

Organizations in the World of Ursole

A **Tears of Blood** Campaign Supplement



Full Release Version 1.1

Introduction

This supplement is intended for use with the Tears of Blood Campaign Setting, but most of the information can be adapted for use in any fantasy themed role playing game.

The Tears of Blood Campaign Setting is free for download here:

<http://tears-of-blood.weebly.com/>

The information contained in this supplement originally appeared on a group of user forums on the Giant in The Playground website as part of a Community Built Campaign Setting. A meeting place for enthusiasts of role-play gaming, as well as the online comic "Order of the Stick", the Playground can be found here: <http://www.giantitp.com/index.html>

Prologue (Inspired by a post by Alarra)

The Tears of Blood setting is a fantastic, gritty world in which magic is common, but suspicious, and not openly accepted by all. It has been useless against a devastating and unnatural Plague, leaving damaged and shattered civilizations in its wake, and twisted wrecks of its survivors. The world is called Ursoule, and the main continent is known as Terdusas. And it is tearing itself apart.

Most of the core D20 races are present in this world, but with slight alterations. Humans are changed the least, with new cultures and religions. Dwarves have a martial culture, with a long history as mercenaries. Elves have an ancestor race known as the Feldarin, who were the overlords of most of Terdusas until the Plague reduced them to a fraction of their former power. Some Feldarin were gifted with celestial powers in a bargain with a malevolent being with devastating consequences, but which also created the Elves of this world. Halflings are the lords of the Seas; explorers, pirates, and merchants all. Gnomes ride great mechanical vessels and populate the realms both above and below the surface. Orrks are a devoutly religious people living in the dense jungles of a distant continent. There are new races: the reflective Giantkin, who for unknown reasons are immune to the Plague, the twisted Plague-touched, and the unnatural Fleshwrought. Few "Half"-races exist other than Half-Dragons.

Behind the scenes, many factions are at work. An ancient Dracolich plots underground, helping shape the nature of at least one of the world's core races. The Five Gods are disputed between cultures, but are almost always defined by the concepts of War, Death (or Life), Magic, Travel, and Nature. In addition to these, there is another god-like being known as the "Plague Fiend," who by a bargain with the Elves gained the power to cause suffering to all races. Some say it brought the Plague to the world, but, truly, no one knows the source of the Plague, known as "The Weeping". Nearly all, however, felt its sting.

Other influences include opposing Guilds and Nobles scrambling to fill the voids left when their competitors fell from the Plague, secret and not-so-secret organizations with their own agendas, groups that attempt to "regulate" sorcerous magic, as well as various settlements, clans, and city-states that are struggling just to survive. Bizarre post-Plague cults are appearing everywhere, some of whom actually seem able to obtain divine magic. Monsters are stirring both above and below ground, and may be massing to create their own "new world order." In short, the world is in chaos, and into this maelstrom strides your group of adventurers. Will they survive? You, as the DM, will be the final judge of that.

Table of Contents

Organization Name	Page	Area	Race	Type
Aulay's Axes	4	Any	Dwarves	Martial
Ayuvites	6	Pahal	Human	Divine
Beautiful People	9	Phoedra	Human	Other
Bloodknights	11	Kvrin	Any	Martial
Callers of the Summer Rain	14	Pahal	Human	Divine
Cleansers of the Plague	19	Any	Construct	Other
Cult of the Ancient	24	Empire	Human	Rebel
Cult of the Ascension	25	Empire	Feldarin	Divine
Custodis Imperia	26	Empire	Feldarin	Martial
Elegant Surprises	27	Beneath	Gnome	Other
Elven Council	30	Elflands	Elves	Other
Followers of Baa'Te	31	Any	Any	Other
Gnaritas Occultus	33	Any	Most	Arcane
Gnomish Secret Societies	35	Beneath	Gnomes	Arcane
Grinning Dragon Trade Association	37	Beneath	Gnomes	Trade
Halfpint Holesale Merchant's Guild	39	Any	Halflings	Trade
Ilnezhit A'dran ("Hidden Death")	40	Empire	Many	Other
Imperial Loyalty & Equality Alliance (ILEA)	41	Empire	Human	Other
Inculpators	43	Empire	Feldarin	Martial
Ironthunder and her Crew	47	Any	Gnome	Trade
Mah'kaarite Sect	58	Pahal	Human	Divine
Nexorum	67	Empire	Human	Rebel
Order of the Hidden Fire	68	Any	Any	Other
Order of Salvation	77	Any	Any	Martial
Order of the Sword and Shield, Magical	81	Beneath	Gnome	Martial
Red Sun Rising Merchant House	83	Any	Any	Trade
Servants of the Red Tear	85	Kvrin	Human	Other
Shadows of the Sunlit World	86	Beneath	Gnome	Other
Sisters of Pleasure	89	Any	Any	Other
Slaves of Telus	90	Phoedra	Human	Other
Stehngaard	92	Kvrin	Human	Martial
Terdusas Adventurer's Guild (TAG)	93	Any	Any	Other
Timeless Fellowship	94	Al-Barajah	Human	Other
Weeping Lily	96	Ocean	Halfling	Piracy
Wives of Caerwyn	97	Kvrin	Human	Other
Bonus – Feldarin Army Recruitment Poster	100	-	-	-

Area refers to the geographic area of influence, or the most common area where found
Race refers to the most common (or in some cases only) race among the membership
Type refers to the general purpose of the group. The types are Arcane, Divine, Martial, Rebel, Trade and Other.

General Note on Gnomish organizations: Many of the Gnomish organizations are connected in ways designed to be useful to a DM. For example, the Grinning Dragon Trade Association gets training on the surface world from the Shadows of the Sunlit World. But some in the Grinning Dragon resent the Shadows because they are associated with the Sunlit Shadows of Law, who enforce the stringent Gnomish "Surface Laws." This can lead to some interesting situations if both groups are encountered, or come into direct contact.

Aulay's Axes, commonly called "the Axes"

Author: Total_Viking_Power

Location: Found everywhere their contracts take them, their strongest influence is in the Dwarf Clan **Nine-Fathers'-Sons**, a traditionally nomadic Somerled-affiliated clan.

Demographics: Open to Dwarves only. Outsiders may be used as tools or even allies, but are ultimately seen as inferior pawns used to execute the will of Aulay.

Beliefs: Traditional Dwarven beliefs do not allow Dwarves to neglect service to their gods. It does, however, give clans and individual Dwarves the right to favor one of the deities over the others, and only honoring the rest on their proper Holy Days. This has enabled the secretive Aulay's Axes to survive and flourish. Their belief strays from standard Dwarven doctrine on two points, the first being that Aulay, God of War and Allfather, is the only true Dwarven god, and the other gods are merely servants of lesser divine measure. The second is that Aulay desires war. Lusts for it even. War is a holy duty unto itself. In the past this doctrine had little favor with anyone but most martial members of the cult, but since The Weeping, many have come to hold a bleaker and more destructive view of the world.

These beliefs are condemned as deadly heresy by most Dwarven clergy, but little can be done, as the cult is now vast and scattered, and its members openly observe all the proper religious rituals. The Weeping is the best thing that ever happened to the once tiny cult. First it gained prominence in the Nine-Fathers'-Sons, and then it began to spread among disillusioned Dwarves with a thirst for vengeance or those just searching for some meaning to their existence. Thus the plague is seen as a sign from Aulay, that the "Time of Strife" has come, the prophesied final hour of Dwarves in this world.

Individual members are referred to as Axes, or when addressing each other: Brother Ax, Sister Ax, or Brethren Ax. Other local names may exist, as no practice of the cult forbids it.

Size: No one knows the exact number of Axes, as there is no formal structure that keeps track of members. It might be fewer than a thousand all told, or it might be more than ten thousand. In the Nine-Fathers'-Sons, almost 300 cultists exist, gaining influence as time passes. Other cadres are up to the individual DM. The core of the Nine-Fathers'-Sons cadre consists of 20 members: 5 clerics of Aulay (one of whom is the cult leader), 10 fighters and rangers in high positions in the clan hierarchy, and 5 others of varied background, mostly rogues and barbarians, who relay decisions and ordinances from the inner circle to the other cadres and various contacts of the cult.

