a priest of another faith. Or, worse, she might continue to act as an underground priest of the Light while contaminating the spirits of ignorant followers. A soul that has gone over completely to the darkness reinforces the Dreaming Dark and might expose other practitioners of the Path to danger. Such a one must be destroyed.

Quests

Every moment of a lightspeaker's life is a quest for the purification of the Dream of the Age. But some seek out new knowledge that can further this ultimate goal. The path of the atavist, begun by Soserath the seer, has led to great advances in regaining and strengthening the bond between kalashtar and quori. His research dealt with finding a way to fully incarnate quori spirits devoted to the Light. Thus, some devotees of the Path of Light take levels in the atavist prestige class (*Races of Eberron* 133).

A very few clerics of *il-Yannah* sometimes embark on a different but related quest—discovering a divine connection between the gods and the Great Light. Many note the parallels between their faith and that of the Silver Flame. Some of these priests make pilgrimages to Flamekeep, and if they are allowed to do so, they meditate in the presence of the Silver Flame in the hope of further revelation.

Practical quests require defeating the agents of the Inspired and the Dreaming Dark. Some lightspeakers are brave warriors who strike directly against Riedran holdings or agents of the Dark in Khorvaire. Many such lightspeakers are bright lights indeed, burning out much too quickly.

rites and rituals of the path of light

The Path of Light is at once intensely personal and selflessly altruistic. This seeming contradiction vanishes through understanding its purpose. Survival

demands that the lightspeakers keep their devotion hidden, for enemies are everywhere—and those enemies can sometimes sense the light within. Yet spreading the Light demands that the priests do good works, understand their neighbors, and encourage more such behavior. The lightspeakers are very humble in this duty, and this is not only because being noticed can mean death.

Prayers

Lightspeakers do not utter spoken prayers to *il-Yannah*. For one thing, most do not believe it to be an entity that can answer requests. More practically, open practice of the faith exposes them to detection. However, they spend virtually all their free time in contemplation of the Light, and undertake each action with it in mind. In a way, everything a lightspeaker does is a prayer.

Those who find divine inspiration in the Light don't ask for intervention (for they know that the Light is within), but they do give thanks. They do so silently, as a conscious moment of thought, and sometimes share a brief prayer with another follower during mental contact. They also offer prayers for the safety of Taratai's soul, wherever it exists, in the hope that it might one day find its way back into the Light.

Minor Rites

Each of the sixty-six quori whose spirits still survive in the kalashtar has a five-day period of remembrance in its honor. Four of these are set aside for contemplation of the ancestor—a member of that lineage spends

more time than usual meditating, and the meditation is deeper. Some lightspeakers remain awake throughout this time and spend the extra hours in discussion with others of their lineage. The apex day of this period is a formal Day of Remembrance observance (see Major Rites, below).

With so few members in a typical kalashtar enclave, not many lines are represented. A very large population might have ten different quori ancestors. Thus, the community's lightspeakers commemorate each along with the actual descendants, regardless of their lineage.

Many adherents also practice a minor ritual, *sheshan talarash dasyannah*, which translates loosely as "the path of shadows." This martial arts exercise can prepare a warrior for battle or focus the thoughts for intensive meditation. Many common folk in Adar know bits of the path of shadows or perform it in a stylized way, but they do practice it.

Major Rites

All lightspeakers of a given quori line observe the apex Day of Remembrance for that spirit in communal gatherings. Celebrants ritually

WM purify their bodies and their residences with water and by burning sweet herbs. This makes their minds more receptive than normal to psionic communication. Some celebrations use physical foci to amplify the mental state, such as a roomful of lit candles or the

gentle tinkling of a fountain or chimes. Those with the necessary abilities, such as *remote viewing*, can even participate from a distance. Although low-key, the apex Day of Remembrance is the most public display of the Path



The Void of Taratai commemorates the loss of the Path's founder and reminds the followers of the Path that they walk in the Light because of her

of Light. Community members share thoughtsongs and story circles, remembering their ancestors and promising to honor them with specific devotional acts. The lightspeakers of the enclave lead the thoughtsongs if they have such ability, or they lend psychic strength to the performance if they do not.

Apex observances go on for 24 hours. When they conclude, the participants are fatigued both physically and mentally. After breaking the fast with a light meal, they spend most of the next day in deep, dreamless sleep.

The most solemn observance for all dreamers is the five-day period originally designated in remembrance of Taratai. With the utter destruction of her line, this is instead a time of mourning called the Void of Taratai. Lightspeakers gather the community, much as they do for an apex day, but they do so for the entire Void. In this dark time, the priests of *il-Yannah* lend their spiritual energy to the entire community. Their devotion to the Light sustains all, as they manifest *sustenance*, *share pain*, and similar soothing powers for those in need, often using *metaconcert*. As the participants remember Taratai, the lightspeakers remind them that they walk within the Light and that even the spirit of Taratai could be reborn in the new era to come.

The Calendar

In the private lives of all kalashtar and lightspeakers, wherever they live, a year consists of sixty-seven periods of five days each. Each ancestor quori has five of its own Days of Remembrance, with the Void of Taratai coming last in the sequence. This calendar was established just after the exodus, when the fugitive quori fled into Adar, and it did not take into account the regular celestial events of Eberron.

Among the people of Adar and Khorvaire, the kalashtar use the usual calendar. They still practice Days of Remembrance, but these days shift in the year to keep time with a cycle that doesn't contain 335 days. Only the Void of Taratai observances are regular in Adar and Khorvaire, set when the last of Taratai's line disappeared from Adar—at the end of Zarantyr and the beginning of Olarune. The other Days of Remembrance are observed privately as they occur, except when they overlap the Void. Any such period is interrupted by those five days, restarting after they end.

THE PATH OF LIGHT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Every kalashtar is troubled by a conflict within her very nature. On the one hand, her soul is descended from a quori spirit—an alien child of Dal Quor, even though it is a rebel against the Dark. Its thoughts intrude upon her consciousness, and their strangeness can send her human mind over the edge into madness. The Path of Light is the most common way to achieve balance between these disparate souls and build the inner calm so important to survival in the secret war. More than that, it is a common bond among kalashtar, one through which they can sense each other and work together toward the greater good. The most sensitive among them walk the Path to become more aware of the shadows, to call out a warning before their enemies can grow too strong.

The Path of Light and Government

Kalashtar do not usually speak to other races about their ancient, secret war. They can even be arrogant, believing that such “lesser” people can't understand the enormity of their struggle. The practical needs of survival dictate silence as well.

The arcane authorities in Aundair and Karrnath distrust the kalashtar and their alien mental powers. If they knew the truth, they would fear the Inspired more. Kalashtar and the lightspeakers prefer to conduct their war in their own way, but they value informed allies. Occasionally, this means the lightspeakers or shadow watchers provide information to other forces for good. Such information is reliable and discreet, and it can rarely be traced to its source.

A few lightspeakers and shadow watchers have established a small outpost in the Demon Wastes, near the watch posts of the Maruk Ghaash'kala. They come to learn about *Kalok Shash*, the binding flame, and its possible connection to the Silver Flame. Their interest goes beyond the merely academic, and they use divine magic to assist the barbarian warriors in their struggles against the fiends of the wastes.

The Path of Light and Other Faiths

As mentioned earlier, the Silver Flame and the *Kalok Shash* fascinate some scholarly lightspeakers. Clerics of those religions have differing attitudes to this idea, ranging from outright hostility among the Pure Flame to calculating appraisal by Ghaash'kala, who welcome any available weapon against the fiends. Other devotees of the Path of Light find this fascination strange and believe it distracts from the true struggle.

The lightspeakers don't have much interest in other faiths. However, they recognize the value of religion as a way to strengthen a community, and they often participate in holidays or festivals to blend in better. They do learn about the pantheons and other cults, of course, just as they study anything else about their adopted society.

Followers of the Path of Light are horrified by the travesty of religion that the Inspired have established in Riedra. They fear that, beyond the enslavement of innocent souls, this system strengthens the power of *il-Lashtavar*. Priests of the Path of Inspiration are often strategic targets for Adaran shadow watchers.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE LIGHT

In Khorvaire, followers of the Path of Light do not build temples. The only shrines to the Light are those within the minds of its followers. Personal quarters double as meditation chambers but do not display any obvious religious function.

Fortified monasteries in Adar are home to powerful lightspeakers. These sanctuaries of the Light allow them to devote all their energies to meditation and purification of the Dream of the Age. The people of Adar also build shrines within their villages. Reaching Adar is nearly impossible, for a powerful psionic barrier (the Shroud; see page 139 of *Explorer's Handbook*) and forbidding mountains defend that land. The fortresses of Adar do have means to allow teleportation into a fortress, but this method is secret and rarely used.

Orders and Monasteries

Most followers of the Light fall into one of two categories, depending on their attitude toward the secret war. Lightbringers comprise the majority, and they believe in strengthening *il-Yannah* through active mental exercise. Shadow watchers are a militant minority who are convinced that simply waiting for the turning of the age is not enough. They take the fight directly to the Inspired wherever they can.

Within Adar's fortresses, elite monks train for war against the darkness. Many of these monks develop psionic or magical ability to complement their physical training. A large number of them take levels in the fist of Zuoken prestige class (*Expanded Psionics Handbook* 144), which they name fist of the Light. Adar is home to other forms of martial mysticism as well.

VARIANT SECTS

A small number of kalashtar are neither evil nor insane, but they don't follow the Path of Light. Some call themselves dreamwalkers, professing that the *il-Lashtavar* is not a force of evil. It is incomprehensible to nonquori, and its alien nature is deeply disturbing to them, but its purpose is not active malice. The dreamwalkers study the Dreaming Dark in the hope of making it more understandable to all. In this way, kalashtar can once again take their place within Dal Quor as true quori spirits, and the warring halves of their people can be reunited.

Kalashtar do not dream, for dreams would take them to Dal Quor, a place still hostile to them. But the dreamwalkers retrace the steps of the exodus, when Taratai led the rebel quori through mortal dreams, to find a way to skirt the edges of the Dreaming Dark without being consumed by it. They also hope to find the lost spirit of Taratai, which they believe remains trapped somewhere in the dreaming. Sometimes a dreamwalker loses her way and becomes isolated, so others also seek their lost colleagues. Those who can be rescued from Dal Quor might have valuable information to impart concerning its nature.

THE PATH OF LIGHT IN THE LAST WAR

Kalashtar who live among the people of Khorvaire were affected by and participated in the Last War along with their neighbors. The Path of Light played no active role in the war, but its followers paid especially careful attention to the machinations of the Inspired during that time.

THE CULTS OF THE DRAGON BELOW

Western Khorvaire was twisted long ago into a dark, dangerous land by the invasion of the daelkyr. The conquerors from Xoriat laid waste to cities and corrupted the inhabitants into foul abominations that still wander the deep places of the world. Using magic taught to them by the dragon Vvaraak, the Gatekeepers finally sealed the planar portal and drove the daelkyr into the depths of Khyber. But the Dhakaani Empire had been shattered by the war, and the orcs and goblinoids degenerated into scattered clans.

The Shadow Marches are still scarred by that war, and remnants of the horrors it unleashed yet lurk there. Roughly half the orc inhabitants still follow a simple, rustic lifestyle and continue to observe the druidic traditions of the Gatekeepers.

Most of the others practice strange worship collectively known as the Cults of the Dragon Below. Despite the all-inclusive name, these cults have nothing in common beyond devotion to the darkly insane forces within Khyber. They do not communicate with one another, and indeed they might have completely opposite aims.

From this origin, the cults spread across Khorvaire and beyond. Any community that gives reverence to dark forces, particularly those purported to be buried deep in the earth, could be deemed to support a cult of the Dragon Below. Aside from their dark heart, Dargon Below worshipers are as varied as

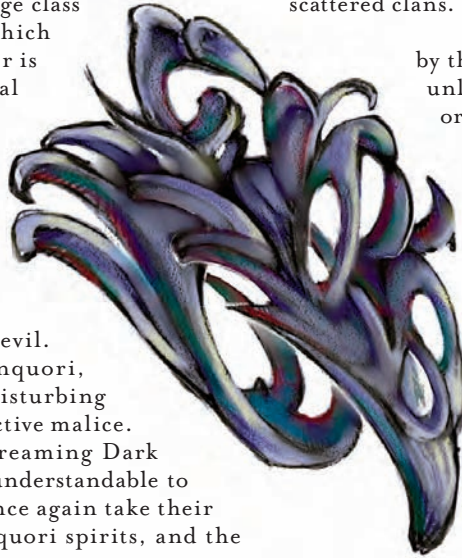
the forms of evil.

SERVANTS OF THE DRAGON BELOW

The cults' followers might be wild-eyed maniacs or disturbingly serene. Some give themselves over completely to evil, violence, and terror, while others cannot see the insanity behind their beliefs, convinced that they serve a greater good. Most have been so psychically scarred that only insanity makes any sense—it is even comforting.

Every cult priest has her own interpretation of worship and her own ideas of how to demonstrate faith. One might demand that every follower remove a finger. Another might insist that the road to paradise is paved with cannibalistic feasts. Another might call on worshipers to give up all material wealth, or conversely to acquire as much as possible.

Among the savage peoples (mostly orcs and some half-orcs), madness is seen as a path to power. For them, barbarian rage is the purest expression of the warrior spirit, and insanity is the quickest way to achieve it. Not many use divine magic, and those who do are uncivilized casters such as adepts and favored souls. The more civilized clans incorporate myriad human and orc beliefs, each with its own idea of how to bond with the Dragon Below. Though they might war with each other over their



The usual symbol of the Dragon Below is a mockery of a dragonmark, a dark and twisted shape that echoes the madness of the cultists.

interpretations, all respect the power of aberrations, which they treat as the high priests of Khyber. These clans are more likely to use cleric magic, but they always choose the Madness domain.

These cultists are to be pitied more than hated. Unfortunately, their insane devotion makes them dangerously unpredictable, and their ideas of worship can be inimical to life.

Becoming a Priest

A new cult can arise at any time. All it takes is a charismatic personality who can persuade others to listen to her ideas. An aura of madness surrounds such people, and they readily attract disturbed or damaged followers.

As well, a powerful aberration might found a cult to accomplish some purpose. Those with mind-control abilities, such as aboleths, mind flayers, and lesser daelkyr, are the most likely candidates. Their followers need not understand why they obey—they simply must. They might revere the horror directly, or they might be under its control from a distance, enrap-tured by a normal-seeming priest who passes on the true master's directives.

Some cultists believe the only true priests of the Dragon Below are aberrations. If a humanoid leader arises, she must prove her worth by becoming physically monstrous in some way. The usual method is by acquiring an aberration graft or a symbiont (*ECS* 298).

Hierarchy

With such a variety of unrelated cults, there can be no organized priestly hierarchy. Instead, each group has its own organization. That might include detailed ranks, a ruling conclave, pure anarchy, but most often features a dictatorial leader with the power to enforce her every whim.

Fallen Priests

Cults of the Dragon Below rise and fall unpredictably. Just as a charismatic preacher might suddenly appear from the wilderness and gather followers to her, another might be torn apart at the very hands of those she converted. A priest can fall from grace in a moment—all it takes is for followers to question her motives or actions. This does not usually happen as a result of commands that go too far; true believers are capable of justifying the most terrible acts. But if a human priest acts out of

character, or shows hesitation, followers might see weakness of conviction. In such a case, someone else might arise to claim he is the true voice of Khyber and challenge the leader. This usually is a fight to the death, but a resourceful priest sometimes escapes, nursing a grudge and plotting her vengeful return. More often than not, such a fallen priest seeks out a powerful aberration, which is happy to accept her service for the opportunity to extend its own power.