Alignment: Though varying greatly among the lower ranking members, most tend toward Chaotic (Neutral or Evil). The leader is Chaotic (Neutral), and none in the inner circle are either Good or Lawful. Though war is their purpose, slaughtering the innocent has never been an agenda of the Axes, hence Neutral.

Rituals/Observances: Most members seem to care little for such things, and only differ from their non-Axe brethren by occasionally neglecting prayers to the other gods and often appearing joyful and celebratory instead of grim and determined in times of bloody warfare.

In clans with powerful and devoted Axe cadres, especially in Nine-Fathers'-Sons, rituals unique to the cult are performed. The chief of these are the "Offerings of War," where captured enemies are sacrificed on pyres, and cult members chant and fight ritual duels.

Among these rituals are the "Brothers' Pact." A close bond with your battle mate is often essential for survival, but this is Dwarven bonding taken to an extreme. The Pact is a bare-fisted fight to the last Dwarf standing (through blood loss or head trauma). Some cadres take it a step further and perform ritual scarification of the normally hidden parts on the bodies of the losers, usually somewhere from the neck down so as to be hidden by armor.

Symbols: The standard crossed weapons of Aulay is always worn by members, and is always crossed axes, but refinements to this design are common. Often the Axes become red, or double edged. Personal markings are also used to indicate a closer bond with Aulay (in the eyes of the Axes). As mentioned, many members are ritually scarred. These scars may vary according to the demeanor and artistic talent of one's Brother or Sister Ax. Some of them attempt to depict scenes of carnage, or terrifying monsters. Most however are just masses of badly treated scarification and seem to be nothing more than battle scars.

Tactics: The cult does not usually fight as a unit itself, since its members are Dwarven mercenaries already in a clan army. If discovered and challenged by the established Dwarven clergy, however, they will fight as a unit, back to back if surrounded, shoulder to shoulder if not. Any Axes who are within sight of a fight involving others of the cult will often rush to their aid, even if doing so compromises their otherwise unchallenged cover. Lower ranking members are sometimes even told to do so. Higher ranking members will only reveal themselves if doing so gives them or the cult an advantage.

However, the cult does frequently try to influence their clan's tactical dispositions, pressing for combat at every turn. Many fine tacticians have become Axes of late, and not all the proposed actions are as reckless as they sound.

Leaders and Important NPC's:

Ragnulf Hargasax: A cleric of Aulay in the Nine-Fathers'-Sons, he is the nominal leader of Aulay's Axes. He gained his position in the inner circle of the sect during the height of The Weeping. The former cult leader, Mugundyr, failed to see the great opportunity the plague held for the Axes, and was outmaneuvered by his younger apprentice. Since the duel that ended Mugundyr's life, Ragnulf has gathered more influence in the Clan, and argues for expansion both in and out of the Nine-Fathers'-Sons. His motives are first and foremost to gain total control of his clan, preferably as its High Priest. He also vows to throw the entire Dwarven population into war. Not on any particular side, or to any one goal, but to have them all fighting in open warfare at once. When this is achieved, he believes, the End will come, and Ursoule will break under the wrath of Aulay. He is deranged, but in a cold and calculating manner, making him even harder to expose. While not cruel, he is indifferent, and his dealings with others bear witness to this. He is not very well liked within the Clan, although he is fiercely respected and revered by the warriors. Though he does not impress with his lack of certainty on the will of any god but Aulay, he has other ways of influence. He is openly opposed to the politics of the High Priest, who wants to unite and regroup the scattered Clans rather than to seek out combat whenever possible. Ragnulf has so far escaped the wrath of the Council and the Chieftain, but he somewhat angers the less gifted and experienced High Priest, who feels he is losing grip on the hearts of his Clanmates.

Sigfran Fåham: A ranger and lieutenant of Nine-Fathers'-Sons, his Cult duties are as a liaison to various other cadres. He is a well liked and influential officer in the ranger battalion of the Clan. He does not seem the type to crave war and destruction, with an easy-going manner and an intense interest in keeping his warriors alive. This is, however, a mask he carries. He never publicly supports Ragnulf, rather the opposite. All in all, he would be the last one the High Priest suspects, if ever the cult is discovered. This fact and his skills

both in the field and as a honey-tongued diplomat make him the most important agent of the cult. Encounters with a ranking member of the cult outside Nine-Fathers'-Sons will most likely be with Sigfran or his aide, Fylga, a female Dwarven scout.

Gunröd Ylvasdottir: A young priestess of Aulay, she is the next generation, the one who must complete the great work of Ragnulf should he perish before he succeeds. Personally, she would rather see the world ended sooner than later, but not out of lack of ambition. Her devices are what keep the High Priest from unraveling the conspiracy of the Axes. Her high birth makes her influential enough to have a say in any important matter of the Clan, and her wits and the cunning strategy she and Ragnulf have devised keeps her just out of suspicion of being on his side, while still backing him (grudgingly, it appears). Slowly she has gained the confidence of the High Priest, who is glad to have a "loyal colleague" with whom to share his secret concerns. The loss of her father, brothers and a great many friends to The Weeping is what nudged her already somewhat strained sanity off the peg, making her a willing victim of Ragnulf's cunning persuasion. She longs to end her life, but is too proud to do it any other way than by taking the world and all Dwarvenkind with her.

The Ayuvites (also called "The Order of the Third Eye")

Author: Mephibosheth

Location: Found wherever Ayudh is worshipped, and outside of Pahal the sect has little (if any) influence or presence. Members of the sect are concentrated around the plague-ridden city of Chamakila Pura, where the sect's teachings of non-aggressive vigilance and defense are quite popular and the worship of the god is strongest. The temple of Ayudh in Chamakila Pura is the organizational and spiritual center of the movement.

Demographics: Most Ayuvites are Human monks, bards, or divine spell-casters, though the movement welcomes anyone who worships Ayudh and espouses the doctrines of defense and non-aggressive vigilance. As the movement gains in popularity, its members are starting to include people of all walks of life, though the more martial classes (Fighter, Paladin, etc) are understandably under-represented. The Ayuvites are mostly Pahali humans, though some Halflings and Baran humans have joined the sect as they encounter the worship of Ayudh on trade visits to Pahal. The demographics of the sect are limited mostly due to the lack of familiarity with Ayudh outside of Pahal.

Beliefs: Not much is known about the founding of the Ayuvite sect. It is commonly believed that the sect originated with a particularly charismatic priest named Mohan. Shocked by the violence of the nearby Feldarin invasion and the near-catastrophe for Chamakila Pura after The Weeping, he turned to Ayudh's teachings of non-aggression as the salvation of the people. As his influence in Chamakila Pura's political and spiritual communities increased, his teachings began to spread to the common people of the city and its surrounding lands, and he took the title of Udhapa to lead his followers. Since then, the sect has grown slowly as wandering monks from Chamakila Pura have brought the teachings to other villages.

The core teachings of the Ayuvites are relatively simple. They believe that only he who truly practices non-aggression can meet Ayudh, and that the way to spiritual fulfillment is only by eliminating aggression in all forms. It also teaches that one should be vigilant in all aspects of life, from preparing for invasion to keeping a lifestyle in accordance with the teachings of Ayudh. The sect is overwhelmingly lawful, and trains its monks in what is called "The Disciplines," a series of defensive techniques and verbal judo designed to forestall violent combat. Many of the Monks in the cult take the Vow of Peace to show their devotion.

Size: The total number of Ayuvites is unknown, but the leadership estimates that there are around 2500 Ayuvites in and surrounding Chamakila Pura. The sect is growing quickly, however, and is rapidly expanding throughout Pahal.

Alignment: The Ayuvite sect is a religious group that seeks to increase the influence of non-aggressive teachings. People join the group seeking security against danger and spiritual fulfillment in these teachings. The sect teaches that true non-aggression is the only way to truly meet with Ayudh. The group also seeks to increase the political influence of its passive defense techniques and philosophies. This emphasis on non-aggression leads most of its members toward Neutral and non-evil alignments.

Rituals/Observances: The Ayuvites are a religious movement dedicated to spreading the teachings of Ayudh, the Pahali aspect of war and peace. They focus particularly on his teachings of non-aggressive vigilance and defensive techniques as a method of dealing with enemies. It is commonly believed that the formation of the Ayuvites was prompted by a short-lived Feldarin invasion of Pahal in 390 A.L. that, although it ended in failure, showed the Pahali what could happen in the future.

The Ayuvites are centered in the temple of Ayudh in Chamakila Pura, where the Udhapa is their spiritual leader, as well as controlling the worldly aspects of the sect. Except for the temple staff, the sect is extremely diffuse and disorganized, with little capacity for collective action except by spiritual inspiration and mass movement.

Symbols: The "Begging Bowl" and stylized "Eye of Ayudh." Ayuvites are often seen with a stylized eye painted on their forehead in gray pigment or ashes. This has led to the group's members being called "The Order of the Third Eye" by some.

Leader: The leader of the Ayuvites is a Bhukshai who is called Udhapa Mahinsa. Udhapa is a title that means "teacher" and is always bestowed upon the leader of the Ayuvites. This is the spiritual leader of the group with direct influence over the members. Under the Udhapa are a small group of monks who assist the Udhapa and a larger group of monks who are sent out by the temple to wander and preach the teachings of Ayudh. These monks always have levels in the Monk class, and they almost always take levels of the Ayuvite Prestige Class (detailed below). The group places little emphasis on hierarchy and, despite the individual discipline of the members, is rather unorganized.

Allies & Enemies: Typical of Pahali religious belief, the Ayuvite sect is not openly opposed by any religious groups, nor does it openly reject the teachings of any other group. On the whole, the movement is relatively benign, though it is often opposed politically by other, more aggressive groups and religious sects, particularly those devoted to Khastijit. It has also aroused the ire of the Samraath from time to time as it works to counteract aggressive policies enacted by the central government, who are also concerned over the Feldarin.

Ayuvite Prestige Class

Hit Dice: d8

Requirements: Base Attack Bonus: +5; Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 10 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 10 ranks; Flurry of Blows class feature; Must worship Ayudh and be a member of the Ayuvite sect.

Class Skills :

Class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Perception (Wis), Perform

(Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Stealth (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Monk Abilities, Discipline of the Breath of Fire (Dazzled)
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	-
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Discipline of the Body's Fluidity (Charm)
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Discipline of the Rising Breath (mundane mobility)
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Discipline of the Breath of Fire (Dazed)
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Discipline of the Body's Fluidity (Suggestion)
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	-
8	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	Discipline of the Rising Breath (extradimensional)
9	+6/+1	+6	+3	+6	Discipline of the Breath of Fire (Stunned)
10	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7	Discipline of the Body's Fluidity

Class Features

Monk Abilities: Beginning at first level and continuing at every odd level, an Ayuvite gains increased power and endurance. The Ayuvite's unarmed strike damage, armor class bonus, and unarmored speed increase as if he/she had gained a level in the monk base class.

Discipline of the Breath of Fire (Su): Beginning at first level, an Ayuvite can imbue his/her body with an aura of fire by making a successful Concentration check, DC 10 + total character levels. Any opponent within 20 feet of the Ayuvite must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 + the Ayuvite's Wisdom modifier) or be dazzled for 1 round per class level. At fifth level, any opponent affected by the **Discipline of the Breath of Fire** ability becomes both dazed and dazzled for 1 round per class level. At ninth level, any opponent affected by the **Discipline of the Breath of Fire** ability becomes both stunned and dazzled for 1 round per class level. Those more than 20 feet from the Ayuvite are unaffected, including those previously affected who can remain more than 20 from an Ayuvite for at least one round.

Discipline of the Body's Fluidity (Sp): Beginning at third level, the Ayuvite's advanced understanding of the nature of humanoids enables them to separate their spirit from their body and influence the actions of others. A number of times per day equal to ½ their class level, the Ayuvite may attempt to influence the behavior of any single humanoid within 60 feet. If unwilling, the target may make a Will save (DC equal to the Ayuvite's class levels + Wisdom modifier) to resist the effect. If the save fails, the target behaves as if under the influence of a *Charm Person* spell.

Establishing this control is a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity. The Ayuvite may take a -2 penalty to the DC to establish control without provoking an attack of opportunity. Once control is established, the Ayuvite may direct the subject within the limits allowed by the effects of the spell as a free action. Maintaining control requires a standard action, and the Ayuvite may only move at ½ speed while concentrating on this ability. If the Ayuvite is damaged while controlling a subject, he/she must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + ½ damage dealt) or lose control.

Beginning at sixth level, the **Discipline of the Body's Fluidity** ability mimics a *Suggestion* spell. Beginning at tenth level, the **Discipline of the Body's Fluidity** ability mimics a *Dominate Person* spell.

Discipline of the Rising Breath (Su): Beginning at fourth level, the Ayuuvite's mobility is enhanced. The Ayuuvite walks between 1 inch and 1 foot above any terrain, and can move through any sort of terrain that slows movement (such as undergrowth, rubble, and similar terrain) at normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. This ability does not allow normal movement through terrain that requires a Climb or Swim check to navigate, nor through terrain or undergrowth that has been magically altered to impede movement. Additionally, beginning at eighth level, the Ayuuvite may use *Dimension Door* as a spell-like ability twice per day. The caster level is equal to the total class levels.

The Beautiful People

Author: Elvaris

Phoedrans are, as a culture, preoccupied with self improvement. Some of history's most enlightened philosophers, noble heroes, and greatest athletes have come from the Poleis. Only the search for wisdom rivals the quest for physical beauty in a Phoedran's life.

Though in some cases, it's a losing battle.

The Beautiful People are a group of mostly young - and always vain - Phoedrans who have chosen the physical ideal they idolize and attempt to emulate: the Elves. More than a few younglings have been seen around Teionascus dressed in Elven clothing, conversing in the Elven language (or what they think passes for Elven), and some even going so far as to attach "extenders" to their ears to appear more like their graceful idols.

While most of the Beautiful People are so self-obsessed that they would seem useless, they do serve several purposes that a canny adventuring group can take advantage of.

First, they welcome outsiders in the normally xenophobic poleis. While adventurers are normally distrusted amongst the Phoedrans, the sighting of an adventuring Elf may be all it takes to convince a cultist to arrange a room at an inn without the usual "outsider markup." A party containing an Elf will practically be an object of worship. The cult may bring the party gifts, free meals, and act as intermediaries in a normally unwelcoming town.

Second, as they are citizens, and in some cases children of highly placed citizens, they can speak up for a group of outsiders should a dispute arise that requires a trial-by-assembly. What the members of the cult lack in wits, they tend to make up for in oratory. Again, as foreigners, most adventurers tend to be looked on poorly in a Polis, and a word or two from a member of this cult can go a long way toward receiving a fair hearing (or in some cases an unfair hearing in their favor).

Typical Member:

Polly Panakitis, Female Human Aristocrat 1

Medium Humanoid

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flatfooted 10

Base Attack: +1 **Grapple:** +0

Attack: "Attack? I might ruin my nails!"

Full Attack: "Ugh... can I get someone to do that for me?"

Special Qualities: "Everything I do is special"

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +1

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 17+

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +5, Perform (Dance) +7

Feats: Persuasive, Fickle (see below)

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Possessions: Daddy's House, Daddy's Servants, Access to Daddy's vault.

Alignment: Typically Neutral

Polly is attractive, but shallow. She wears oddly mismatched clothes, but all of the highest quality. When presented with a truly dangerous situation, she will use whatever means is available to escape, from trying to talk her way out to just plain running.

New Feat:

Fickle [General]

You can use your charm to get your way.

Benefit: You designate a target creature and receive a +2 bonus to all Charisma based skills used against that creature for 1 hour. You may only have one target designated at any given time, and can only target the same creature for one hour. You may designate a new target at any time, which grants your previous target a +1 bonus to resist any of your Charisma based skills for the following 24 hours.