Quests

Madness is the one defining trait of the Cults of the Dragon Below. Whatever a leader's purpose might be, many set bizarre goals for their followers and even for themselves. Sometimes these quests have an internal logic, even if it makes no sense to an observer. For example, one cult collects the eyes of everyone who has seen a particular sacred object or site, in the belief that no one but themselves have the right to behold it, and that the eyes contain power from the sight. The eyes might be eaten or be stored in a central item of worship. In other cases, quests are more like psychotic compulsions, such as painting every other brick in a building green.

An aberration usually sets up a cult for a specific purpose, such as the attempt to create a Xoriat manifest zone. In these cases, the cultists pursue activities that contribute to this ultimate goal, even though the tasks seem nonsensical. An individual might be sent to gather body parts, or measure every doorway in the district.

The mad leaders of individual cults are always pursuing greater knowledge of or closeness to Khyber or Xoriat. They drive themselves relentlessly in their chosen quests, so that if they were not entirely mad when they began, any remaining sanity is soon abandoned. The insane nature of these quests guarantees that they can never be completed.

rites and rituals of the dragon below

With such a variety of cults, religious activity can comprise anything imaginable, and plenty of things beyond imagination.

Prayers

Psychotic affliction is common among followers of the Dragon Below, and this can manifest in habits of speech. A worshiper who is convinced that the name of his god is sacred could speak it all the time (logomania) or refuse to say a given word or phrase, substituting a more acceptable term instead. Nonsensical chants, speaking in tongues, and constant muttering can all take the place of traditional prayer. A worshiper who is reasonably sane, though, offers up prayers to his god just as anyone else does.

Minor Rites

Ritual bonds a group, whether its purpose is religious or otherwise. The priest of a given cult typically prescribes certain ritual behavior to demonstrate loyalty and reinforce obedience. Its exact form, of course, varies from one cult to the next.

CULTS OF THE DRAGON BELOW

Neutral Evil

The various Cults of the Dragon Below have little in common, but their clerics and adepts find crazed inspiration from their worship.

Portfolio: Glory, insanity, conquest, darkness, aberrations.

Domains: Corruption (*Book of Vile Darkness* 80), Cavern†, Darkness‡, Dragon Below*, Earth, Evil, Greed‡, Madness*, Pact‡, Pain (*Book of Vile Darkness* 81), Pestilence‡, Summoner‡.

Favored Weapon: Heavy pick.

Major Rites

As with minor rituals, each cult's leader prescribes and sets any major rites. Some cults observe no great festivals, especially if their work requires secrecy. Those led by megamaniacal priests might go in for big, showy rituals complete with all the clichéd trimmings: drums, robes and hoods, smoking torches, obsidian knives, and so on.

CULTS OF THE DRAGON BELOW IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The exact number of cults is unknown and constantly changing, so any given community can contain worshipers, even of multiple competing cults. Despite the insanity that underlies any such faith, a follower need not appear mad. Some cultists are still in control of their faculties to some extent and can disguise their impulses so as to "pass" in everyday society. Some are not even crazy themselves—at least, not yet—but believe fervently in the illogical premises of their cult. These are the most dangerous cultists, capable of persuading others to their way of thinking and difficult to discover.

Cults of the Dragon Below and Government

No one cult is a real threat to the stability of Khorvaire, but their sheer number and their obscurity make them collectively dangerous. An influential political figure might secretly serve an abomination from Khyber, and could be doing so in the certainty that it is for the greater good. Even more frightening is the possibility that untainted leaders are being influenced by agendas peddled from the shadows and presented by trusted advisors as reasonable policy.

Certainly, the nations bordering the Shadow Marches are concerned about the influence of the cults. The Eldeen druids are always on the watch for renewed activity by the minions of madness. In Darguun, the Lhesh Haruuc fears that other chieftains hoping to consolidate power when he dies might turn to the Dragon Below. The scattered power bases of Droaam could easily tip in favor of one who allies with the dark powers.

For the most part, the "civilized" nations of Khorvaire underestimate the danger posed by these cults. The Shadow Marches are a long way off, and few people care much about the well-being of a monstrous kingdom or a scarcely populated wilderness. The most forward-thinking rulers, such as Aurala of Aundair, Boranel of Breland, and especially Kaius of Karrnath, are watchful for corruption in their courts, but most of the young nations are too caught up in recovering from the Last War to see the hidden danger from within. It is fortunate that the cults work at cross-purposes so often.

Cults of the Dragon Below and Other Faiths

Each cult has its own set of beliefs, and its followers see even other cultists of the Dragon Below as wrong-headed or worse. Random groups that spring up under influential humanoids usually do not interact with other faiths at all. The more insidious danger comes from those cults

with abomination leaders. These intelligent creatures sometimes infiltrate a legitimate religion with their cultists to take advantage of its influence.

It is relatively easy to insert a devotee of the Dragon Below into the followers of a dark god dedicated to primal impulses, such as the Devourer, the Fury, or the Mockery. Average people, who might offer a prayer to avert ill fortune from the god, are not likely to notice a change in the church's leadership, and the interests of true believers coincide—at least for a time.

Corrupting worshipers of a "good" religion such as that of the Shining Host is harder, but can reap much greater rewards. Such faiths usually have close connections with the rulership of a city, province, or nation, and open the door to greater influence by the cult.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE DRAGON BELOW

The cultists skulk in hidden places, whether isolated hummocks within the Shadow Marches, basements of noble manors, or abandoned warehouses on decaying waterfronts. Their temples fill these secret lairs, usually cobbled together from materials at hand, although a wealthy patron or priest can afford expensive furnishings.

All aspects of the Cults of the Dragon Below can be better understood by reference to the particulars of one cult. To that end, the Mourning Circle is discussed in detail.

The Mourning Circle

Erlomel d'Tharashk (male daelkyr half-blood telepath 12; see page 37 of *Magic of Eberron*) was born with a dreadful physical deformity and displayed signs of mental instability in youth. Rejected by his family and unable to hold a position within the House, his behavior grew more and more erratic until he left the Shadow Marches for Sharn. There he has been living in the undercity for some time.

Using the benefits of his own lesser Mark of Finding, the libraries of Margrave University, and human agents who came under his control, he studied the history of the city, hoping to find clues that would lead to ancient sources of power. He learned all he could about the Closed Circle of wizardry, which had been destroyed for its blasphemous study in 641 YK, and became convinced the wizards had still had a base in Sharn. He eventually located a ruined complex in the slum district of Khyber's Gate, so buried beneath the rubble of later generations that its existence was completely hidden.

All the arcane laboratories had been smashed—the Pure Flame crusaders had burned every foul tome they could find, then cleansed the spot with a *hallow* spell. But in their zeal, they had overlooked a trove of research notes, stored in an extraplanar vault. The wizards were long dead, but Erlomel used his psionic detection abilities to glimpse the past and discern the secret of opening the vault. At present, he is absorbing as much of their forbidden knowledge as he can. To that end, he founded the Mourning Circle so that he would have a steady supply of experimental subjects and willing soldiers.

Erlomel styles himself both high priest and incarnation of the Dragon Below, having bonded with a shadow sibling (*Magic of Eberron* 156) as a result of his tainted ancestry. His word is law, but most often that “word” is a psionic command. He has also been attempting to create breed leeches (*Magic of Eberron* 154) to transform his female cultists into the mothers of daelkyr halfbloods, but the research notes are garbled, slowing his progress.

A handful of favored servants (in reality, thralls) act as Mourning Circle underpriests. These followers have been “blessed” with symbionts by their high priest. There are currently four, each of whom is responsible for directing specific cult activities: Bronwen Sor’ilah (female human sorcerer 7) selects subjects for experimentation and sports a spellworm; Antonin d’Tharashk (male human rogue 5/spymaster 3; see page 76 of *Complete Adventurer*) manages intelligence-gathering, assisted by his tongueworm; Ghaarsh’t (male half-orc barbarian 2/fighter 3) is in charge of recruitment and discipline, and wears a crawling gauntlet; and Severin vil Orandor (male human cleric 6), who maintains the temple proper and conducts rituals, benefits from a tentacle whip.

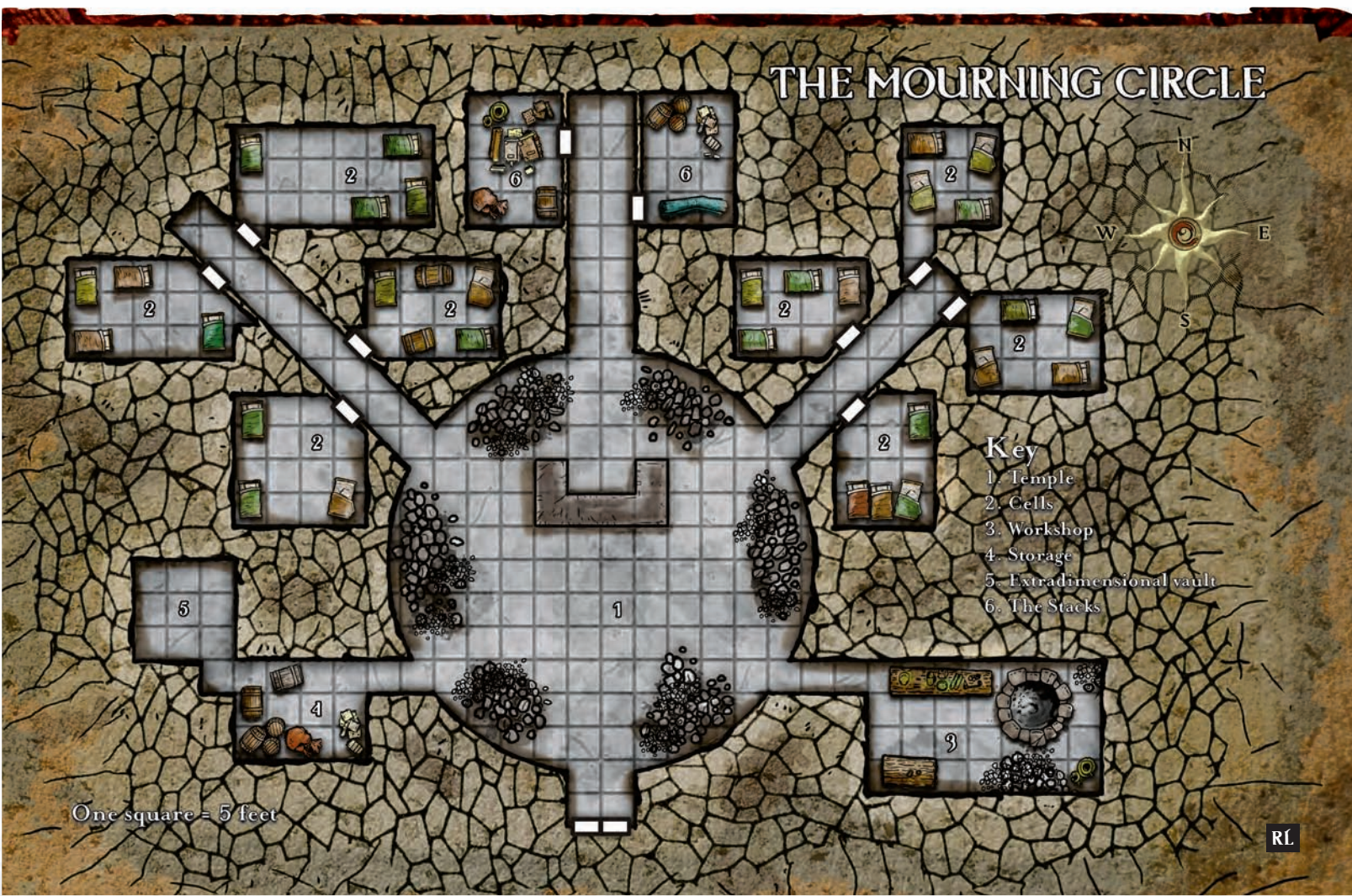
Most of Erlomel’s followers are shattered refugees from Cyre, to whom the crazed worship of the Dragon Below provides some comfort in lives gone mad. They believe that a new future awaits within the underworld and do not question the strange tasks set them by their master. This human flotsam drifts unnoticed in the slums of Sharn’s undercity, the eyes and ears of Erlomel and his recruiting agents.

The Mourning Circle observes two major holidays, both anniversaries: that of the Closed Circle’s destruction and that of its rediscovery by Erlomel. The date of destruction is marked with songs of lamentation. Cultists carry lit candles to the temple and stand in a circle, then extinguish the lights to represent the loss of the wizards’ knowledge. Flagellation is featured. In contrast, the ceremony of rediscovery is a joyous, even hedonistic festival. On this day, worthy followers receive grafts and symbionts, and new members are welcomed into the cult. The high priest himself leads songs of praise and hope for the glorious future.

1. Temple. Erlomel has converted the original library of the Closed Circle into a makeshift temple to his own glory. The process is still underway; heaps of rubble have been shoved to the edges of the circular room, waiting for lowly temple servants to haul them away. Erlomel has them remove the trash in small quantities and at irregular intervals so as not to draw undue attention to his lair.

The walls of this room were once painted with frescoes depicting servants of the Shadow summoning terrible creatures and calling down doom upon their enemies. The Pure Flame defaced the walls before burning the circle’s books, so only fragments of the original art remain, the whole blackened by smoke. The mosaic floor is similarly damaged; Erlomel hopes to replace the lost tiles with a new image of himself.

As the wreckage is cleared away, the high priest has been collecting statuary to line the walls. These are horrible images, tentacled and alien beings from the



realm of nightmare, which the worshipers see as divine and beautiful.

Erlomel has added a fountain and pool to the center of the room, which he hopes to make a gateway to Xoriat one day. In the meantime, it anchors a manifest zone in its early stages. He dispelled the *hallow* spell that the Pure Flame laid on the place and has replaced it with a permanent *Mordenkainen's private sanctum* (cast by a dominated wizard).

The temple is in use fairly frequently; the rest of the time, Erlomel is in the workshop (area 3) or poring over his precious texts (area 6).

2. Cells. These simply furnished rooms accommodate the temple's worshipers. Each can hold four people.

3. Workshop. This rubble-strewn chamber was once the arcane workshop of the wizards' circle. Erlomel has adapted it for creating aberration grafts. The long workbenches are covered with vessels and tubs containing a variety of unpleasant substances, such as thick, nasty-colored liquid or preserved samples of still-living flesh. A massive tub occupies one corner of the room, in which unidentifiable flukelike creatures swim (his attempts at brood leeches).

4. Storage. The wizards' circle had used this room to store mundane equipment, food supplies, and the like. (They did not equip the building with a kitchen, being disinclined to take time for cooking, but instead purchased prepared foods or sent servants out for meals.) The Purified, leaving nothing to chance, torched this place as well. The scorched remnants have largely been cleared out, and the room now stores the temple's mundane materials. Erlomel is working on converting the room to a kitchen; a fireplace is under construction.

5. Extradimensional Vault. Accessible only through a masterfully hidden secret door (Search DC 26) is this pocket dimension that the former owners used to store their most precious items. They kept their research scrolls here, as well as valuable components and magic items crafted in their lab. Erlomel discovered it and plundered its contents. It now holds his personal wealth and the most valued research notes.

6. The Stacks. Erlomel cleaned out the wizards' records and stored them in one of these former sleeping cells. The other he devoted to his own substantial collection. The books and scrolls are piled in heaps on the bare floor; Erlomel has never taken the time to organize them properly, and he does not trust his underlings enough to have shelves built. (He will get around to it one of these days.) He spends much of his time in these two rooms absorbing the information. Another project is his compiled memoirs, which he sees as becoming the cult's holy scripture eventually. Erlomel devotes at least one hour each night to recording his contemplations. To an outside reader, these seem the ravings of a megalomaniac with a shaky grasp of reality, but Erlomel regards them as the distillation of great truth that he has been favored to discern.

Cults of the Dragon Below in the Last War

The mad ambitions of those who adore Kyber and Xoriat continue regardless of the political climate in the outside world. Except where the battles of the Last War physically

intruded on their activities, the cultists were largely unaware of this upheaval. The more cunning leaders recognized opportunities to seize ravaged territory or recruit the traumatized inhabitants of a war zone. Some of them headed to Cyre, where they were destroyed or worse on the Day of Mourning. A few individuals, insane even by the loose standards of such cults, made their way to the Mourndland *because* it had become a twisted land. The disorder and ruin left by the war across Khorvaire have offered many opportunities for new cults to flourish and for older ones to expand.

SEREN DRAGON CULTS

The thirty or so tribes of barbarians who inhabit Seren Island, northwest of Argonnessen proper, are ferocious raiders and fanatic worshipers of the dragons. Each tribe has a dragon "founder," an individual that it reveres as its foremost god, and its own set of rituals relating to that founder. The dragons as a whole form the tribes' pantheon, and it is the fervent hope of every Seren worshiper to join with his gods—whether through rebirth as a dragon, or the blessing of dragonblood. Each tribe has its own ideas about how to honor the dragons, and the Seren war continually among themselves over religious dogma.

SERVANTS OF THE DRAGONS

Every Seren inhabitant follows the dragon gods, but very few are deemed worthy to speak to and for the gods themselves. These honored men and women are the dragonspeakers, who are the highest civil authority in each tribe.

As civic leaders, dragonspeakers are responsible for every aspect of tribal life other than the business of warfare, the province of the chieftain. They oversee life events, make pronouncements on life, hear petitions for justice, pass judgment, and enforce sentences. They prophesy for the tribe, and prescribe rituals to appease an angry patron when hard times befall their people. They have absolute power of life and death, even over a chieftain found to displease the gods.

Many senior dragonspeakers are clerics or favored souls (*Complete Divine* 6). Dragonspeaker clerics prefer to choose the Dragon domain (*Spell Compendium* 273). Lower-ranked speakers are also spellcasters but usually adepts.

Dragonspeakers adopt elaborate costumes to make them appear as draconic as possible. They affect horned headdresses, brightly painted dragon masks, and robes embroidered with scaly patterns. A shed scale shard or

THE SYMBOLS OF THE DRAGON CULTS

Dragonhead statues rear up on Totem Beach, their origin unknown. They are now used as sites of worship by the dragon cultists. Seren barbarians sometimes carry or wear the symbol of a dragon's head, typically the founder of the wearer's tribe.

claw from a dragon is immensely prized, forming the centerpiece of the possessor's regalia. Apprentice dragonspeakers wear simple garb, but they accumulate more draconic ornamentation as they advance in seniority.

Becoming a Priest

Becoming a dragonspeaker takes a lifetime. The long journey begins in adolescence, when all Seren youths receive their tribal markings and become recognized as adults. The senior dragonspeaker of a tribe oversees these ceremonies and performs the ritual cutting that marks the passage to adulthood. For most, this is the culmination of the process. But a very few display something unusual during the ritual, such as blood forming a sacred pattern. This individual is seen as chosen by the tribe's founder, and he is taken immediately to the huts of the dragonspeakers. He has no choice in the matter—the gods have spoken.

Once identified, the dragonspeaker-to-be leaves behind his family, friends, and all ties to his former life. He is sequestered in the dragonspeaker compound and begins lengthy training in the lore of the tribe's founder and the mysteries of the dragon totems. This involves memorizing thousands of years of tradition in the form of epic chants, with frequent testing and harsh punishment for inadequate mastery. The initiate also undergoes instruction in traditional magic, usually training as an adept. Only after becoming an apprentice can a dragonspeaker learn cleric spellcasting; many do not progress further.

Training as a dragonspeaker takes around fifteen years, broken into three stages of five years apiece. Each stage is marked by rigorous testing, followed by a speaker quest. Quests are challenging but not intended to endanger the initiate's life (unlike those of dragon god worshippers). Each demonstrates that he has mastered physical and spiritual discipline appropriate to that stage of training.

After passing all three stages, the new apprentice receives the first piece of his religious garment: a wooden mask carved into a dragon's head and painted to resemble his tribe's patron. This usually occurs at around thirty years of age. He is assigned to a senior dragonspeaker, whom he serves for a number of years as a low-level functionary. His duties include maintaining the tribe's totems, attending to the physical needs of his mentor, carrying messages, and the like. All the while, he observes the dragonspeaker to learn the practical side of the knowledge he spent so many years absorbing. The time of apprenticeship varies with each mentor, who decides when the young dragonspeaker is ready to advance in responsibility. A typical period is three or four years.

Once the mentor releases him from apprenticeship, the initiate becomes a junior dragonspeaker. He receives an inscribed badge crafted from a dragonscale shard, and is authorized to conduct minor rites and to perform mundane administrative tasks for the tribe. He participates in all religious services and attends councils of the other dragonspeakers, joining in the discussions but not casting votes. During this period, the junior dragonspeaker travels extensively between Seren, the outlying islands, and Totem Beach. He oversees the maintenance of the giant sculptures and deals with visitors to the

shore. As time passes, he gains additional responsibilities. Finally he must make another visit to the interior of Argonnessen to receive the blessing of his dragon patron. This blessing takes the form of a personal item bestowed by the dragon, such as a shed claw or spine. On his return, he is acknowledged as a senior dragonspeaker and incorporates the dragon's gift into his costume. Only these exalted individuals can deal directly with the gods.

Hierarchy

Each tribe has just one or two senior dragonspeakers, along with a handful of initiates at various stages of training. Tribes with more dragonspeakers than others see themselves as especially favored by the gods, and since their speakers are proportionally more influential in the councils, this favor translates into practical benefits.

The council of dragonspeakers consists of the senior members of each tribe, numbering perhaps fifty in all. Each senior speaker has a vote in religious and political decisions. The junior dragonspeakers also attend these councils but do not vote. The dragonspeakers still in training have no official rank within the religious hierarchy but are still superior to lay members of the tribe simply by virtue of being chosen.

One senior dragonspeaker is elected by the council to be the Dragon's Voice, the supreme religious leader of the Seren cults. The Voice wears a special mask, a minor artifact carved from the bone of an ancient wyrm and overlaid with gold and precious gems. He never appears without it.

The Council meets in a special enclosure on the small island to the northeast of Seren. Also on this island is the compound where initiates receive their training. It is off-limits to all others, on penalty of death.

Below the dragonspeakers and their initiates, but higher in status than the common folk, are the Totem Guardians. These are barbarian soldiers drawn from all the tribes, called to protect Totem Beach and keep intruders away from Argonnessen's interior. Dragonspeakers usually select new guardians as a result of visions, but occasionally a dragon itself sends the call. Totem Guardians cut their hair short and apply lime to make it stand up in spikes, resembling the crest of a dragon. Often they dye their hair in brilliant colors to match those of their dragon patrons.

Fallen Priests

An initiate who does not receive the dragon's assent on his final quest, or an apprentice who does not earn his patron's blessing, is clearly unworthy of the gods. Such failures almost always take their own lives in shame, if the dragon does not destroy them first. Those who survive can never return to their people; no one would acknowledge their existence or feed or house them. They become half-mad hermits who haunt the wild lands of Argonnessen, lurking just outside the notice of the dragons they still long to serve, and tormenting themselves with the hope that one day they will be found worthy. The dragons, of course, do not care about or even notice this human refuse—unless a hermit enters a lair. That usually means swift death. Sometimes a Chamber dragon comes across one of these pathetic creatures and makes him into

a special emissary to Khorvaire's nations, mostly for its own amusement.

No record exists of a senior dragonspeaker who turned away from the faith. However, the epics are full of stories of chieftains who lost their positions and their lives when they abandoned the dragons and their chosen emissaries. A myth of the world's end describes the Final Voice, heralding the consumption of existence by its draconic lords. Some dragonspeakers fear this prophesies a great betrayer who will bring the dragons' wrath upon their people; others believe it means a recreation of existence, and rebirth in the perfect forms of dragons.

Quests

Dragonspeaker initiates must pass three quests to prove their fitness for office, as mentioned above. The first quest takes place as the initiate reaches young adulthood (around age eighteen, for humans), after five years of instruction. The initiate must enter the jungles of Argonnessen, which form a miles-thick boundary between the Great Barrier and Totem Beach. There he searches for a shard of dragonscale. This fragment is crafted into the badge the initiate earns on becoming an apprentice. If he is unsuccessful in locating a fragment, he must repeat the entire five-year stage. The threat of such humiliation keeps the initiate searching until he collapses from hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. If he does not return after three days, the dragonspeakers

dispatch search parties from the initiate's tribe to bring him back.

The second-stage quest is more challenging. The initiate travels to a point along the Great Barrier near a dragon's lair and camps there, out of the way and hopefully out of the dragon's sight. For one week he must remain there and observe the dragon's activities. Usually the chosen lair belongs to the tribe's patron (or a descendant if the original dragon has died). He prepares a detailed report on his return and must defend his observations and conclusions before a panel of senior dragonspeakers, much like a scholarly thesis. Sometimes a quester does inadvertently draw the attention of the dragon, who might become irate at the intrusion. If he survives the dragon's fury, the failed initiate is immediately expelled from the order but usually becomes a Totem Guardian.

On completing all three stages of instruction, the initiate travels once again, this time to cross the Great Barrier and visit the lair of his tribe's patron. He must make contact with the dragon and ask to become a priest of its cult. The initiate carries tokens identifying him as a priest in training, and the dragon receives him with varying degrees of friendliness. By putting the "fear of god" into the puny human, the dragon ensures his faithful service—another buffer between itself and the outside world. It then magnanimously dismisses the petitioner after first bestowing its *arcane mark* upon him. This proves to the speakers that he has been accepted, and he becomes an apprentice.

The final quest on the path to becoming a dragonspeaker is seeking out the blessing of the tribe's draconic patron



One last quest is required before a junior dragonspeaker can assume the title of senior. He must go again to his patron and ask the dragon's blessing. He brings a valuable offering for the patron's hoard (worth at least 5,000 gp) and wears all the tokens of office he has earned to date. The dragon's symbol is tattooed onto or cut into his face. If the dragon accepts the offering, it confers a gift of its own, usually an intact small scale or a broken-off spine. This becomes part of the dragonspeaker's religious costume.

A dragonspeaker receives various quests from the Council throughout his career. Sometimes he also experiences a dream vision of his patron, requesting him to undertake some task for the dragons.

RITES AND RITUALS OF THE DRAGON CULTS

The Seren worshippers' lives are defined by superstition and ritual. Even the most minor undertaking is accompanied by a wish for the dragons' blessings. If something goes wrong, a Seren assumes he has angered his tribe's patron somehow and undertakes some form of atonement.

Prayers

The Seren tribes treat the dragons as a pantheon: They offer prayers to their founding dragons in matters of personal importance, and to the dragons in general for matters relating to community. A prayer to the founder addresses the dragon as a kind of high chief.

Seren prayers use the Draconic tongue, though a debased form of it. They consist of ritual expressions taught by the tribal founders and passed down over thousands of years, and now so garbled that a dragon would have difficulty understanding them. An oft-repeated invocation is "Vormoninaku," which seems to have derived from the Draconic *vorel ominak ocuir* ("watch over us, incarnation of beauty"). A Seren frequently utters this formula to ward off ill fortune, much as a superstitious person might knock on wood.

Minor Rites

Each tribal village has a totem of its founding dragon, carved from wood and richly painted, in the dragonspeakers' compound. Lesser rituals usually take place at the totem. As founder and patron of the tribe, the dragon (in the form of its totem) oversees the typical life-passage ceremonies, such as naming, coming of age, marriage, and death.

Fishers and hunters sometimes make a brief offering at the totem to ensure good luck before they embark on an expedition. Such minor invocations involve promising the patron a portion of the harvest on the worshiper's safe return. The dragonspeakers understand that dragons rarely take any action for its own sake, instead expecting some sort of payment. They believe the patron listens to them through the totem, but they also understand that dragons are capricious and might not respond.

Major Rites

The most important Seren observances take place on Totem Beach, at the foot of the monoliths that stand along it. The rising of the constellation sacred to the

patron's god is the occasion for a nightlong celebration in the dragon's honor. Traditionally, this is the time a dragonspeaker-in-training receives quests or embarks on the journeys that might advance him along his spiritual path.

The Seren are cruel, violent people; their reputation for bloodthirstiness is not much exaggerated. Should they capture intruders on Totem Beach or within their own lands, those unfortunates become living sacrifices to the draconic patron. The victims are slaughtered on the beach and their blood is poured over the mighty statues. If the dragon founder is evil, or has a taste for human flesh, the dragonspeakers bring the slaughtered intruders to its lair as an offering.

The Calendar

The primitive Seren tribes live close to nature and have no knowledge of or use for the Galifar calendar. They do mark the rising of the moons, however, since these are tied to the patrons' festivals, and the changing of seasons are important as well. They also pay attention to the dragon constellations, again for the purpose of ritual, and refer to a patron's favored day by the moon that rises in that time. Generally speaking, though, there is no liturgical calendar, and the Seren mark secular life simply by the phase of the dominant moon and the season.

THE DRAGON CULTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The influence of a dragon patron is everywhere within the life of a tribe. Totems and marks representing the tribe's founder decorate buildings and clothing, and the dragon's priests are always visible in their impressive regalia. Tribe members believe they are granted life, and allowed to continue living, solely at the discretion of the founding dragon. They fervently hope that upon death, their spirits might be reborn into dragons rather than drift in Dolurrrh.

The Dragon Cults and Government

Each Seren tribe honors its own founder, and its high priests are also the tribe's leaders. Tribes often come to blows over the honor due each one's founders. Thus, religion and politics are inextricable among the barbarians. The primacy of one tribe perforce causes the worship of a given dragon to become ascendant.

The Seren have no interest in Khorvaire (those who even know of the continent) and no influence on the politics of its nations. Individuals on Khorvaire who seek the knowledge of dragons might persuade a ruler to finance an expedition to Argonnessen, but beyond that the rulers have no designs on the dragon isle. Seren raiders do come into conflict with the Lhazaar Principalities when the pirates descend on the isles to loot and take captives, but such raids are rare.

The Dragon Cults and Other Faiths

The isolation of the Seren tribes means they have as little involvement with other religions as they do other governments. They know much of the dragon gods, though, and some offer prayers to one or more of the draconic pantheon in addition to honoring their tribe's patron. A few Seren follow druidic or shamanistic practices,

but these exist in harmony with the dragon cults. The dragons are seen as the source of life, and the powers of nature and spirits are simply another side of their great gift to the world.

The Dragon Cults in the Last War

The Seren had no more interest in the struggles of the Five Nations during their long war than they have now. They did notice that the internal strife of the continent made raiding more successful, since military forces were turned inward rather than guarding against external assault.