What's Really Going On in the Beautiful People

Unfortunately, this group is not as harmless as it first appears. Behind all the pretty faces lurks a madman - Luca Hanatos - who is obsessed with the Elves for a different reason.

Luca Hanatos, Male Human Wizard 18

Medium Humanoid

Hit Dice: 18d4+18 (65)

Initiative: +0 (+0 Dex)

Speed: 30 ft

Armor Class: Base 17 (+0 Dex, +7 Bracers of Armor), touch 10, flatfooted 17

Base Attack: +9/+4 **Grapple:** +10

Attack: +12 melee (1d4+3, Dagger +1)

Full Attack: +12/+7 melee (1d4+3, Dagger +1) or spells

Special Attacks: Spells

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +11

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 26 (32), Wis 6, Cha 19 (25)

Skills: Bluff 17, Craft (Alchemy) 22, Diplomacy 10, Knowledge (The Planes) 32, Knowledge (Arcana) 32, Knowledge (History) 32, Knowledge (Religion) 32, Spellcraft 34

Feats: Scribe Scroll, Combat Casting, Self Delusion, Spell Penetration, Craft Wand, Leadership, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Quicken Spell, Greater Spell Penetration, Greater Spell Focus (Enchantment), Echoing Spell, Combat Casting

Challenge Rating: 18

Possessions: Bracers of Armor +7, Cloak of Charisma +6, Dagger +1, Headband of Intellect +6, Tome of Clear Thought +3 (Used), Tome of Leadership +2 (Used)

Alignment: Chaotic (Evil)

Spells per Day: 4/7/7/7/6/6/6/5/4/3

Spells Prepared: Detect Magic x2, Mage Hand, Resistance, Hold Portal x2, Shield x2, Magic Missile x2, Unseen Servant, Web x3, Fox's Cunning x2, Protection From Arrows, Eagle's Splendor, Dispel Magic x3, Hold Person x3, Protection From Energy, Stoneskin, Dimensional Anchor x2, Animate Dead x3, Dimension Door, Dismissal, Dominate Person x2, Hold Monster x2, Wall of Force, Create Undead x2, Greater Dispel Magic, Guards and Wards, Disintegrate x2, Greater Teleport x2, Mass Hold Person x2, Sequester, Binding, Greater Shout, Symbol of Death x2, Dominate Monster x2, Gate

Spellbook: Luca has spellbooks in his sanctum which contain all relevant spells. Luca has reached middle age and his ability scores reflect the relevant bonuses and penalties.

Luca is a handsome man, but the years of study have worn away some of the truly striking looks he had in his youth. For most men, this would be a source of disappointment, but Luca has driven himself mad looking for a way to retain his beauty. He refuses to accept the passage of time as inevitable, and his madness has led him to contemplate the one thing no mortal should ever hope to recreate: the Ritual that created the Elves.

Luca incessantly researches the Ritual, seeking out every last detail, trying to capture for himself the spark of divinity that the Elves acquired. While his quest remains unfulfilled, he believes the one being he needs to complete the rite is the Plague Fiend himself.

While he realizes that the Fiend cannot be the focus of a second Ritual, Luca hopes to get the secret from the Fiend and then alter the Ritual enough to steal the strength from another outsider, though how he intends to capture both the Plague Fiend and another Outside is unknown.

He is aware that another Ritual may have similar consequences, from creating another Fiend to possibly starting another outbreak of The Weeping, but he just doesn't care.

The Bloodknights

Author: Gaimar

Location: Originating in the mountains near Chevengrad, they now have a strong presence in much of the Kvrin territory of the Feldarin Empire. The headquarters and Scarlite production facility are in Chevengrad, and the leaders also reside here.

Demographics: Scholars, clerks, miners, diplomats and warriors, the Bloodknights are a mix of Humans, Feldarin, and some Dwarves. Other races are not trusted enough to have the influence that the Bloodknights have in the Feldarin Empire. There are many others who work for them, but the true members are all Human, Feldarin, or Dwarven. They are either martial (Fighters, Paladins, some Rangers, Rogues and some Clerics) or scholarly (Wizards, Loremasters, Experts, Adepts and some Sorcerers) and many higher ranking members have levels in Aristocrat as well. There's a small diplomatic arm of the order consisting of Bards, Aristocrats and Clerics.

Year founded: The Bloodknights began as the effects of The Weeping began to subside.

Size: There are few actual Knights of the Order, perhaps a hundred of varying ranks. These knights command an army of about 6000 warriors, so they are a serious force in the

Empire. Most of their influence is economic, but they can defend themselves when needed.

General Background: The Bloodknights are a very young Knightly Order in the Feldarin Empire. When word began to spread that a newly discovered material called "Scarlite" was a ward against The Weeping, some Kvrinzemyan merchants began to make large profits by selling it. The Empire wanted control over such a discovery and tried to force the creator into giving up the secret of the Scarlite. However, the creator had by then raised enough money to hire a Dwarven mercenary Clan which had been attracted by the wealth and those looking for ways to spend it.

The Feldarin Empire struck a deal with the creator, formalizing the distribution of the material as small metal plates called "Scarlite Marks" which bear the likeness of the last Emperor, Deriah, and which have an Empire-set value of 10 platinum pieces.

Emperor Deriah created an official Order of Knights of the Empire who were given free reign in creating and distributing Scarlite as long as it didn't devalue the regular currency.

As The Weeping subsided, the Bloodknights quickly rose in number and power, and set up a protected infrastructure of safe-houses, guild-houses and banks. With the infrastructure of money distribution in place, and the protection of the Empire, they began to get rich. A great deal of research and activity of the Bloodknights these days goes into hunting down would be forgers and shavers of profit.

History: It was called The Weeping. A Plague unlike any other, with unimaginable pain and inescapable doom. It changed everything. Good men turned on each other, evil men turned on everyone, and all out of desperation. People were desperate for a scapegoat, a reason, an origin, and most of all for a cure.

Cody Co'alan had never been a good man, but he was good with poisons, and that was good enough. However Cody still wanted more, and when one of the first Plaguetouched sought shelter near his secret lab, he saw an opportunity. If he were to find out the nature of the Plague, he could possibly distill some very interesting poisons out of it. He tricked the Plaguetouched into coming to his lab and locked him up there. Diligently, the eager Kvrin alchemist started studying the creature, determined to find a way to create a poison that would make him rich. Filthy, stinking rich. Oh, and the fame wouldn't hurt either.

Through a combination of luck and skill, he stumbled upon a way to create a reddish colored alloy, a soft, useless, but rather beautiful metal created by mixing gold and silver with a little bit of tears from the Plaguetouched and binding it through several processes. He also discovered that combining the metal with certain arcane energies gave it healing properties.

Recognizing a chance for success when he saw it, he stole more silver and gold and started experimenting with how to create this new metal more efficiently. When he felt satisfied he could recreate the process unfailingly, he named it "Scarlite," after its blood red color, and started pondering the best way to make money off of it.

For some help and guidance he went to the only one in this world he ever trusted, his former teacher and mentor, the Kvrin necromancer Przemysaw of the Seven Skulls, and told him about his new creation. His teacher, however, shunned the idea of using Plaguetouched as a resource, and chided Cody for even considering mass production. The conversation was overheard by Przemysaw's daughter, who told her secret lover, who then told his father, who told everybody else. Of course, little details like it being an amalgam of steel and Plaguetouched tears, and that it was actually ineffective against the Plague, had been

discarded during the retelling. The story spread that it could heal The Weeping.

Soon, nearly the whole nearby village had approached Cody to purchase a small bit of the metal, and coincidentally, the Plague began to disappear.

As interesting as it was that it seemed to have worked, Cody was baffled. He had done endless tests, and even though it had healing powers, Scarlite had been ineffective against the Plague every time. This only bothered him briefly, though, since he was now busy making more of the metal and selling it at ridiculously high prices. He realized that he would have to keep the formula a secret, so he once again sought out his former mentor, Przemysaw. He suspected his mentor of being the one who had let out the secret. Cody paid him a visit and rewarded him with a taste of one of his "special" tonics. Problem solved.

By promoting his material as warding against The Weeping, Cody got rich very quickly, and became a man of power in nearby Chevengrad. It might have ended there, except luck continued to smile on Cody, and as the metal sold, the plague continued to die out.

Cody Co'alan soon had trouble making enough of the metal to meet demand, and so he hired assistants, making sure each one knew nothing of the others. Each assistant was made responsible for a small part of the creation process and knew nothing of the other steps, insuring only Cody knew the entire formula. Only his most trusted handled the tears.

When word of this "wundermettle" reached the Feldarin Empire, they saw it as too much of a wildcard not to be controlled, so they sent a small force to find and capture its creator.

When the troops neared the city of Chevengrad, though, they encountered a sizeable army of mercenary Dwarves led by the veteran mercenary General Charl Hertz-Grauper. The Dwarves had been attracted by the smell of newfound wealth, and Cody had been quick to hire their protective services.

Cody knew he didn't have the resources to fight a prolonged war, and the Plague-weakened Feldarin weren't very interested in war either, so the two parties quickly came together for a cup of tea and some negotiations.

These negotiations led to the creation of the newest Knightly Order of the Feldarin Empire: The Bloodknights. And to the regulated release of "Scarlite Marks" across the Empire.

Symbols: Members always wear red, or wear a silver rectangle with either red diagonal stripes or an image of Deriah, the last Emperor, on a silver field trimmed in red.

Goals and Motivation: To create, distribute and control the new Scarlite Marks. Many related activities have also begun, including a series of banks, the distribution of the new Feldarin paper money, and the rumored hunting of Plaguetoached. The leadership realizes that with the Plague disappearing, the demand for Scarlite will follow suit. They are constantly looking for new ways to remain relevant in the Empire, and banking is the current project.

Leaders: Final authority rests with the Emperor, but the Order is governed by three leaders. The original inventor, the Kvrin human named Cody Co'alan, leads Research and Production. The militia is led by the Dwarven mercenary General Carl Hertz-Grauper, and the Clergic and Diplomatic arm is led by the Feldarin Paladin Sophia Lucia Reductus. The Bloodknights are mostly lawful, but have been known to bend the law on occasion.

Resources/Benefits: A full Knight of the Order can call upon vast amounts of money, and has access to the highest circles of society. If a Knight needs a place to stay, there are banks with sleeping accommodations in every major city in the Feldarin Empire. These accommodations are always well protected, and higher ranking members will be able to get most things done there. Lower ranking members must go through a lengthy series of administrative processes to get most things done, so usually they don't bother.

Gather Information/Knowledge DC's for the Bloodknights

DC 10: "The Bloodknights? Sure, they're the guys that run the banks, right? I heard they have some military muscle too. They make that Scarlite healing metal."

DC 15: As DC 10, plus, "Ah yes, I know them. They're a new bunch of Feldarin Knights who run the banks and distribute that new Imperial paper money."

DC 20: As DC 15, plus the fact that only the Bloodknights know the secret of Scarlite and they seem to have connections to organizations that specialize in hunting Plaguetouched.

DC 30: As DC 20, plus details about their organizational structure and current leaders. Also some details of how the order was formed.

Adventure Hooks

- A forger is active in an area where the Bloodknights do not have very strong influence, and they hire the Party to help root him out.
- A Plaguetouched couple approaches the Party, claiming that they're twin Plaguetouched sons have been kidnapped by men in red uniforms.
- Carl Hertz-Grauper fears that Cody is slowly slipping into madness, and the secret of creating Scarlite is at stake. He hires the Party to discover the secret and then make sure Cody overdoses on one of his own poisons. This could involve a Feldarin official concerned with the Bloodknights as well (typical Feldarin "politics").
- A ghost appears to the party's Cleric, and beckons the party to follow it. It leads them to Cody Co' Alan's old original lab, and reveals himself to be the Plaguetouched that sparked the idea in Cody's mind. He offers to tell the players how to create Scarlite, if they help him exact his revenge on Cody and the Bloodknights.

The Callers of the Summer Rain

Author: Mephibosheth



Location: Only known to exist on the Plains of Pahal.

Demographics: Only Pahali humans are members of the Callers of the Summer Rain, mostly because the organization's activity is limited to Pahal, and very few outsiders live in the region. The Callers of the Summer Rain are very demanding on those seeking to join them. Only the finest hunters, the most devout and knowledgeable priests, and the most pious monks are allowed to take part in the rituals. The current members scrutinize all applicants and select new members from the most accomplished. It is common for the application process to include intense combat, long debates with scholars, difficult wilderness survival, and similar tests. Only the best are admitted to the organization.

Clerics, Druids, Monks, and Rangers dominate the membership of the Callers of the Summer Rain to such an extent that there are very few members who have other classes.

Beliefs: The early months of summer in Pahal (the large peninsula located west of the Al Barajah Desert) are among the hottest and driest months of the year. Plants wither and die, wild animals and livestock become emaciated and lethargic, and life in general seeks nothing more than escape from the heat. Humankind is no exception to this imperative.

As long as the Pahali have worshiped the gods, the Callers of the Summer Rain have preserved a vital ritual known as the "Shaagyaa," which is believed to please the rain god Bharshii, and brings the life-giving summer rains to the region after the hard months of early summer. As a small, dedicated group of priests, monks, and hunters, the Callers have the responsibility of conducting the Shaagyaa Ritual and protecting the Shaagyaa Cat (a large cat, usually a tiger, which is chosen to be sacrificed at the end of the ritual) as it wanders the land. They see their mission as of utmost importance, and are ruthless in ensuring its proper completion. At any given time there are between 50 and 60 members of the organization, most of them involved in watching and protecting the Shaagyaa Cat.

The Shaagyaa Ritual is an exceedingly complex and difficult one to complete. In late summer (after the rains have begun), the hunters (known as the Hands of the Rain) begin the search for the Shaagyaa Cat for the following year's rituals. The Cat must conform to a bewildering number of requirements, and only the most perfect animal is chosen for the Ritual. Once the perfect animal is found and captured (no easy task, since the animal's blood must not be spilled in the process of its capture), it is brought to the priests for purification. The purification process takes one week to complete, and involves bathing the Cat repeatedly with purified water from the River Jiva. After the purification is complete, the animal is released and allowed to roam the countryside for ten months, during which period it cannot be touched by mortal hands or the Ritual will fail. During that time, the Hands of the Rain follow it and ensure that no unwitting hunter or farmer lays a hand on the sacred animal. At the end of the ten months, the Hands herd the Cat back to the priests, who ritually sacrifice the Cat to Bharshii, ensuring the summer rains for the following year.

The Callers of the Summer Rain exist for the sole purpose of catching the Shaagyaa Cat, purifying it with the necessary rituals, protecting it as it roams, and conducting the proper sacrifice at the end of the Cat's wandering.

Size: Currently around 500, although nearly all Pahali recognize its importance. The typical distribution of Class levels is shown in the Table to the right.

Alignment: The Callers of the Summer Rain are Lawful to a man, caring little about anything other than the traditional rituals. They are almost all Neutral as well, seeing their actions as working toward the good of all but not above committing what others might see as heinous and ruthless acts to ensure their proper completion.

Callers of the Summer Rain-Distribution of Classes

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ranger: 50%• Cleric: 25%• Druid: 10%• Monk: 5%• Other: 10% (Scouts, Fighters, Paladins) |
|--|

Rituals/Observances: No one knows when the Callers of the Summer Rain began their rituals, as even the oldest texts and legends refer to the group and its ritual. It would seem that the organization has been around as long as men have worshiped the gods.

The Callers' unknown origin notwithstanding, history is full of stories about the ruthlessness of the organization and the importance of its mission. Thrice in the memory of man has the

Shaagyaa failed, once because a perfect animal was not found, once because the Cat was touched during its wanderings by a farmer trying to drive it away from his livestock, and once because the Cat killed the priest on the altar and escaped before the sacrifice could be completed. Whether by chance or divine providence, each time the ritual has failed the summer rains failed to arrive, and the land suffered from the resulting drought.

Symbols: Members of the Callers are marked with a tattoo of a raindrop on their right cheek that shows them as members. These tattoos almost always gain the bearer discounts on most services in Pahal, and the Temples often help Callers of the Rain for little or no fee.