Since the destruction of Cyre, some dragons of the Chamber have decided that the young nations bear watching. Occasionally a tribal patron who belongs to the Chamber charges a dragonspeaker with gathering information about activity in Khorvaire.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE DRAGON CULTS

As mentioned, each tribe has a totem of its patron in the dragonspeakers' compound. Religious life and ceremonies generally center around this representation. The Seren believe that the patron or its spirit (if deceased) sees through the eyes of the totems and keeps watch over his charges.

The Council meets in a special enclosure on the small island to the northeast of Seren. Within the enclosure is the compound where initiates receive their training. This area contains simple huts for shelter, fire pits for cooking food and for warmth, and a special totem statue sacred to all the tribal patrons. Totem Guardians protect the area and sometimes hunt to supplement food supplies for the compound. The area is off-limits to all others, on penalty of death.

The monoliths on Totem Beach contain the spiritual essence of the dragon patrons, according to Seren belief. The barbarians defend the statues as though they were the gods themselves, and they make offerings and sacrifice victims at the monoliths' feet.

Orders and Monasteries

The wild nature of the Seren is not conducive to the sort of discipline required for monastic training. However, the Stormwalker tribe has developed a martial style that mimics dragon attacks, and they have formed a loose organization of combatants who specialize in these techniques. Stormwalkers are the most feared of the Totem Guardians.

VARIANT SECTS

Some non-Serens revere the dragons as nearly divine, and believe that emulating the dragons can lead worshippers

to a divine state. They reject the traditional gods of the Sovereign Host and instead have formed the Path of the Elemental Masters, eight orders of shugenjas (*Complete Divine* 10) dedicated to the elements as expressed by the various dragon types (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 45). This is a young movement, and some of its most zealous practitioners have traveled to Seren in the hope of winning converts (not many have survived the trip).

THE UNDYING COURT

On the isle of Aerenal, the line between life and death is blurred, and the living converse with the dead. They offer their prayers to no distant god, but rather to their ancestors. Most of these ancestors are long deceased, but their spirits watch over the elves of today, acting as guardians to their family lines. Some of the dead have not departed, though, and walk Aerenal still. This combination of spirits and the animate dead is the Undying Court: counselors, protectors, soldiers, and gods to the elves of the island. This religion is like no other in Eberron, misunderstood and feared by many, yet it has produced a population more universally faithful than most "civilized" cultures.

The Aereni faith is not rigidly codified or quantified as are many other religions, but if their primary doctrine were to be summed up, it might read something like this: *Existence is a spiritual journey requiring far longer than a single lifetime. Only the Undying can ever truly learn what great wonders lie at its end.*

Thus, the elves of Aerenal do not fear death. They welcome it as simply a new stage of the spiritual journey. To the Aereni, no greater honor exists than to be accepted for the Rites of Transition, to become undying and to remain on Aerenal to continue the journey and to watch over their descendants. In living, they try to prove their worthiness for this great honor. Some adopt mannerisms to mimic the dead, even painting and mutilating their bodies to appear so. Others lead lives of great spirituality, honoring the Undying Court and serving their fellow elves to the best of their abilities. But the fullest devotion to the Undying Court is devotion to one's family, for the Court is composed of one's ancestors. Aereni families are insular, keeping to themselves where possible, marrying within the line and focusing their worship and devotion on the ancestors and undying of their own blood. Thus, worship of the Undying Court changes—sometimes dramatically—from region to region and family to family across the isle.

The Aereni treat the undying in their midst as revered counselors and holy figures. Although the undying counselors are not the secular rulers of the

THE SYMBOL OF THE UNDYING COURT

The Undying Court has no official symbol. Each Aereni family symbolizes the Court as they choose, often with a family crest of some sort. The Aereni death mask, which is widely believed to be a symbol of the Court, was actually

developed by outsiders who needed some easy means of representing this strange faith. It has become a recognizable symbol of the Court in other lands, but the Aereni themselves do not use it.

nation—that power is reserved for the Sibling Kings—their advice is heeded by even the most powerful of elves. They are mouthpieces of the divine, and they possess the wisdom of many generations. Even the undying of families other than one's own are revered, although not to the same degree; showing disrespect to the undying is a sin, and such an offender never receives the Rite of Transition.

While the Aereni honor and love the undying, they despise the undead. The Undying Court is empowered by positive energy, and its members do not feed off the living to survive. True undead are a corruption of this order, a violation of all laws of nature and spirit, and are to be destroyed. An Aereni who becomes undead is the worst of all abominations, a blight on the world and the Undying Court.

Souls and the Afterlife

The Aereni claim no knowledge as to the origin of souls. According to their belief, souls travel on their journey before birth, as well as after death; the physical realm is simply one stage of that journey. They believe, as well, that elves who do not become undying remain in Eberon as spirits, watching over their descendants. Although these souls cannot continue their own spiritual journey—only the undying do that after death—they can at least observe and aid others in doing so. Only the truly unworthy join the other races in Dolurrh, the final destination for all souls that have given up or failed on their journey.

SERVANTS OF THE UNDYING COURT

Priests of the Undying Court—or *soungraloi*, as they are known in the Aereni dialect—are elves who have dedicated their lives to assisting others in their spiritual journey rather than pursuing their own. While a great many *soungraloi* are found worthy to receive the Rite of Transition, their primary focus is on guiding other Aereni in their lives and worship. A *soungral* serves the Undying Court directly, as the spiritual leader of a community, as an advisor to rulers on matters of faith, or as the religious leader of a family.

Soungraloi dress primarily in white. During rites, they paint their faces like skulls or wear death-masks; some *soungraloi* do so even when they are not performing rituals. While some Aereni emulate the undying, hoping to appear more worthy, *soungraloi* do so to identify themselves as priests, and to make it clear that they speak for, and serve, the ancestors.

Becoming a Priest

Worshippers who wish to become *soungraloi* need merely request that their own *soungral* begin to train them. If a would-be student has participated in the faith and its rites, and has shown sufficient reverence for the ancestors, the *soungral* might take her in as an acolyte (*ersvitour*). These acolytes train for decades, and a *soungral* might have several *ersvitouri* studying and serving under her at a time.

The Aereni and the Divine

It's a common misperception that the Aereni have no concept of the divine, that their ancestor worship omits the potential for true gods. This is a great fallacy and the largest hurdle to truly understanding the faith. The Aereni do believe in divinity: the assembled spiritual might of the Undying Court itself. A given ancestor or undying counselor might possess great knowledge but relatively little power. The Court as a whole, however, shapes the world of the Aereni, grants spells to clerics and adepts, and essentially forms its own "god." The Aereni believe that no mortal being can truly comprehend divinity, and thus offering prayers directly to this god or any other is meaningless. They pray instead to their ancestors as emissaries and servants of the Undying Court, knowing that these individuals can present their words and deeds to the "God-Court" as a whole.

A few Aereni maintain that some form of divinity existed even before the formation of the Undying Court. They believe that a previous race of beings had, as a whole, reached the end of their spiritual journey, even as the elves and undying of Aerenal seek to do. These beings ascended to become the gods that would create the next world—a power that feeble mortal minds can only interpret as Eberon, Khyber, and Sibenys. They believe, too, that when the elves of Aerenal finally reach the end of their own spiritual journey, they will shape the world to come.

Hierarchy

The *soungraloi* do not have a strict hierarchy of ranks. Rather, the length of time a given priest has served the undying corresponds to her authority. A *soungral* who has served for seventy years holds sway over one who has served for sixty-eight, but must yield to one who has served for eighty-one. A younger *soungral* might be of higher class level, and might even be more respected in the community, but only length of service counts.

Only one *soungral* out of a hundred is chosen to become a *mordral*, or a Priest of Transition. The *mordraloi* are responsible for performing the Rite of Transition, in which they transform an Aereni into one of the undying. The *mordraloi* also travel Aerenal, seeking out and studying those who might be worthy of the transformation. While the members of the Undying Court ultimately decide a candidate's worthiness, the *mordraloi* make recommendations. In fact, they are the only living beings whose counsel the undying consider. The *mordraloi* do not lead ceremonies or serve in most other priestly capacities, so their interests rarely overlap with those of the *soungraloi*. Should they do so, however, the *mordraloi*'s wishes take precedence—the only situation in which age and experience do not decide authority.

Duties of the Clergy

The *soungraloi* conduct religious rites, advise the Aereni on matters of faith and service to the undying, and protect Aerenal from supernatural threats. Marriage on Aerenal is not a religious affair but an agreement between two elves who love one another. A *soungral* would bless a marriage if asked to do so, but the bond itself has no spiritual significance. Births and deaths, however, are marked with somber religious ritual, since each represents the beginning of a new stage of the spiritual journey. These rites include dozens or even hundreds of participants, drawn from the child's or deceased's family, and led by at least one *soungral*. The rite must take place within three months of the event, and a birth or death that goes unmarked by the proper ritual is considered unlucky. An elf who has not received the proper rite cannot become an undying, no matter how worthy she otherwise might have been.

rites and rituals of the undying court

Aereni worshipers express their reverence for the Undying Court in a number of ways (*Player's Guide to Eberron* 21).

Prayers

Aereni prayers are simple utterances, little more than the name of an ancestor (often preceded or followed by an honorific), and then a request or expression of thanks. For instance, "Revered Vellaye, honored grandfather, grant me the patience to deal with these outlanders!" Aereni never pray to the Undying Court as a whole, believing true divinity is beyond mortal understanding. Rather, a worshiper offers a prayer to a specific ancestor—usually one with relevant interests, such as a great-great-grandmother soldier on the eve of battle—or to direct ancestors as a whole. These ancestors act as spiritual emissaries, carrying the prayer to the Undying

Court or, if their own powers are up to the task, dealing with the matter themselves.

Minor Rites

The Aereni hold rituals regularly, to celebrate births or deaths, to request aid in an endeavor or intervention in their followers' lives (such as during times of plague, war, or famine), and simply to honor the Court. Every family marks the deathday of each of its members who have gone before, and they hold a rite at sundown to commemorate that anniversary. Depending on the size of the family, this can result in daily observances.

Aereni rituals seem alike. Worshipers light flames, draw sacred symbols on the ground in wine or blood, and engage in somber, dirgelike chants and prayers. Rites usually involve slow, steady dances with steps determined in advance by the leading *soungral*, based on what movements most please and honor the undying being invoked. While the Aereni worship the Undying Court as a whole, most such rituals name a few specific ancestors to carry their words and petitions to the Court. Rites last anywhere from a few minutes to several hours, depending on importance. Funerals, for example, can last an entire day.

Major Rites

The greatest ritual of the Aereni is the Rite of Transition, or the *levan mordr-aer*. This rite can take place only in the City of the Dead, a region particularly suited to this activity due to streams of positive energy emanations from the plane of Irian. The rite can be performed on the living or the dead, so long as the corpse is no older than three months.

The *levan mordr-aer* requires the participation of multiple *mordraloi*. Tradition demands that at least one of the undying stand as witness, and the closest relatives of the subject are present as well to herald his passage. The priests bathe the subject in oils and embalming fluids (which include, among many other substances, distilled *mordre'i'n*), lay him upon a bier, and draw holy symbols on his body in the willingly given blood of witnesses. Finally, the *mordraloi* cast a sequence of spells over the subject, including either *create deathless* or *create greater deathless*, as well as spells of blessing and other mystical utterances that do not appear to be part of any known spell. This 48-hour rite, empowered and modified by the ambient forces of the City of the Dead, anchors the resulting deathless to the energies of Irian. Deathless created

THE UNDYING COURT

Neutral Good

The various Aerenal families all have their own ways of venerating their ancestors, but clerics have access to the same pool of domains.

Portfolio: Glory, history, patience, revelation, obedience.

Domains: Deathless*, Fate‡, Good, Planning‡, Protection.

Favored Weapon: Scimitar.

elsewhere can never become ascendant councilors (*ECS* 276), no matter how old they grow. The Aereni claim that the rite functions only on elves, but since it has never been attempted on anyone else, the truth of this statement remains in question.

The Calendar

The Aereni calendar is a strange affair, practically unreadable to anyone not raised with it. It measures time in repeating cycles. For instance, while the calendar acknowledges the concept of “days,” they are not considered important measurements of time in their own right. Rather, they are the component parts to overlapping cycles called *tuernai* (singular *tuern*), which consist of three days each and are the primary unit of measurement on the Aereni calendar. A similar overlapping cycle of twenty-one *tuernai* equals a *luenir*, roughly three months on the Galifar calendar. This process continues, with *luenirai* overlapping to eventually form the Aereni year, years forming cycles called *ruelnai*, and *ruelnai* forming *nuelnirai* (roughly analogous to a decade). Only then does the calendar restart. Specific holidays vary by family and the deathdays of ancestors.

THE UNDYING COURT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Religion and daily life in Aerenal are inseparable. The Aereni believe that the spirits of their ancestors watch them constantly, and their undying ancestors literally walk among them. To please their ancestors, and to continue their own spiritual advancement, the Aereni seek to be the best at everything they do. Artisans take an incredibly long time, sometimes spending days or weeks crafting a single item, to ensure the highest quality. Lawmakers study and debate policy from every possible angle. The Aereni are not utterly humorless, but they frown on frivolity as a distraction from duty. They frequently perform small rites, or at least utter prayers, throughout the day. Nearly all structures are decorated with the holy symbols of important ancestors.

Many Aereni serve one or more of their ancestors directly, by running errands or helping them keep up with current events, in exchange for access to their age-old wisdom. Sometimes the undying even participate in religious rites; after all, they revere ancestors still older than themselves.

The Undying Court and Government

In the City of the Dead, or the other major communities with an undying population, the faith takes

on an even greater immediacy. Although the undying are not officially in charge, their advice carries enormous weight. Aereni feel obligated to follow or at least consider the words of their deceased relatives, and those who dwell beside them are even more devout in their practices.

The Undying Court and Other Faiths

With one exception, worshipers of the Undying Court lump all other faiths into the same category: foolish misunderstanding of the nature of divinity. The Sovereign Host or the Silver Flame is nothing but a mental construct, a flawed and ultimately futile attempt by mortal minds to comprehend the vastness of the divine. No true divine power can or would hear the prayers of living beings. A cleric’s spellcasting ability is a testament to the power of belief, nothing more. Only by comprehending the spiritual journey of the soul, and recognizing the dead as the only true conduit to the divine, can a person shake his misperceptions and truly worship.

Smaller sects such as Radiant Cults and followers of the Lords of Dust are actually nearer the truth: they worship lesser beings with a link to the divine, rather than trying to contact the divine itself. Still, they lack real understanding. They worship these beings in their own right, rather than as a conduit, and they fail to acknowledge the power and importance of their own dead. Thus, they are no less deluded than those who try to worship “gods.”

The Aereni know the ultimate truth behind the Blood of Vol and loathe that creed with a passion not often seen in this somber, restrained people. The notion that undeath is a path to immortality, and something to be aspired to, fills the Aereni with deep revulsion, and no small amount of shame at this hideous perversion of their own beliefs.

The Undying Court in the Last War

Officially, the elves of Aerenal had little to do with the Last War, given their separation from Khorvaire. However, the island did send observers to keep an eye on things and ensure the war did not spread beyond the continent’s shores. Several of them witnessed the war’s greatest battles, and on rare occasions—when they felt they could do so without being identified—took sides. This occurred most often in battles involving Karrnath; the Aereni elves took offense at the existence of that nation’s undead armies and did what they could to aid its enemies.