Tactics: The Callers of the Summer Rain are very well-funded and well-equipped. Wealthy patrons from all over donate generously to the Callers to ensure the prosperity and fertility of their lands. The Callers can easily acquire any item or service valued up to 50,000 GP, and can acquire items and services valued at much higher amounts if the need is dire.

Leaders: The "Supreme Hand of the Rain" and the current High Priestess of Bharshii.

Shikah – Supreme Hand of the Rain

Male Human [Pahali] Ranger 10/Hand of the Rain 10

Shikah is the current leader of the Hands of the Rain, organizing all Hand activity with ruthless efficiency. He is an aloof, almost cruel leader, who is fanatically devoted to the Ritual and to the organization.

Padari – High Priestess of Bharshii

Female Human [Pahali] Cleric of Bharshii 20

Padari is the current High Priestess of the Callers of the Summer Rain, deciding when the Ritual is to begin and participation in the completion of the Ritual itself, including the sacrifice. She is far warmer and friendlier than Shikah, and makes more effort to ensure that no one is hurt by the conduct of the ritual that Shikah does. The two occasionally clash over the proper methods of conducting the ritual, with Padari usually prevailing over Shikah.

Other Important Figures:

Rishi – Scholar of the Summer Rain

Male Human [Pahali] Monk 15

Rishi is the most learned scholar in the organization and is frequently consulted on matters of the proper conduct of the Ritual. In his youth he loved to accompany the Hands on their hunting trips, but he now prefers to remain with his studies and meditations.

Gather Information/Knowledge DCs for The Callers of the Summer Rain:

- **DC 10:** "The Callers of the Summer Rain? Sure, everyone knows about them. They have that ritual that ensures the summer rains. But don't cross them, or you're liable to be hurt bad. They don't allow interference with the ritual. If you see someone with one of those rain tattoos, stay away if you know what's good for you."
- **DC 15:** Details of the Shaagyaa Ritual and the doctrines of Bharshii.
- **DC 20:** Details of the location and current membership of the Callers, the status of the current Ritual.

Adventure Hooks:

- While wandering in the wilderness, the party happens upon the Shaagyaa Cat. If

they make any threatening gestures toward the Cat, the Hands of the Rain will intervene. How will the party handle this sort of encounter?

- The Hands of the Rain are able to subdue the party, believing that they had attempted to attack the Shaagyaa Cat, but the Hands were impressed with the party's abilities. They heal the party and offer them the opportunity to apply for membership in the organization.
- The party is sent by their patron to apply for membership in the organization. Their patron hopes that they will provide him with eyes and ears inside the organization and that his "offering" of new members will make the organization friendlier to him.
- The party is sent by their patron to kill the Hands of the Rain and ruin the ritual, claiming that it unbalances the natural course of Nature. Whether or not the party goes along with this assignment is up to them.
- Someone in the party tries to touch the Shaagyaa Cat. In the ensuing melee with the Cat's guardians, the Hands of the Rain assigned to guard the Cat are killed. Soon thereafter, a member of the Callers appears in the midst of the party and attempts to force/persuade them to take the place of the previous Hands, if only temporarily.
- As above, except the Callers of the Summer Rain distribute the party's names and descriptions far and wide, inciting hostility against the party wherever they go. How will the party deal with the situation?

The Hand of the Rain Prestige Class

Requirements: BAB +6, Survival 13 ranks, Handle Animal 8 ranks, Craft (Trapmaking) 5 ranks, Track ability, and the character must swear an oath to uphold the practice of the Shaagyaa ritual at all times and to never allow anyone to touch a purified Shaagyaa cat

Hit Dice: d8

Class Skills: Acrobatics, Climb, Craft, Escape Artist, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Intimidate, Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (geography), Perception, Ride, Stealth, Survival, and Swim

Skill Points per Level: 3 + Int modifier

Table: Hand of the Rain Prestige Class

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Favored Enemy +2, Trap Focus
2	+2	+3	+0	+3	Improved Bullrush
3	+3	+3	+1	+3	<i>Baleful Transposition</i> (1/day)
4	+4	+4	+1	+4	Subdual Efficiency
5	+5	+4	+1	+4	Favored Enemy +4
6	+6/+1	+5	+2	+5	<i>Baleful Transposition</i> (2/day)
7	+7/+2	+5	+2	+5	Subdual Efficiency
8	+8/+3	+6	+2	+6	
9	+9/+4	+6	+3	+6	<i>Baleful Transposition</i> (3/day)
10	+10/+5	+7	+3	+7	Favored Enemy +6, Intercept

Class Features

Favored Enemy: Beginning at first level, a Hand of the Rain gains Favored Enemy (Animal)

as the Ranger ability, with the exception that the bonus to damage only applies when dealing non-lethal damage to the animal. At fifth level and again at tenth level, the bonuses increase by two as shown on the Table. If the character already has Favored Enemy (Animal) as a class ability, the bonuses stack. At fifth level the Hand of the Rain gains Favored Enemy (Human), with bonuses beginning at +2 at fifth level and increasing to +4 at tenth level. Unlike Favored Enemy (Animal) however, the bonus to damage applies when dealing either lethal or subdual damage to Favored Enemy (Human).

Trap Focus: Beginning at first level, a Hand of the Rain gains a competence bonus to Craft (trapmaking) checks equal to his/her class level. This bonus applies only when the trap is intended to trap a target without drawing blood. Pit traps (without spikes), snares, nets, magical traps that immobilize or capture, traps that deal subdual damage, and similar traps all fall into this category.

Improved Bullrush: At second level, a Hand of the Rain gains the Improved Bullrush feat, even if he/she does not meet the prerequisites for the feat.

Baleful Transposition (Sp): Once per day beginning at third level, a Hand of the Rain can select a target creature within 100 ft that is no more than one size category larger than them and attempt to swap positions with that creature. Both the Hand of the Rain and the target must share a common surface such as the ground, a bridge, or even a rope. The target is allowed a Will save (DC 10+Hand of the Rain's Level+ Int modifier). Objects carried by the target up to their maximum load go with them, but other creatures do not, even if carried. This movement is instant and does not provoke attacks of opportunity if it results in leaving a threatened square. One additional use is gained at sixth and ninth level.

Subdual Efficiency (Ex): Beginning at fourth level, a Hand of the Rain becomes increasingly adept at dealing subdual damage with a weapon normally intended to deal lethal damage. The penalty for dealing subdual damage with these weapons is reduced from -4 to -2. At seventh level, the Hand of the Rain can deal subdual damage with a lethal weapon at no penalty.

Intercept (Ex): Beginning at 10th level, a Hand of the Rain can attempt to charge and Bullrush anyone he/she can reach in a charge as an Immediate action. Additionally, he/she gains a +4 bonus to the Bullrush attempt as a result of the charge instead of the normal +2 bonus, and he/she gains a +4 dodge bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity incurred while making this Bullrush attempt. This ability can be used twice per day.

Bharshii - She who Nourishes, patron deity of the **Callers of the Summer Rain**
Pahali goddess of rain and water [Nature]

Symbols - a drop of water, a grey cloud heavy with rain, a plow, a tiger or other large cat
Alignment - CG - Bharshii is as unpredictable as the weather, but is a benevolent deity and almost always listens to the prayers of her devotees
Domains - Plant, Air, Water, Weather
Favored Weapon - Shortbow or crossbow

Description - Bharshii sends the life-giving rains to the plains of the Pahali and ensures the success of their agricultural endeavors. She is a benevolent, motherly goddess who remains close to humanity while many of the other gods stand aloof from the troubles of the people. While her general attitude is one of benevolence, her emotions are as changeable as the wind. If she is angered, or if her sacrifices are ignored, she can be capricious and spiteful.

Bharshii is most often depicted as a young woman working on a farm, and often with four arms. With two of these arms, she steers a plow through the earth. With a third, she wipes sweat from her brow with a towel, and with the fourth she wrings out this sweat onto the earth as rain. Her skin is often drawn as light blue in color, and she always has a raindrop symbol drawn on her right cheek.