LEAVES OF DEATH

During rites, Aereni priests and practitioners might consume the *mordrei’in*, or “leaves of death” (see page 153). These are the leaves of the *mordril*, a tree that grows only on Aerenal, and only in grave dirt. The leaves are deadly when eaten raw, but with the proper application of herbal and alchemical techniques, they become only

mildly poisonous and enhance the consumer’s ability to focus. Worshipers hold this trancelike state to be a bridge between the living and the dead—and, thanks to improper treatment or low resistance, some practitioners don’t return from the journey.

UNLIVING GARDENS OF TAERNAS REUL



TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF THE UNDYING COURT

Temples to the Undying Court—or *souvrouh*, plural and singular—are stone structures, normally consisting of two to five rooms on a single level. Some of the largest have multiple floors, often in the form of a step pyramid. These are used for particularly massive ceremonies, or to hold multiple rites at once. The interior of a *souvrouh* has perfectly smooth walls and floors, allowing practitioners to add whatever symbols are appropriate for their ancestors.

For those without access to a *souvrouh*, or the means to build one, a *patarouh* will suffice. This is simply an empty lot, surrounded in religious symbols and consecrated for use as a shrine. The ground must be earth, stone, or wood; living vegetation is unacceptable.

THE SPIRITS OF THE PAST

Neutral

The priests of the Valenar can call on their revered ancestors for divinely inspired magic.

Portfolio: Glory, battle, bravery, honor.

Domains: Destruction, Elf†, Protection, Revered Ancestor†, War.

Favored Weapon: Double scimitar.

Both a *souvrouh* and a *patarouh* must be built around a “death’s tree,” or *mordri-ellin*. This can either be a living *mordril*, or any other type of tree that was planted in grave dirt and is now dead. The tree represents the temple’s tie to both life and death. In some of the larger *souvrouh*, the tree is completely within the structure.

The Unliving Gardens of Taernas Reul

Off Aerenal proper stands a small island, unmarked on any map. Covered in thick jungle and surrounded by a barrier of reefs, it is inhospitable and all but unapproachable. Only a few elves know the way, and only the rarest of explorers finds the path by accident. Those who do might wish they had not, for this is the isle of Taernas Reul, a naturally occurring focal point of necromantic energies nearly as potent as the City of the Dead itself. Taernas Reul is a haven for undying who need time away from their living charges, a place where they seek solitude and the opportunity to contemplate their own existence.

The entire isle is covered in thick jungle and undergrowth. Oddly enough, enormous gardens of bright flowers grow in seemingly random spots across the isle, tended by the undying as a means of meditation. No animals chitter in the shadows, no birds sing from the branches. Nothing living dwells on this isle. The trees, the vines, even the many beautiful flowers that bloom in spring are dead—yet they continue to grow, even to thrive. Some are merely disturbing; some release foul odors; some can kill with a touch. While

not innately hostile, the undying frown on those who intrude on their solitude, and feel no remorse if the isle itself slays intruders.

Natural pathways are the only easy way to cross the island. Stepping off the path means pushing through underbrush that can harm with the merest touch. Thick jungle occupies most of the island, jutting unusually far north in this area. Attempts to travel through it require a slow pace and sharp blades. When cut, some of the trees ooze a dark sap that looks and smells very much like coagulating blood. To the south, the ground becomes uneven. The range of hills that begins here continues on for miles, eventually disappearing into the heavy jungles.

Only the portion of the isle near the northeast coast is shown on the map, as this is the easiest area on which to land a ship.

1. Ruined Shrine. This large structure was once an Aereni step pyramid devoted to the Undying Court. Since no living elves come to this island, it has fallen into disrepair. On occasion, the undying use it as a place of meditation.

2. The Footprint of Shadow. While most of the plant life of the isle is somehow “undying,” the plants in this area are truly dead. Trees stand bare and grass is brown. The undying do not set foot here, for it is a place of negative energy and it causes them great harm. Anyone who dies here rises as a wight within 1 day, but takes damage as though in a mildly positive-dominant region when outside the so-called footprint.

3. The Lake. This small, unnamed lake empties east toward the sea. Living creatures who drink from it, or from the rivers that flow from it, feel a burning in their very soul and die a bit inside (1 Constitution damage, no save). Immersion is hideously painful, but not truly harmful if the subject can avoid swallowing the water.

4. The Deep Ruins. Barely a few standing stones and an open foundation, these ruins predate the coming of the elves. Even the undying themselves cannot say who constructed it.

VARIANT SECTS

Worship of the Undying Court consists of nothing but “variant sects.” Each Aereni family reveres its own ancestors above all others. Each family ultimately prays to the Court as a whole, but its “pantheon” of spirits and undying is unique. Each has its own religious symbols, its own

prayers and ceremonial dances, sometimes even its own requirements for joining the undying.

A few branches of the faith do exist that differ in far more fundamental ways. The Aereni treat most of these sects with respect, although they see them as misguided, but one inspires vehement hostility.

Death-Eaters: This is the closest thing the Aereni have to a heresy. These zealots believe that if they consume a deceased elf before the funeral rites, they can absorb his soul and gain power and knowledge he might otherwise gain. Members of the Death-Eaters keep their allegiance secret, for other Aereni—horrified at the implications—imprison or even kill them on sight.

Dynastians: This is not a proper sect but a term that describes individuals who share a similar belief. Dynastians maintain that the Undying Court is not a unified body at all. Rather, the ancestors of any given lineage—both spiritual and undying—in fact make up their own “deity.” These gods cooperate with one another for the preservation of Aerenal, but one must ultimately dominate the others. Unsurprisingly, an individual Dynastian believes her own familial divinity must prevail. Thus, while they are not overtly hostile, each occasionally sabotages the efforts of other families in the hope of advancing her own dynasty’s position.

Tairnadal: These warrior elves from Aerenal’s northern steppes worship their ancestors, as do the rest of the Aereni. They do not, however, seek to become undying. They believe that the path to ascension lies in emulating the deeds of great elves long dead, and that successfully doing so is the culmination of the soul’s journey. A growing number hold that elf souls do not travel to any final destination but are instead reincarnated over and over. Only by perfectly emulating a past ancestor can a Tairnadal become consciously aware of these past lives, thus gaining the knowledge and wisdom of generations and ascending to a higher existence.

Valenar Ancestor Worship: Although the elves of Valenar severed themselves from Aerenal millennia ago, those warrior folk still retain much of their relatives’ religious beliefs. Rather than venerating the undying ancestors of Shae Cairdal, they worship patron ancestors and seek to emulate them through brave deeds as the Tairnadal do. The Valenar priests are called the Keepers of the Past and can be clerics or bards. A Valenar bard following this religion can treat *spirit steed* as a 4th-level bard spell.



The priestess screamed
a terrible salutation,
and it was answered.

Aufarien went for his
sword instinctively,
even as he wondered
whether a blade could hurt
this being.

The power of a veritable
god was poised to strike
them down.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRAPPINGS OF FAITH

The varied expressions of faith across Eberron include special areas of focus, dedicated magic, and holy items to assist practitioners.

NEW FEATS

The religious sometimes adopt specialized techniques and focuses related to their faith. New feats that represent these techniques are described below.

DIVINE FEATS

All divine feats are open to clerics, paladins of 3rd or higher level, or prestige classes that grant the ability to turn or rebuke undead. They allow you to expend one or more turn or rebuke attempts to channel positive or negative energy into powerful abilities. Activating a divine feat is a supernatural ability and therefore does not provoke an attack of opportunity unless the feat description specifies otherwise. See page 77 of *Complete Divine* for a full discussion of divine feats.

FEAT DESCRIPTIONS

The prerequisites and benefits of the feats described here are summarized in Table 7–1, on the following page.

ACTION HEALING

You can spend an action point to enhance your healing power.

Prerequisite: Ability to lay on hands.

Benefit: You can spend 1 action point when using your lay on hands ability to adjust it in one of the following manners (choose when used):

Empower: You can heal 3 points of damage for every 2 points of lay on hands spent.

Quicken: You can use your lay on hands ability as a swift action.

Reach: You can use your lay on hands ability to affect any ally within 30 feet.

You can't enhance your lay on hands ability in more than one way per use, but you can enhance it differently in consecutive uses. For instance, in one round you could quicken it, and in the next round empower it.

ANCESTRAL WHISPERS [DIVINE]

Through intense focus and divine energies, you can hear the advice of past ancestors.

Prerequisite: Ability to turn undead, worshiper of the Undying Court.

Benefit: Spend a turn undead attempt as a standard action, and select a single skill. For a number of rounds equal to 1 + your Charisma bonus (if any), you gain a +4 sacred bonus on checks using that skill, thanks to the whispered advice of your deceased ancestors. You are treated as being trained in that skill, even if you have no ranks. You can also take 10 on that skill even when rushed or threatened.

Special: You cannot make untrained checks using skills that require training if you have no ranks in them. You cannot take 10 when rushed or threatened.

CEREMONIAL EMPOWERMENT

Your divine might increases on your patron's holy days.

Prerequisite: Cleric level 1st, worshiper of the Sovereign Host or one of its deities.

Benefit: On any day devoted to your god, you gain a +1 sacred bonus to your caster level when casting cleric spells. This occurs once every sixteen days.

Normal: Clerics of the Host gain this bonus only on holy days that occur in their patron's favored season, as indicated on the Sovereign Host liturgical calendar (see page 21).

Special: The rules regarding mechanical benefits based on dates of the liturgical calendar are optional, and require a degree of extra bookkeeping on the part of the DM. Make certain your DM is using these rules before selecting this feat.

CONSTRUCT GRAFTER [ITEM CREATION]

You can apply construct grafts to other living creatures or to yourself.

Prerequisite: Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, or sculpting) 10 ranks.

Benefit: You can create construct grafts and apply them to other living creatures or to yourself (see page 156). Creating a graft takes one day for each 1,000 gp in its price. To create a graft, you must spend 1/25 of the graft's price in XP and use up raw materials costing half of this price.

DIVINE ALACRITY [DIVINE]

You channel divine energies into your own body, increasing your speed.

TABLE 7-1: NEW FEATS

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Action Healing	Ability to lay on hands	Spend 1 action point to boost your lay on hands in one of three ways
Ceremonial Empowerment	Cleric level 1st, worshiper of the Sovereign Host or one of its deities	+1 sacred bonus to caster level on your god's holy days
Frantic Rage	Rage ability, access to the Madness* domain	Gain bonus to Dexterity instead of Strength
Heroic Devotion	Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells	Gain 1 temporary action point in place of highest-level spell slot
Lucid Channeling	Good alignment, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 13	Channeled celestial uses its Int, Wis, and Cha scores and can share thoughts with host
Nightbringer Initiate	Nongood alignment, ability to spontaneously cast <i>summon nature's ally</i> , nongood alignment	Add Hide and Move Silently as class skills, add spells to spell list
Unquenchable Flame of Life	—	+2 bonus on saves against undead attacks
Unyielding Bond of Soul	—	+2 bonus on saves against evil outsider attacks
Worldly Focus	Worshiper of the Sovereign Host	Cast divine spells without a divine focus
Wrest Possession	Nongood alignment, Cha 15	You can attempt to take control of a fiend that fails three possession attempts against you
Divine Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Ancestral Whispers	Ability to turn/rebuke undead, worshiper of the Undying Court	Spend turn attempt to gain a bonus on a skill check
Divine Alacrity	Ability to turn/rebuke undead, access to the Travel domain	Spend turn/rebuke attempt to gain +30 feet to speed for 1 round
Divine Countermagic	Ability to turn/rebuke undead, access to Magic or Spell† domain	Spend turn/rebuke attempt to counter others' spells with divine energy
Divine Warrior	Proficiency in deity's favored weapon, base attack bonus +6, ability to turn/rebuke undead	Spend turn/rebuke attempt to make weapon holy or unholy for one attack
Domain Spontaneity	Ability to turn/rebuke undead	Spend turn/rebuke attempt to spontaneously cast a domain spell
Heroic Channeling	Ability to turn/rebuke undead	Spend 1 action point instead of a turn/rebuke attempt to use divine feat
Sacred Resilience	Unquenchable Flame of Life or Unyielding Bond of Soul, ability to turn undead	Spend turn attempt to help ally resist undead or evil outsider attacks
Touch of Silver	Ability to lay on hands, ability to turn undead, worshiper of the Silver Flame	Lay on hands damages evil outsiders and lycanthropes as though they were undead
Item Creation Feat	Prerequisites	Benefit
Construct Grafter	Craft (armorsmithing, blacksmithing, or sculpting) 10 ranks	Create construct grafts

Prerequisite: Ability to turn or rebuke undead, access to the Travel domain.

Benefit: Spend a turn or rebuke undead attempt as a swift action to gain a +30-foot enhancement bonus to your land speed for 1 round.

DIVINE COUNTERMAGIC [DIVINE]

You channel divine energies to counter spells.

Prerequisite: Ability to turn or rebuke undead, access to Magic or Spell† domain.

Benefit: You can counter someone else's spell by expending a turn or rebuke attempt, rather than casting a spell. You must spend one turn or rebuke attempt, plus one additional turn or rebuke attempt per level of the spell being countered. In all other respects, including using a ready action and identifying the spell with Spellcraft, this ability functions the same as a standard counterspell attempt.

Normal: To counter a spell, you must use *dispel magic*, or the specific spell being cast.

DIVINE WARRIOR [DIVINE]

Through divine power, you wield your deity's favored weapon to devastating effect.

Prerequisite: Proficiency in deity's favored weapon, base attack bonus +6, ability to turn or rebuke undead

Benefit: Spend a turn or rebuke undead attempt as a swift action to temporarily grant your held weapon (which must be your deity's favored weapon) either the *holy* or *unholy* property. This effect applies only to the next attack you make with the weapon; if you do not attack before the start of your next turn the effect fades.

If you normally turn undead, this feat grants your weapon the holy special ability (DMG 225). If you normally rebuke undead, this feat instead grants your

weapon the unholy special ability (DMG 226). This effect overrides any alignment or similar property that the weapon has.

DOMAIN SPONTANEITY [DIVINE]

You are so familiar with one of your domains that you can convert other prepared spells into spells from that domain.

Prerequisite: Ability to turn or rebuke undead.

Benefit: Each time you take this feat, choose a domain that you have access to. You can now convert prepared divine spells into any spell from that domain. You expend a spell of equal or higher level, as well as expending one of your daily turn or rebuke undead attempts. This works just as good clerics spontaneously cast prepared spells as *cure* spells.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times. Each time you take this feat, it applies to a new domain.

FRANTIC RAGE

Your divine madness allows you to channel your fury into frenetic agility rather than might.

Prerequisite: Rage ability, access to the Madness domain (ECS 107).

Benefit: When you use your rage ability, you can increase your Dexterity instead of your Strength. Your Dexterity improves by the same amount that your Strength would normally improve. Once you have made this choice, you cannot alter it until this rage has ended and you invoke a new one.

HEROIC CHANNELING [DIVINE]

You can call on your personal strength of will to channel positive or negative energy into divine feats.

Prerequisite: Ability to turn or rebuke undead.

Benefit: Instead of spending a turn or rebuke attempt to use a divine feat, you can spend 1 action point. You can spend action points in this way even if you do not have any turn or rebuke attempts left.

You cannot spend more than 1 action point at a time in this way (or use action points more than once in a round). However, you can combine this action point with additional turn or rebuke attempts to use divine feats that require multiple turn attempts. Thus, you can activate a divine feat by using 1 action point and one or more turn or rebuke attempts.

Normal: You cannot use divine feats if you have no turn or rebuke attempts left.

HEROIC DEVOTION

Your devotion to your faith allows you to manipulate fate at the expense of some spellcasting ability.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells.