Campaign Adaptation: The Callers of the Summer Rain is an organization specific to the Tears of Blood setting. It is a cultural organization designed for a specific group of humans that are part of that setting. However, the organization is easily adaptable to other settings. The Callers of the Summer Rain fits very well within any agrarian civilization that relies on rains to maintain the quality of their farmland, especially if the civilization is located in an area marked with alternating rainy and dry seasons or monsoon weather patterns. It also works best when used with a culture that worships a pantheon of deities that includes a rain or weather deity, and that practices (or at least condones) animal sacrifice. By simply replacing any reference to the Pahali culture or the region of Pahal, the Callers of the Summer Rain can be inserted into almost any pre-existing culture. It might also be beneficial to replace the Shaagyaa Cat with some other animal appropriate to the local environment, and to change the names to fit within the local cultural mold.

The Cleansers of the Plague

Adapted from an original by: soylentplaid

History: As recorded in *The Loss of the Thunderflight* from "The Combined Adventures of Jorn Tenbrier"

"In the first years of the Plague, as the Weeping ravaged the surface, the Gnomes remained hidden deep underground, mostly unaware of the disaster unfolding above them. Strange tales of people dying as their bodies twisted and wept blood filtered in through the few surface traders that came back, but were dismissed as completely mad. A magic resistant plague, sweeping over the entire surface world? Preposterous! How could any such thing be?"

Then, it came to the Holy City.

To give the Gnomes credit, they reacted quickly enough. The NMS Thunderflight was a Nether trade ship that had been sent two months prior from the Holy City to a Halfling colony to trade in grain and ore. Many Netherese, and even a few Aether, were gathered by the dock to greet the ship on its return. The Thunderflight soared in through the main tunnel, floating majestically toward the twin basalt columns that held the gates at the entrance to the city. Gleaming iron plating and twin plumes of smoke were illuminated by the magic lanterns of the tunnel, making for a beautiful sight. One enthusiastic Netherese raised a spyglass to his eye so he could view the hardy crew of such a magnificent ship.

What he saw instead made him reel backward in sheer horror.

Pale, twisted mockeries of nature walked the vessel's decks. Their clothing was torn and stained red, as were Thunderflight's banners. They wept blood. The deck was scattered with the twisted bodies of the dead and dying. Unknown to those waiting dockside, they had caught the Plague from the Halfling colony and had made a mad, desperate rush home. All of them in pain, all of them desperate and feral, all of them quite insane, all of them come to bring the blight to the Holy City.

The Gnome cried out, and the sentries sighted in. The Captain of the Watch made a painful decision. He ordered every watchtower in the city to turn on the Thunderflight and open fire. Deafening explosions burst above the cavernous city as magical thunder and flame were loosed by the Mages of the Watch. The Aether and Nether Gnomes joined together to defend their city. The insane stories of the Weeping, the ravaging of the surface world, it was all true. And it must not come here. The Thunderflight was destroyed and fell just short of the city gates.

Afterward most Gnomes simply dismissed the Plague as a surface problem that should now be contained, and left it to the surfacers to deal with. One Gnome, however, suspected the truth. Uruk Al'Azred, the Gnome with the spyglass, swore over the flaming wreckage of the ship that the Plague would be cleansed, by any means necessary.

It took years. As The Weeping raged above, Uruk Al'Azred kept working. At first he made proposals to the ruling council for his creation. They were rejected time after time - the Plague was a threat, true, but not one worth wasting valuable resources on while there were still arcane secrets undiscovered in the Holy City, let alone elsewhere in the Gnomelands. Tired of the council's hypocritical stance and failure to see the greater danger right above them, Uruk struck out on his own.

He needed raw materials, so he bought what he could and stole the rest. One thing was certain, Uruk was devious, and though it took many years, he finally gathered the raw materials he required. During the intervening time, he kept busy with other pursuits. His home, once a simple laboratory and artificer's forge, became the center of grisly, inhuman experiments. He kidnapped Plague victims and their families from the surface, kept them contained in special force cages, and experimented. Uruk did whatever was necessary to gain even a small understanding of the Plague, and in this time he learned much. He subjected his "samples" to extreme temperatures, living autopsies, and every sick and twisted experiment imaginable. In the end, he learned all he needed to.

His creations were magnificent: living constructs of iron and mithril, immune to all disease, able to hunt down and eliminate the infected, as well as any who had dealt with them. The perfect synthesis of slashing blades, disinfecting fluids, and the cold will required to do what was necessary. Only through careful pruning of the population, and all those infected, was the Weeping to be stopped. These were perfect. He called them The Cleansers, a hundred living metal instruments for the surgical removal of the Plague from the world. Then, with a word, he turned them all on at once.

Too quickly, they achieved sentience. The first being they saw was Uruk, and they knew he had handled the diseased. Perhaps Uruk would have been able to reason with them, explain that he had taken all the necessary precautions to avoid infection, had the Cleansers not operated their flensing blades and acid sprays and taken Uruk apart on the spot. Then, without a word, they left the artificer's lab in flames, moving towards the surface."

Rumors have surfaced from time to time of metal horrors leveling entire villages. Even as the Plague died down, certain places would simply drop off the map, with people too afraid to investigate the sudden loss of contact for fear of contracting the Weeping themselves. A few years later a Ranger named Jorn Tenbrier came across an amazing discovery. Jorn's favored enemy was the Plaguetoached, a damned race that had risen from the survivors of the Weeping. Jorn felt only hatred for these creatures, for they represented the Plague, which had taken his family, and the filth of the Plague Fiend. He had murdered hundreds of Plaguetoached, and was now at a small farmhouse where several of their kind had taken shelter, when he witnessed a remarkable thing. First he heard horrible screams, then saw

metal spheres slicing apart the infected and cleansing the ground, disinfecting the infection. It was so brutal, so efficient. It was a manifestation the strongest will to do what was needed to clean up the Weeping. Jorn was moved.

No one knows why Jorn wasn't taken apart instantly by The Cleansers. All that is known is that, for several years, Jorn "discovered" of new sources of infection for them to "cleanse", acting as their scout and fixer. Jorn was rumored to have agents throughout Ursoule helping him track down Plague victims and the Plaguetouched. Once confirmed, with their coldest of hearts and most ruthless execution, The Cleansers would arrive to "cleanse" the situation.

Cleanser Drone

Small Construct

Hit Dice: 6d12+10 (51 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: Fly 50 ft. (Good)

Armor Class: 20 (+3 Dex, +6 natural, +1 Size), touch 14, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+6

Attack: Flensing Blade +6 melee (1d6+2/18-20) or Slam +5 melee (1d4+2)

Full Attack: 3 Flensing Blades +6 melee (1d6+2/18-20) or 2 Slams +5 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Disinfecting Spray, Flensing Blades

Special Qualities: DR 5/-, Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, SR 15, Detect Infection, Purge Infection

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 16, Con Ø, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills: +8 Survival, +7 Perception, +8 Knowledge (Anatomy), +6 Heal, +4 Craft (Drone)

Feats: Combat Expertise, Skill Focus (Survival), Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (Flensing Blades)

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, Team (3-10) or Swarm (11-100)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 7-10 HD (Small)

Level Adjustment: —

A metallic sphere roughly the size of a Gnome. Its featureless metal plating hangs over a sleek, curved frame, and is highly polished to a silvery, reflective shine. Two amethyst eyes shine coldly in its blank face. Three long, segmented tentacles protrude from its back and wave in the air, ending in wickedly curved blades, and a small nozzle occasionally pokes out from under its face plate at approximately where a mouth would be.

Cleanser Drones act as the main force for The Cleansers of the Plague. A Drone will doggedly track down those it considers even remotely infected and attack without mercy, whether its target is a fully grown Orrk warrior or an infant child. Drones use their *flensing blades* to dissect their targets, and thoroughly disinfect both the remains and the surrounding area with their *disinfecting spray*. Any Cleanser that is reduced to 1/3 or fewer hit points loses the ability to fly, but is still capable of attack and defense.