Benefit: When preparing or readying your spells for the day, you can sacrifice one spell slot of the highest-level divine spell you can cast to gain 1 temporary action point. You cannot gain more than 1 action point per day in this way. If you don't use this action point before you next prepare or ready spells, it disappears.

LUCID CHANNELING

When you invite a celestial into your body, you open your mind completely to the divine spirit.

Prerequisite: Good alignment, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Benefit: When channeling a celestial (ECS 102), you allow it complete access. The celestial uses its own Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, just as a possessing demon does. Both you and the channeled celestial have full access to the other's thoughts, as the *detect thoughts* spell, except that each can automatically read the other's surface thoughts. Each can draw on the other's memories, but only if given permission to do so.

The channeled celestial and the host can share spells and effects just as a spellcaster and familiar do (PH 53).

Normal: Your mental ability scores become 5 points lower than those of the celestial unless they are already equal to or higher than those scores. You and the celestial do not have complete access to each other's thoughts.

NIGHTBRINGER INITIATE

You have been trained in the ways of the Nightbringers, a new offshoot of the Children of Winter.

Prerequisite: Nongood alignment, ability to spontaneously cast *summon nature's ally*.

Benefit: Add Hide and Move Silently to your list of druid class skills.

In addition, you can cast the following spells as if they were on the druid spell list at the indicated level.

1st Level: *inflict light wounds*

2nd Level: *darkness*

3rd Level: *deeper darkness*

4th Level: *enervation*

5th Level: *summon monster V* (can only be used to summon a shadow mastiff)

6th Level: *planar ally* (can only be used to call a native of Mabar)

7th Level: *control undead*

8th Level: *create greater undead* (can only be used to create shadows)

9th Level: *gate* (can only be used to open a gate to Mabar)

SACRED RESILIENCE [DIVINE]

You can channel divine energies to protect your allies from harm.

Prerequisite: Unquenchable Flame of Life or Unyielding Bond of Soul, ability to turn undead.

Benefit: If an ally within 60 feet would be required to make a save against hit point damage dealt by an extraordinary or supernatural ability from a creature type for which you have the appropriate prerequisite feat (undead or evil outsider), you can spend a turn undead attempt as an immediate action. This grants your ally the same bonus on the save as the feat would grant you.

You must decide to invoke Sacred Resilience before your ally rolls the saving throw.

Special: If you have both Unquenchable Flame of Life and Unyielding Bond of Soul, you can apply Sacred Resilience to resist attacks from both creature types. You need not take this feat a second time.

TOUCH OF SILVER [DIVINE]

Your devotion to the Silver Flame allows you to burn the Church's foes with holy energies.

Prerequisite: Ability to lay on hands, ability to turn undead, worshiper of the Silver Flame.

Benefit: Spend a turn attempt as a swift action. For 1 round, your lay on hands ability damages lycanthropes and evil outsiders just as if they were undead.

Normal: Only creatures vulnerable to positive energy, such as undead, are damaged by lay on hands.

UNQUENCHABLE FLAME OF LIFE

You are hardened to the attacks of the undead.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on saves against the extraordinary or supernatural abilities of undead creatures.

Special: If you have selected undead as your favored enemy, your bonus on saving throws is instead equal to your favored enemy bonus against undead.

UNYIELDING BOND OF SOUL

You are hardened to the attacks of the beings of other worlds.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on saves against the extraordinary or supernatural abilities of outsiders.

Special: If you have selected outsider as your favored enemy, your bonus on saving throws is instead equal to your favored enemy bonus against outsiders.

WORLDLY FOCUS

Your belief in the omnipresence of the gods is so strong, you can channel your spells through the environment rather than a holy symbol.

Prerequisite: Worshiper of the Sovereign Host.

Benefit: You can cast cleric spells without the need of a divine focus.

Normal: Many cleric spells require a divine focus to cast.

WREST POSSESSION

If you resist control by a possessing fiend, you can attempt to seize control of its abilities.

Prerequisite: Nongood alignment, Cha 15.

Benefit: You can communicate telepathically with any fiend possessing you (ECS 100), though you can't access its thoughts.

If you resist three consecutive attempts by a possessing fiend to control your body, you can make an attempt to seize control of its abilities instead. Make a special level check (1d20 + your character level + your Cha modifier) against a DC of 10 + the fiend's HD + the fiend's Cha modifier. If you succeed on this check, the fiend loses access to your senses. Furthermore, if your level equals or exceeds the fiend's HD, you also gain control over all the fiend's extraordinary, supernatural, and spell-like abilities that don't depend on its physical form. You can activate those powers on your turn as if they were your own.

This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma bonus. When this control lapses, you cannot attempt to assert control again unless you again resist three consecutive control attempts by that fiend.

Normal: If you resist a fiend's possession attempt three times in succession, it cannot take control of you for 24 hours but is otherwise unaffected.

Touch of Silver allows this paladin of the Silver Flame to turn divine energies against his religion's greatest foes



CLERIC QUICK-REFERENCE

The table in this section provides a reference for players creating clerics for the Eberron campaign setting. The deities, cults, and pantheons of the setting are organized alphabetically within each alignment. Deities from the Sovereign Host are underlined, and deities from the Dark Six are *italicized*.

TABLE 7–2: DEITIES OF EBERRON

Deity, Cult, or Pantheon	Align.	Favored Weapon	Domains
<u>Boldrei</u>	LG	Spear	Community*, Family†, Good, Law, Protection
<u>Dol Arrah</u>	LG	Halberd	Glory†, Good, Law, Sun, War
Silver Flame, The	LG	Longbow	Exorcism, Good, Inquisition†, Law, Protection, Purification†
<u>Arawai</u>	NG	Morningstar	Creation†, Good, Life*, Plant, Weather*
<u>Olladra</u>	NG	Sickle	Feast*, Good, Healing, Luck, Pride†
<u>Onatar</u>	NG	Warhammer	Artifice*, Creation†, Fire, Good, Metal†, Warforged†
Sovereign Host (pantheon)	NG	Longsword	Choose two from any underlined deities
Undying Court, The	NG	Scimitar	Deathless*, Fate†, Good, Planning†, Protection
<u>Dol Dorn</u>	CG	Longsword	Chaos, Competition†, Good, Liberation†, Strength, War
<u>Aureon</u>	LN	Quarterstaff	Force†, Knowledge, Law, Magic, Mind†, Oracle†, Spell†
Path of Light, The	LN	Unarmed strike	Balance†, Law, Meditation*, Mentalism†, Protection
<u>Balinor</u>	N	Battleaxe	Air, Animal, Celerity†, Earth, Retribution†
Becoming God, The	N	Slam/gauntlet	Artifice, Meditation*, Strength, Warforged†
<u>Kol Korran</u>	N	Heavy mace	Charm*, Commerce*, Pact†, Trade†, Travel, Wealth†
Spirits of the Past, The	N	Double scimitar	Destruction, Elf†, Protection, Revered Ancestor†, War
<i>Traveler, The</i>	CN	Scimitar	Artifice*, Celerity†, Chaos, Charm†, Creation†, Liberation†, Travel, Trickery
Blood of Vol, The	LE	Dagger	Death, Deathbound†, Evil, Law, Necromancer*
Lord of Blades, The	LE	Greatsword	Artifice, Evil, Law, War, Warforged†
Dark Six (pantheon)	NE	Kama	Choose two from any italicized deities
<i>Devourer, The</i>	NE	Trident	Cold†, Destruction, Evil, Pestilence†, Ocean†, Water, Weather*
Dragon Below, Cults of	NE	Heavy pick	Corruption ¹ , Cavern†, Darkness†, Dragon Below*, Earth, Evil, Greed†, Madness*, Pact†, Pain ¹ , Pestilence†, Summoner†
<i>Fury, The</i>	NE	Rapier	Evil, Liberation†, Hatred†, Madness*, Passion*, Wrath†
<i>Keeper, The</i>	NE	Scythe	Death, Decay*, Evil, Greed†, Hunger†, Pact†
<i>Mockery, The</i>	NE	Kama	Destruction, Domination†, Evil, Illusion†, Trickery, War
<i>Shadow, The</i>	CE	Quarterstaff	Chaos, Darkness†, Evil, Magic, Mind†, Shadow*

¹ Domain described in *Book of Vile Darkness*.

SPELLS

The unique nature of religion in Eberron has given rise to new kinds of magic.

CLERIC DOMAINS

Revered Ancestor Domain

Deity: Spirits of the Past.

Granted Power: You gain Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Valenar double scimitar) as a bonus feat. If you already possess that feat, you gain Weapon Focus (Valenar double scimitar) instead.

Revered Ancestor Domain Spells

- 1 Magic Weapon:** Weapon gains +1 bonus.
- 2 Aid:** +1 on attack rolls and saves against fear, 1d8 temporary hp +1/level (max +10).
- 3 Heroism:** Gives +2 on attack rolls, saves, skill checks.
- 4 Spirit Steed*:** Channels an ancient spirit into your steed, increasing its speed and granting other benefits.
- 5 Glimpse of Eternity†:** Target takes 1d6 nonlethal damage/level and is *confused*.
- 6 Heroism, Greater:** Gives +4 bonus on attack rolls, saves, skill checks; immunity to fear; temporary hp.
- 7 Vision^{MX}:** As *legend lore*, but quicker and more strenuous.

- 8 **Earthquake**: Intense tremor shakes 5-ft./level radius. (Valenar call this spell *thundering hooves*.)
- 9 **Hero's Blade***: Channel the spirit of a great hero into a melee weapon.

Warforged Domain

Deities: The Becoming God, Lord of Blades, Onatar.

Granted Power: Rebuke, command, or bolster construct creatures as an evil cleric rebukes undead. Use these abilities a total number of times per day equal to 3 + your Cha modifier. This granted power is a supernatural ability.

Warforged Domain Spells

- Repair Light Damage***: Repairs 1d8 + 1/level damage (max +5) to a construct.
- Construct Essence, Lesser†**: Grants a living construct qualities of the construct type.
- Stone Construct*^M**: Construct gains DR 10/adamantine.
- Repair Critical Damage***: Repairs 4d8 + 1/level damage (max +20) for a construct.
- Construct Energy Ward, Greater***: Construct gains immunity to specified energy type.
- Iron Construct***: Construct gains DR 15/adamantine and takes half damage from acid and fire.
- Construct Essence, Mass Lesser†**: Grants many living constructs qualities of the construct type.
- Total Repair***: Repairs 10/level damage to a construct.
- Summon Warforged Champion†**: Summons a mighty warforged titan.

CONSTRUCT ESSENCE, LESSER

Transmutation

Level: Artificer 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, Warforged 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Living construct touched

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

As you lay your hand on the living construct standing before you, its form becomes more durable and unyielding.

When this spell is cast upon a living construct, it takes on more of the qualities of a true construct. The living construct gains the moderate fortification armor special quality, negating critical hits and sneak attacks 75% of the time. As well, the living construct gains low-light vision and immunity to nonlethal damage and stunning.

If this spell is cast on a creature under the effect of *lesser humanoid essence* (*Races of Eberron* 187), both spells are dispelled and have no effect. It has no effect if cast on a creature under the effect of *humanoid essence* or *greater humanoid essence*.

CONSTRUCT ESSENCE, MASS LESSER

Transmutation

Level: Artificer 6, sorcerer/wizard 6, Warforged 7

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living construct/level, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

You spread your arms, and about you, your warforged comrades become more durable and unyielding.

As *lesser construct essence*, except as noted above.

DETECT MANIFEST ZONE

Divination

Level: Adept 1, cleric 1, paladin 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 ft.

Area: 120-ft.-radius emanation, centered on you

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 min./level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You look about you, your eyes unblinking. As you focus, the landscape around you glows with an unearthly aura.

You can sense the presence of manifest zones, areas in which the energies and traits of another plane leak over into the world of Eberron. The amount of information revealed depends on how long you study a particular area or subject.

1st Round: Presence or absence of a manifest zone. (In some cases, manifest zones are obvious to the naked eye. In such instances, you gain no new information on the first round.) If the zone is in range but not in your line of sight, you discern its direction but not its exact location.

2nd Round: Age of the manifest zone. You gain a very general sense of how long it has existed, as indicated on the following table. If the zone is going to fade within the next 24 hours, you learn that, too. Otherwise, you gain no sense of how long it will last.

3rd Round: The plane to which the manifest zone is connected. If the zone is small, and fits entirely within the area of your spell, you learn its exact borders and dimensions. If the zone is larger than that, you do not know the precise location or dimensions of the zone outside your spell area.

The spell can penetrate barriers, but a thin sheet of lead, 1 inch of common metal, 1 foot of stone, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

MANIFEST ZONE AGE CATEGORIES

Category	Age
Nascent	Less than 1 day
New	1 to 30 days
Young	31 days to 1 year
Mature	1 to 10 years
Old	11 to 100 years
Ancient	More than 100 years

EMBRACE OF ENDLESS DAY

Conjuration

Level: Cleric 4, paladin 3

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 minute/level or until expended
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

In a burst of holy light, you gift your companion with the faintest spark of the divine. His eyes glow dimly with sacred power.

You imbue the target with positive energy which he can then release, in controlled amounts or all at once. You bestow 3 "points" of positive energy per caster level (maximum 30).

The target can expend this energy to heal with a touch, or harm creatures vulnerable to positive energy, as a paladin's lay on hands ability. Each "point" of positive energy removes or deals 1 point of damage.

The target also gains a +1 sacred bonus on saves against necromantic and death effects until all the bestowed energy has been expended.

GLIMPSE OF ETERNITY

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Bard 5, sorcerer/wizard 5, Revered Ancestor 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 round/3 levels
Saving Throw: Will partial; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

Your target's eyes gleam with a sudden wave of insight . . . but then his face twists into a rictus of agony and confusion.

You call upon the ancestral memory and experience of the long-lived elves, visiting all the burden of that knowledge on a single creature. The target of the spell takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per caster level (maximum 15d6) and is *confused* for the duration of the spell unless it makes a successful Will save. A successful save results in half damage and negates the *confusion*.

Elves and similarly long-lived creatures are affected normally by this spell. No creature can experience millennia of knowledge in such a short time without feeling its weight.

Material Component: A pinch of dust from an hourglass.

INTENSIFY MANIFEST ZONE

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Cleric 7, druid 7
Components: V, S, F, XP
Casting Time: 8 hours
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: 40-ft.-radius/level emanation
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

You reach forth into the essence of the manifested plane, pulling more of its power into the area.

You enhance the effects of a manifest zone of a specified plane.

The effects of the manifest zone increase by one "step." Since each zone is different, this can have various effects. A zone that exists in rings (such as the Gloaming in the Eldeen Reaches) has stronger effects as one moves inward; this spell increases the effect of a ring to that of the next inmost. The innermost ring of such a zone instead takes on one trait of the associated plane that it does not already have; in the case of the Gloaming again, the spell confers the mildly negative-dominant trait on that ring. A zone that has a uniform effect over its area takes on one planar trait (of your choice) in the same way.

You cannot further enhance a manifest zone (or a ring within a zone) with additional *intensify manifest zone* spells.

An *intensify manifest zone* effect cannot be dispelled, but it can be removed with a *limited wish*, *miracle*, *planar bubble* (Planar Handbook 102), or *wish* spell.

Focus: A gem, piece of precious metal, or concentrated essence of the plane associated with the manifest zone, worth at least 500 gp.

XP Cost: 500 XP.

SUMMON WARFORGED CHAMPION

Conjuration (Summoning) [Lawful]
Level: Warforged 9
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: One summoned creature
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Touching the holy symbol emblazoned on your chest, you call upon the power of your warforged god. An enormous armored figure shimmers into view.

This spell is similar to *summon monster IX*, except that it can only summon a single (advanced) warforged titan.

The warforged titan is advanced to 24 HD (172 hp); its other statistics improve as follows: BAB +18; Grp +35; Atk Axe +25 melee (2d8+9/×3) or maul +25 melee (2d8+9/×3); SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +8; Jump +44. It gains the following feats: Great Cleave, Greater Powerful Charge (bringing its extra charge damage to +4d6), Improved Damage Reduction (twice; increasing its DR to 12/adamantine).

In addition, as long as the warforged titan summoned by this spell is within 15 feet of you, is active, and is under your control, it unconsciously protects you from attacks. It grants you a +5 shield bonus to your AC.

WEAPON OF THE DEITY

Transmutation
Level: Blackguard 3, cleric 3, paladin 3
Components: V, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Weapon touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

You utter a brief prayer, and your weapon transforms into an awesome expression of your god's power.

You must be holding your deity's favored weapon to cast this spell. You can use the weapon as if you had proficiency with it even if you normally do not. The weapon gains a +1 enhancement bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls and an additional special ability (see the list below). A double weapon gains this enhancement bonus and special ability for only one of its two ends, as chosen by you.

When you reach caster level 9th, the enhancement bonus of the weapon increases to +2. At 12th level, the bonus rises to +3, at 15th level it is +4, and at 18th level it becomes +5.

The list below includes deities described in this book, along with the five alignment components. If a cleric worshipping a different deity casts this spell, the DM should assign an appropriate weapon special ability of the same power level as those given here.

Arawai: +1 thundering morningstar
 Aureon: +1 spell-storing quarterstaff
 Balinor: +1 earthbound* battleaxe
 The Becoming God: +1 defending spiked gauntlet or battlefist
 The Blood of Vol: +1 keen dagger
 Cults of the Dragon Below: +1 vicious heavy pick
 Boldrei: +1 defending spear
 The Dark Six: +1 keen kama
 The Devourer: +1 waterborn* trident
 Dol Arrah: +1 merciful halberd
 Dol Dorn: +1 mighty cleaving longsword
 The Fury: +1 vicious rapier
 The Keeper: +1 frost scythe
 Kol Korran: +1 defending heavy mace
 The Lord of Blades: +1 shock greatsword
 The Mockery: +1 keen kama
 Olladra: +1 lucky² sickle
 Onatar: +1 flaming warhammer
 The Path of Light: +1 flaming gauntlet (unarmed strike)
 The Shadow: +1 spell storing quarterstaff
 The Sovereign Host: +1 defending longsword
 The Silver Flame: +1 seeking longbow
 The Spirits of the Past: +1 keen double scimitar
 The Traveler: +1 lucky² scimitar
 The Undying Court: +1 undead bane scimitar
 Chaos: +1 shock battleaxe
 Evil: +1 mighty cleaving light flail
 Good: +1 frost warhammer
 Law: +1 flaming longsword
 Neutral: +1 defending heavy mace

1 Corrosive: The weapon deals an extra 1d6 points of acid damage on a successful hit (*Dungeon Master's Guide II* 256).

2 Lucky: Once per day the wielder can reroll a failed attack roll as a free action; it uses the same modifiers as the missed roll (*Expanded Psionics Handbook* 165).

PSIONIC POWERS

The quori and the kalashtar especially bend psionics toward their divine missions, but anyone with psychic ability can learn these new powers.

ANCHOR PLANE

Metacreativity (Creation)

Level: Psion/wilder 8

Display: Material and visual

Manifesting Time: 8 hours

Range: See text

Area: 5-foot radius; see text

Effect: A manifest zone attuned to the plane of your choice, centered on an anchor point; see text

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Power Resistance: No

Power Points: 15, XP

You focus on the psionic anchor in a week-long ritual, attuning yourself and the area to planar energies. With a brief glow of sparkling motes, a manifest zone is born.

You create a manifest zone of a specified plane, anchored to a specific point prepared for this purpose (such as a quori monolith). The anchor point must include a Siberys dragonshard, or a piece of material or essence from the anchored plane, of at least 1,000 gp value.

This power works only while on the Material Plane, and you must remain within 30 feet of the anchor site during the entire manifestation time. Manifestation of this power creates a local weakness in the planar boundary that precipitates the creation of a 5-foot-radius manifest zone. The fledgling zone expands in radius at the rate of 5 feet per day to a maximum radius of 150 feet. Additional manifestations of this power don't stack (though multiple adjacent or overlapping areas can be created).

The new manifest zone has one planar trait of your choice from the plane to which it is connected. The manifest zone can be enhanced using *intensify manifest zone* or *psionic intensify manifest zone*.

XP Cost: 750 XP.

INTENSIFY MANIFEST ZONE, PSIONIC

Metacreativity (Creation)

Level: Psion/wilder 7

Display: Auditory

Manifesting Time: 1 day

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area: 40-ft.-radius/level emanation

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 13, XP

This power duplicates the effect of the *intensify manifest zone* spell (see page 151), except as noted here.

Unlike the spell, this power does not require a physical focus. Instead, you expend a portion of your own psionic energy to anchor the effect.

XP Cost: 500 XP.

THOUGHTSOOTHE

Telepathy [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Psion/wilder 3

Display: Mental

Manifesting Time: 1 round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets: Yourself and any number of creatures within range

Duration: 10 min./level or until triggered

Saving Throw: None (harmless)

Power Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Power Points: 5

You reach out through a telepathic link, sending waves of compassion and warmth to ease troubled minds.

You forge a minor telepathic link with other beings within range, broadcasting soothing thoughts to counteract negative emotions. You can include or exclude from this broadcast any creature you can see, as well as any creature that you know or know of.

Creatures affected by this power gain a +4 morale bonus against fear effects.

At any time during the power's duration, you can choose to trigger its secondary effect. This immediately ends the power's duration, but also instantly removes any fear effects currently affecting the power's targets. It also removes the confused and fascinated conditions from any of the power's targets.

The kalashtar use this as part of their meditative rituals during the Void of Taratai to bolster each other's emotional and psychic strength.

RELIGIOUS EQUIPMENT

Priests often use special substances and items in performing rites sacred to their gods, or to mark their faith.

BREATH OF THE DEVOURER

Followers of the Devourer use this combination of salts and crystallized acids for ceremonial purposes (or for survival in desperate straits). An ounce of this substance added to a gallon of fresh water transforms it into seawater (or vice versa). Many ceremonies to the Devourer require participants to drink seawater, and some sailors carry some breath of the Devourer for emergency use.

Price 5 gp/ounce.

EUPHORIC SACRAMENT

Worshippers of the Fury revere passions so strong that they are indistinguishable from madness. To attain such a state, some of their ceremonies involve a potent drink called the euphoric sacrament. This liquid is metallic gold and has a dizzying aroma. It is a combination of pure alcohol and certain herbal and alchemical additives.

Anyone who consumes a vial of euphoric sacrament (an ounce of liquid) must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or become *confused* for 2d4 rounds. While *confused* by the euphoric sacrament, the character gains a +2 morale bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls, but takes a –2 penalty to AC. During ceremonies, many worshippers of the Fury deliberately fail this save.

Price 100 gp/ounce.

FLAYSKIN

Flayskin is created by tanning leather through a lengthy alchemical process. (The leather is sometimes human skin, though this is not required.) When this special leather is worn against the skin, the substances within it slowly numb the wearer's flesh. The wearer still feels pain but can withstand more than normal. Followers of the Mockery sometimes use flayskin during rituals involving self-mutilation, allowing them to extend those rituals much longer than normal.

Any living creature wearing flayskin gains DR 2/lethal (that is, they gain damage reduction 2 against nonlethal damage only). A given application of flayskin functions for only 24 hours; after that time, the alchemical substances leave it brittle and useless. A suit of flayskin fits any character of its size category (Medium flayskin fits any Medium character, for instance, but won't fit a Small or Large character). Adjust the price for smaller or larger creatures as if flayskin were armor.

Price 100 gp.

GLEAMING ICON OF THE SOVEREIGN HOST

This is the Octogram, constructed of solid gold with sapphire-tinted enamel. Many consider such icons an extravagance, but rich temples of the Sovereign Host covet them as status symbols.

Not only does a gleaming icon count as a holy symbol, but any consecrate spell cast by a cleric of the Sovereign Host (or any of the deities of that pantheon) upon an area that includes a gleaming icon is treated as being cast at +1 caster level.

Price 250 gp; weight 5 lb.

MORDREI'IN

Created by the Aereni elves for use in religious rites, mordrei'in (or "leaves of death") is made of the crushed leaves of the rare *mordril* tree, combined with other sacred herbs and powders. When eaten raw, the leaves are a deadly poison (Fortitude DC 14, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con).

Mordrei'in, however, enhances the imbiber's ability to focus and is substantially less toxic (Fortitude DC 10, 1 Con/1 Con). Anyone who consumes mordrei'in (whether or not the save succeeds) gains a +2 alchemical bonus on Concentration and Spot checks for 10 minutes.

Price 25 gp (available only on Aerenal).

SILVERBURN

Silverburn is a fine powder created by exposing pure silver to a mixture of alchemical substances and acids. The process breaks down the silver, leaving a powder that causes a mundane flame to burn a deep silver in hue. Even the smoke takes on a silver sheen. The Church of the Silver Flame uses silverburn for all manner of ceremonial purposes. They have even developed variants that produce different hues, by mixing other minerals in with the silver.

Silverburn has no effect on a flame's brightness, though it has one side effect. Any creature with damage reduction overcome by silver weapons finds the luminous flames slightly uncomfortable, taking a –1 penalty on melee attacks while within the bright illumination created by such a fire.

An ounce of silverburn affects a fire the size of a torch or lantern (or can be included in a candle during its creation); a pound is necessary to affect a bonfire or similar fire source. A single dose lasts for 30 minutes (or in the case of a candle, for its entire lifespan). Any light source that doesn't actually include combustion (such as *continual flame*) is unaffected by silverburn.

Price 5 gp/ounce.

MAGIC ITEMS

Divine spellcasters and champions of the faith have access to powerful magic items.

BLACK EFFIGY

This small object generates mystic waves that impede the functioning of other magics.

Description: This is a small onyx statuette of a shadowy draconic figure, roughly the size of a loaf of bread. It seems to absorb light, rather than reflect it. Only its eyes, a piercing gold, show any color at all.

The effigy feels strange to the touch. It is abnormally smooth, and seems as though it should be slippery or difficult to hold on to, yet it is not.

Prerequisite: Due to its method of activation, few individuals who are not worshipers of the Shadow use the effigy. However, they are technically capable of doing so.

Activation: You must recite a prayer to the Shadow while holding the icon in both hands. The effect lasts for one hour, and the effigy need not remain in your possession once you activate it. By holding it and repeating a second prayer, you can deactivate the effigy (this counts as one of its daily uses). Alternatively, you can simply wait out the duration.

Effect: Three times per day, the effigy makes spellcasting within a 100-foot radius more difficult. Creatures within the area can still cast spells as normal, but take a –5 penalty on any Concentration checks to do so. Any items that expend charges or daily uses cost twice the normal amount in this area; single-use items, and items that function only once per day, fail to work at all.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint abjuration. CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *dispel magic*, creator must be a worshiper of the Shadow, 2,500 gp, 200 XP, 5 days.

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 5,000 gp.

DOMAIN ICON

The *domain icon* grants you the ability to “swap out” your own spells for spells of one specific domain.

Description: This appears to be a normal holy symbol, albeit made of solid silver. It seems unusually bright, as though recently polished.

The icon is comfortably cool to the touch, almost soothing. When in use, it grows brighter still, as though shining with its own internal light.

Prerequisite: Each *domain icon* is attuned to a specific god, as well as a specific domain of that god. If you do not worship that god, you cannot use the item.

Activation: To activate the icon, you merely hold it while casting a prepared divine spell. If you do so, and if you wish the *domain icon* to function, it does so.

Effect: Three times per day, the icon allows you to substitute a domain spell of equal or lower level for the spell you are actually casting. For instance, if you have a *domain icon* attuned to the Fire domain, you could cast any 2nd-level divine spell, and substitute either *burning hands* or *produce flame*. These spells function in all ways as though you had cast them (caster level, save DC, and the like).

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate evocation. CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *imbue with spell ability*, creator must have access to the domain to which the icon is attuned, creator must worship the deity to which the icon is attuned, 5,000 gp, 400 XP, 10 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 10,000 gp.

MASK OF THE UNDYING

You experience the existence of the deathless for a brief time.

Description: This appears to be a bronze death mask, clearly Aereni in style.

When worn, the mask reshapes itself to match the wearer's features, with an expression of profound peace. The eyes turn a deep black when the mask's powers are active, as though they were tunnels to a faraway place.

Prerequisite: This item functions properly only on elves. Others can activate it but enjoy only one benefit.

Activation: The mask is activated by speaking the phrase “Show me the path ahead” in Elven. It can be deactivated by being removed, by waiting out the duration, or with the phrase “I have seen, and I understand” in Elven. The mask functions three times per day for 10 rounds per use.

Effect: An elf wearer temporarily gains some of the features of the deathless type: darkvision 60 feet (this does not stack with existing darkvision); immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and mind-affecting spells and abilities (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects); not subject to extra damage from critical hits, nonlethal damage, or ability drain; immunity to damage to physical ability scores; immunity to fatigue and exhaustion effects; subject to energy drain; harmed by negative energy and healed by positive energy; immunity to any effect that requires a Fortitude save, except for energy drain attacks (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless).

The wearer can be turned (but not destroyed) by an evil cleric, and rebuked or bolstered (but not commanded) by a good cleric. Deathless have the opposite reaction from undead to spells such as *consecrate*, *hallow*, *desecrate*, and *unhallow*, as well as to holy water. Spells such as *control undead* and *halt undead* do not work against the wearer, but spells such as *control deathless* and *halt deathless* do. While the mask is active, the wearer can't be affected by *raise dead* or *reincarnate* spells or abilities.

The wearer doesn't gain any other features of the deathless type. Hit points, skills, base attack bonus, and saves do not change. Unlike a true deathless, the wearer retains his Constitution score.

A person who is not an elf, and who activates this item, gains darkvision out to 60 feet, but no other abilities.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate necromancy. CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *create deathless**, creator must have access to the Deathless domain, 11,000 gp, 880 XP, 22 days.

Weight: 2 lb.

Price: 22,000 gp.

VESTMENT OF FLESH

This horrific garment grants your flesh unnatural resilience.

Description: This vest (or, in a few rare cases, shirt) is an odd tan color. It appears supple yet strong, like thin leather.

When held against the flesh, the vestment feels disturbingly warm, as though it were the skin of a still-living creature. When worn, it darkens slightly, as if blood were again flowing through it.

Prerequisite: The *vestment of flesh* must be made from the skin of the individual for whom it is being created, and functions only for that creature. During the item's creation, the intended owner takes 1 point of Constitution damage each day.

Activation: The vestment automatically activates each day at midnight, so long as it is worn, and remains active until the temporary hit points it grants are exhausted.

Effect: The vestment grants you 10 temporary hit points each time it activates; multiple activations of the vestment do not stack. As long as you have at least 1 temporary hit point from the vest remaining, you also gain DR 5/magic.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint necromancy. CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *false life*, 4,500 gp, 360 XP, 9 days.

Weight: 5 lb.

Price: 9,000 gp.

DRAGONSHARD HOLY SYMBOLS

Dragonshards can be incorporated into cleric holy symbols to grant power over various sorts of creatures.

Eberron Shard Holy Symbol

Eberron dragonshards, due to their connection with the world, can be incorporated into a cleric's holy symbol to grant power over denizens of other planes.

Description: An *Eberron shard holy symbol* looks like the mundane version of the symbol, except that it is crafted of precious metals and has an Eberron dragonshard set into its center. Each holy symbol is attuned to one of the thirteen outer planes at the time of creation. A rune that identifies that plane (see illustration, ECS 93) appears on the symbol.

When a cleric uses the holy symbol's ability, the shard within glows a deep crimson.

Activation: You activate the item's ability as part of a turning attempt, presenting the holy symbol forcefully. Each use of the item counts as one of your daily turn/rebuke attempts. If you have more than one kind of turn/rebuke attempt, you choose which one you use each time you activate the item.

You can spend 1 action point to use this item one additional time in a day.

Effect: You rebuke (but not command or bolster) creatures native to the plane to which the item is attuned as an evil cleric rebukes undead. For lists of sample creatures native to each plane, see ECS 94–100.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration. CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *dismissal*, 4,500 gp, 360 XP, 9 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 9,000 gp.

Khyber Shard Holy Symbol

In addition to their various uses for binding and controlling, Khyber dragonshards can be incorporated into a cleric's holy symbol to grant power over elementals.

Description: A *Khyber shard holy symbol* looks like the mundane version of the symbol, except that it is crafted of precious metals and has a Khyber dragonshard set into its center. Each holy symbol is attuned to one of the four elements at the time of creation. The shard's setting has a specific shape for each element.

Element	Setting Shape	Opposing Element
Air	Circle	Earth
Earth	Lozenge (diamond)	Air
Fire	Triangle	Water
Water	Teardrop	Fire

When a cleric uses the holy symbol's ability, the shard within glows a deep blue.

Activation: You activate the item's ability as part of a turning attempt, presenting the holy symbol forcefully. Each use of the item counts as one of your daily turn/rebuke attempts. If you have more than one kind of turn/rebuke attempt, you choose which one you use each time you activate the item.

You can spend 1 action point to use this item one additional time in a day.

Effect: You turn or destroy creatures of the item's opposing element as a good cleric turns undead, or you rebuke, command, or bolster creatures of the inset element as an evil cleric rebukes undead.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration. CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *dismissal*, 3,500 gp, 280 XP, 7 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 7,000 gp.

Siberys Shard Holy Symbol

In addition to their ability to enhance spell-like abilities and psionics, Siberys dragonshards can be incorporated into a cleric's holy symbol to grant power over the dragonmarked.

Description: A *Siberys shard holy symbol* looks like the mundane version of the symbol, except that it is crafted of precious metals and has a Siberys dragonshard set into its center. Each holy symbol is attuned to one of the twelve dragonmarks at the time of creation. A reproduction of the lesser version of the dragonmark appears on the symbol.

When a cleric uses the holy symbol's ability, the shard within glows a brilliant orange-yellow, like molten gold.

Activation: You activate the item's ability as part of a turning attempt, presenting the holy symbol forcefully. You can use this ability a total number of times per day equal to your cleric level + your Cha modifier.

You can spend 1 action point to use this item one additional time in a day.

Effect: You rebuke (but not command or bolster) creatures bearing the dragonmark to which the holy symbol is attuned, as an evil cleric rebukes undead.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong abjuration. CL 13th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *repulsion*, 1,500 gp, 120 XP, 3 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 3,000 gp.

CONSTRUCT GRAFTS

Most living creatures are quite happy with their own bodies, but a few disturbed (or, as they see it, daring) individuals are fascinated with the idea of blending living flesh with artificial body parts. In so doing, they hope to prolong life, increase soldiers' and laborers' strength and endurance, and otherwise benefit society. Unfortunately, the result too often is a horror rejected by the living and driven to madness by its disparate pieces.

Construct grafters often have some magical aptitude, especially in the artificer class, and might already be experts in creating golems and other constructs. House Cannith, unsurprisingly, produces a disproportionate number of such experimenters, but they can come from any race and culture. Construct grafters might be non-warforged beings who are obsessed with the Becoming God (see page 116) and believe they can enhance their own souls by enhancing their bodies with construct parts. Or they might be heretics who are trying to bring the fleshbound into communion with the Becoming God. Some are just crazed.

Grafts involve taking a portion of an existing creature (or, in the case of construct grafts, an artificial body part) and transplanting it into or onto the body of another living creature. Grafting is essentially an alternative method of item creation, and its benefits are many. Bearers gain the benefits of magic items without actually wearing a magic item, and many grafts are difficult to spot under casual observation, allowing their bearer an unseen advantage when other potent items are unavailable.

Construct grafts can be created and applied only by someone with the Construct Grafter feat (see page 145). While the creation and application of a graft is similar in theory to the principles involved in the creation of wondrous items, grafts involve the magical manipulation of biological processes and structures. The grafter must have an excellent knowledge of anatomy and be able to integrate artificial body parts with flesh.

An individual can have a total of only five grafts grown on his body, and all grafts must be of the same kind. A single body can only support so many augmentations before it is overwhelmed with competing biomagical signals that result in death or (more often) madness. No portion of the body (head, skin, flesh, legs, and arms) can have more than one graft. Furthermore, two different kinds of grafts (such as construct grafts and undead grafts) cannot be applied to the same character. Rumors of individuals who have attempted to bypass these biological limits abound, but such monstrosities—for that is what such creatures become—rarely live long.

Using a graft requires a sacrifice from the host. Construct grafts take a toll on a creature's body. In most cases, a graft simply applies a permanent reduction to the

character's hit point total (this reduction is not damage and cannot be healed). Other grafts might cause a permanent reduction in an ability score or a permanent penalty on certain checks or saves. A creature with a graft cannot get rid of the penalties or other costs of a graft unless the graft is removed. The specific penalties of a graft are detailed under each graft's Graft Sacrifice entry.

All grafts come from a donor creature, or are grown from tissues taken from one or more creatures. Each graft has a Graft Donor entry that describes where the graft originates. If taken from a donor creature, the graft materials must be no more than seven days old when creation of the graft begins.

Grafts are difficult to remove. Grafts have no statistics of their own and cannot be attacked or damaged separately from the creature to which they are grafted. A character with the Construct Grafter feat can remove a construct graft safely from a living creature; this requires 8 hours of work in a quiet setting (similar to creating a graft). A graft safely removed can be applied to another character, though this must take place within 24 hours of it being removed and deals 4d6 points of Constitution damage to the character receiving the used graft.

Without the proper feat, a graft can be removed only if the body part to which it is grafted is removed (a grisly task to be sure); even then, the graft is irreparably intertwined with the flesh and cannot be reused. Likewise, a graft on a creature that dies is killed at the same time, and cannot be harvested and reused—this means that an NPC's graft probably cannot be recovered as treasure.

A graft is not a magic item. It does not radiate magic once completed (although a graft might require the casting of specific spells as part of the construction process), and it does not take up a body slot like a magic item would. A graft can't be suppressed with *dispel magic*, nor is it affected by an *antimagic field* or similar effect.

Multiple construct grafts bestow a cumulative benefit upon their host. A character with at least two construct grafts gains damage reduction X/adamantine, where X equals the number of construct grafts he has minus one (DR 1/adamantine for two construct grafts, DR 2/adamantine for three, and so on). This damage reduction stacks with similar DR gained from other sources (such as the Adamantine Body feat).

In addition, the character's natural attacks overcome damage reduction as if they were adamantine weapons.

Finally, the implantation of multiple construct grafts increases the character's ability to resist some physical effects. A character with at least two construct grafts gains a bonus on saves to resist energy drain, death effects, and necromancy effects equal to the number of construct grafts he has.

CREATING A CONSTRUCT GRAFT

The creation of a construct graft must be in a quiet and comfortable setting and requires a supply of materials, including the donated body part. The cost for the materials is subsumed in the cost for creating the graft. Creating a graft otherwise works exactly like crafting a wondrous item, including the cost to create, time required, preparation of spells required, and expenditure of components, focuses, or XP required by the spells (except as noted below). If a graft incurs extra costs in material components or XP, as noted in its description,

these costs are in addition to those derived from the graft's base price.

Unlike creating normal magic items, construct grafts need not be crafted during consecutive days. A creator can spend a day here and there tending an assimilating graft, but it is not functional until the total time necessary to complete the graft has been spent. In addition, a character cannot spend more than a week between the days that he works on an incomplete graft. Doing so means the incomplete graft is rejected, and the crafter loses a portion of the gp involved in the graft's creation equal to the amount of time spent working on it. However, the crafter does not lose any XP until the graft is completed.

A grafter must devote 8 hours on days during which he works on the graft. Failure to do so means the day's work is wasted, and no gp or XP costs are incurred.

The recipient of the construct graft does not incur any of the penalties involved with acquiring a graft until it is attached in the second phase of the procedure. A graft is created apart from its intended host until it is completed, much like any magic item. It is then attached in an 8-hour procedure, during which time both grafter and recipient must be present. Once a graft is fully constructed, it requires care from the creator until it is attached. A completed graft outside a host body requires 1 hour of care each day or is no longer usable.

CONSTRUCT GRAFTS

Construct Graft	Price
Adamantine Skin	11,000 gp
Heart of Steel	9,000 gp
Heavy Legs	6,000 gp
Mighty Arms	1,000 gp
Wakeful Mind	14,000 gp

ADAMANTINE SKIN

Your skin is hardened with adamantine composite plating similar to that of a warforged. As a result, your vulnerable areas are now protected.

Graft Location: Skin.

Description: Metal plating covers your body. It shines dully and allows some of your skin to show through.

Adamantine skin makes your body bulky, but does not hinder your movements.

Activation: Adamantine skin is always active once the graft is installed. The graft requires no action on your part to activate or deactivate.

Effect: You gain a +5 armor bonus to AC. This does not stack with any other effect that provides an armor bonus to AC (such as *bracers of armor*), but it can be enhanced as if it were a suit of armor.

Adamantine skin also provides DR 2/adamantine and gives you light fortification (25% chance to negate the extra damage from a critical hit or sneak attack).

Adamantine skin counts as medium armor for the purpose of determining movement and other effects. You have a +3 maximum Dexterity modifier to AC, a –3 armor check penalty, and an arcane spell failure chance of 25%.

You cannot wear armor or robes if you have adamantine skin.

Construction: Construct Grafter†, 5,500 gp, 440 XP, 11 days.

Graft Donor: Adamantine plating from a warforged.

Graft Sacrifice: 4 hp.

Price: 11,000 gp.

HEART OF STEEL

Some warforged internal "organs" are grafted into you, giving you some of the construct's indomitability.

Graft Location: Flesh.

Description: Although there is no obvious physical change to your appearance, you seem more fit and have an attitude of confidence.

Activation: Heart of steel is always active once the graft is installed. It requires no action on your part to activate or deactivate.

Effect: You gain immunity to disease, paralysis, and poison.

A side effect of this graft is that you are less affected by healing magic. Any spell from the healing subschool or supernatural ability that cures hit point or ability damage, including healing potions, provides only half its normal effect to you (as if you were a warforged). You still are not a construct, so you do not benefit from *repair damage* spells and similar effects.

Construction: Construct Grafter†, *neutralize poison*, *remove disease*, *remove paralysis*, 4,500 gp, 360 XP, 9 days.

Graft Donor: A piece extracted from the internal anatomy of a warforged.

CONSTRUCT GRAFTS AS TREASURE

Construct grafts enhance a character's abilities in much the same way that magic equipment does, but they are not as readily available. Because they affect a character's abilities like equipment does, they have an equivalent gold piece value.

When adding a construct graft to an NPC, the DM should count the graft's gp equivalent as part of the total value of the NPC's equipment. After all, the powers granted by the graft factor into the NPC's Challenge Rating just like magic items do. However, an NPC's grafts are almost certainly not going to be claimed as treasure, and so the monetary reward for defeating

such an NPC is artificially lowered. If you anticipate this being a problem, consider adding treasure to the NPC's hoard by an amount somewhere between 50% and 100% of the graft's gp cost to make up for the loss. For example, if the PCs defeat an NPC with a *wakeful eye* graft, consider adding somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 gp of treasure to the NPC's hoard (such as jewelry, gems, or coins—not in additional equipment that might be used by the NPC). The lower end of this range describes the value they would get for selling an equivalent magic item, while the upper end is how much an equivalent magic item would cost them to buy.



A mighty arm bestows a powerful slam attack on the grafted creature

Graft Sacrifice: 2 hp, half benefit from healing magic.

Price: 9,000 gp.

HEAVY LEGS

Your legs have been replaced with construct limbs, giving you greater endurance.

Graft Location: Legs.

Description: Heavy legs are typically built of wood and metal, sheathed in armor plating, like those of a warforged. They are much larger and bulkier-looking than your original legs.

Heavy legs can be fitted with warforged components that attach to the foot or leg.

Activation: Heavy legs are always active once the graft is installed. The graft requires no action on your part to activate or deactivate.

Effect: You take no penalties for being fatigued. If you are exhausted, you are instead treated as being fatigued.

The bulk of these legs hinders you slightly when swimming, resulting in a –2 penalty on Swim checks.

Construction: Construct Grafter†, *bear's endurance*, 3,000 gp, 240 XP, 6 days.

Graft Donor: Legs from a golem or warforged, or constructed mechanical legs.

Graft Sacrifice: 2 hp, –2 penalty on Swim checks.

Price: 6,000 gp.

MIGHTY ARMS

Your arms are built of artificial materials, allowing you to use them to make slam attacks.

Graft Location: Arms.

Description: Mighty arms are built of wood and metal, and sheathed in armor plating, like those of a warforged. They are much larger and bulkier-looking than your original arms.

Mighty arms can be fitted with warforged components, such as battlefists, that attach to the hand or arm.

Activation: Using this construct graft in combat requires an attack action, or is part of the full attack action if you are also making weapon attacks.

Effect: You gain a natural weapon slam attack that deals damage as a construct of your size (1d4 for a Medium creature). You can make a slam attack while wielding a weapon in the other hand, in which case it is treated as a secondary attack (–5 penalty on attack roll).

Construction: Construct Grafter†, *bull's strength*, 500 gp, 40 XP, 1 day.

Graft Donor: A pair of arms from a warforged, or constructed mechanical arms.

Graft Sacrifice: 2 hp.

Price: 1,000 gp.

WAKEFUL MIND

Part of the artificial nervous system of a warforged has been grafted onto your own. As a result, you gain the wakefulness of a construct.

Graft Location: Head.

Description: Wakeful mind isn't visible once it's been implanted, but outside a body it resembles a smooth gem, usually yellow or green, with a dim glow at its center. Cablelike tendrils extend from the gem to fuse with your body.

Activation: Wakeful mind is always active once the graft is installed. It requires no action on your part to activate or deactivate.

Effect: You gain immunity to sleep and stunning effects.

In addition, you no longer need to sleep. If sleep is normally required for you to regain spells or other special abilities, you must still rest for the same period of time as you would normally sleep.

As a side effect, the wakeful mind interferes slightly with your normal mental faculties. You take a –2 penalty on Knowledge checks.

Construction: Construct Grafter†, *lesser restoration*, 7,000 gp, 560 XP, 14 days.

Graft Donor: A small portion of the brain of a warforged.

Graft Sacrifice: 2 hp, –2 penalty on Knowledge checks.

Price: 14,000 gp.

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