Drones are often broken up into small hunting parties that some have dubbed "teams" when need be, and it isn't unusual to find solitary drones acting as scouts for a much larger force. A single Cleanser Drone can potentially be reasoned with, but since it considers almost every being it comes into contact with tainted, that may prove difficult.

Cleansers speak Gnome, and can communicate with any other Cleanser within sight telepathically.

Flensing Blades - Treat these blades as +1 cold iron weapons. They have a variable reach of up to 10 feet and can be used to attack adjacent opponents.

Disinfecting Spray (Ex) - A Cleanser Drone can unleash a spray of disinfecting chemicals and bio-reactive breakdown agents as a standard action. This deals no damage to anything non-organic (such as constructs, elementals or metal or stone objects), but to anything organic treat as a 15 foot spray of acid that deals 3d6 damage per round and persists for three rounds (DC 14 Reflex for half). Those who make their saves do not take damage past the first round. Once used, a Cleanser Drone cannot spray again for 1d4 rounds.

Detect Infection (Su) - Cleanser Drones were designed to ruthlessly track down victims of The Weeping and those who have ever possibly been in any sort of contact with it. Of course, this doesn't leave a lot of "non-infected" people. At will, a Cleanser Drone can detect plague victims as the *Detect Plague* spell cast by a 5th level cleric. This enhanced version can also detect creatures who have ever been in contact with either a Plague victim or Plaguetoached, or who have been in the repeated presence of them, who glow sickly gray to the Drone. By spending a fourth round of concentration, the Drone can detect anyone who has had secondary Plague contact (contact with one who has had contact with one).

Purge Infection (Ex) - With its detailed knowledge of anatomy and biology, a Cleanser Drone has a +2 insight bonus to attack and damage versus Plaguetoached and those actually infected with the Plague.

Cleanser Controller

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 16d12+20 (124 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: Fly 50 ft. (Excellent)

Armor Class: 28 (+3 Dex, +15 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+16

Attack: Flensing Blade +18 melee (2d6+3/18-20), or Slam +17 melee (1d6+3), or Disinfecting Spray

Full Attack: 3 Flensing Blades +18/+13 melee (2d6+3/18-20), or 2 Slams +17 melee (1d6+3), or Disinfecting Spray

Space/Reach: 5 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Disinfecting Spray, Flensing Blades

Special Qualities: DR 10/-, Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, SR 15, Detect Infection, Purge Infection

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 16, Con \emptyset , Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills: +18 Survival, +16 Perception, +16 Knowledge (Anatomy), +14 Heal, +14 Intimidate

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Survival), Weapon Focus (Flensing Blades)

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, Team (with 3-10 Drones), or Swarm (d10 plus d100 Drones)

Challenge Rating: 16

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 17-19 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

A much larger version of the Cleanser Drone, still spherical shaped but almost as big as a Human. Cleanser Controllers are the commanders for the Drones and sometimes lead cleansing teams against particularly dangerous or elusive foes.

A Cleanser Controller has the same qualities as a Cleanser Drone except as shown above and as noted here. Controllers were not part of the original force, and evolved over time as the Drones fixed and repaired themselves, improving along the way.

Disinfecting Spray (Su) - A Cleanser Controller's Disinfecting Spray deals 8d6 damage per round (DC 16 Reflex) in a 20 foot cone and persists for 6 rounds. A save avoids damage past the first round.

Detect Infection (Su) - Instead of a cone, the area of a Cleanser Controller's Detect Infection ability is a 120 foot diameter sphere centered on the Controller. Caster level 15.

Purge Infection (Ex) - A Cleanser Controller has a +4 insight bonus to attack and damage versus Plaguetouched and those actually infected with the Weeping.

Jorn Tenbrier, Neutral (Evil) Human, Ranger 13

Hit Dice: 13d8+13 (89 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 25 (+5 Dex, +10 armor), touch 13, flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +13/+15

Attack: +3 Plaguetouched Bane Composite Longbow +22 ranged (1d8+5/x3) or +2 shortsword +17 piercing (1d6+4/19-20)

Full Attack: +3 Plaguetouched Bane Composite Longbow +22/+17/+12 (1d8+5/x3) or +2 shortsword +17/+12/+7 piercing (1d6+4/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +13, Will +7

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 16(20) Con 12, Int 12, Cha 15, Wis 16

Skills: Escape Artist +20, Knowledge (nature) +10, Survival +12, Perception +16, Stealth +25, Handle Animal +8, Climb +8, Ride +5, Swim +5

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Manyshot, Improved Precise Shot, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (Longbow), Improved Critical (Longbow), Improved Initiative

Spells: 1st-Speak with Animals, Summon Nature's Ally 1. 2nd-Speak With Plants, Snare

Animal Companion: Hawk, +4 HD, +4 Nat. Armor, +2 Str/Dex, 3 extra tricks, Link, Share Spells, Evasion, Detection

Class Abilities: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, favored enemies, Track, Wild Empathy, Archery Combat Style, Endurance, Improved Archery Combat Style, Swift Tracker, Evasion, Archery Style Mastery, Camouflage

Favored Enemies: Humanoid (Plaguetouched) +6, Monstrous Humanoid +4, Humanoid (Elf) +2

Possessions: +3 Plaguetouched Bane Composite Longbow, +2 shortsword, +3 chain shirt, Gloves of Dexterity +4, Lesser Bracers of Archery, Boots of Elvenkind, Cloak of Elvenkind, Bag of Holding Type IV, Amulet of Natural Armor +3, Goggles of Night, 150 platinum pieces, 340 gold pieces

Sample Encounters

- The party comes across a disheveled, half-crazed man on the road, cut up badly and on the brink of death. He manages to croak out one word - "...cleansers..." before he goes limp.
- The party is hunting a Plaguetouched criminal through a forest when they are approached by a strange man in hunting leathers, apparently a Ranger. The man reeks of death. He takes one look at the party, sneers in disgust, and disappears into the trees. Strange encounter. Should be the last they hear from him. Besides, it's almost time to make camp...
- The Cleansers have come to a small town and have deemed the entire population "tainted". The townsfolk have so far managed to keep the small scouting party at bay with only moderate casualties, but it's only a matter of time before the night air is filled with the cold, efficient "cleansing" of the main force.
- The party has caught word of a man named Jorn who has what he calls "the perfect cure" for the Plague. With several family members and close friends either stricken with the Plague, or having been transformed into hideous monstrosities, fortune seems to have smiled on them. Will they be so happy when they find out what the "cure" is, and will they already have divulged the locations of their loved ones?
- A Plaguetouched PC has met an unusual Gnome with an unusual offer – he claims that Uruk Al'Azred had a backup lab near the surface, and most of his research still exists in archival copies there. This may be the needed breakthrough to finally come up with an end to the Cleansers. All that needs to be done is find the lab and raid it. Simple, right? One has to wonder, though, did Uruk make any early prototypes?

Cult of the Ancient

Author: Trolof

Location: This Cult exists within the Feldarin Empire, where its members are employed in all kinds of jobs. They tend to be better educated than the average commoner, primarily due to the education received after joining the Cult.

Demographics: Cult membership consists of only humans. The membership relies greatly on secrecy. Those who have class levels are either roguish or have some level of magical understanding. Many are trained by senior cult-members to further their skill in a certain area of expertise.

Beliefs: The Cult sees the Feldarin as cruel oppressors, and they believe The Weeping was sent by the gods to weaken the Empire. They use the plague and the widespread panic it has caused among the commoners to inspire hatred towards the Feldarin.

Size: No one keeps track, but it is estimated to be around 500.

Alignment: Generally Chaotic, with good tendencies. They fight for the greater good of humankind, and freedom from the oppressive Feldarin Empire. Their tactics include manipulation, lying, and starting riots to undermine the law and order of the Empire.

Rituals/Observances: Five centuries ago, when the Feldarin invaded Ursoule, some rebel leaders saw the strength of their rebellion failing. They chose to abandon the rebellion and instead infiltrated the newly born Feldarin Empire, staying alive to fight another day. They created a secret society known as the "Cult of the Ancient" and swore to teach their children the ancient ways. They would wait until the time was right to overthrow the Empire.

Over time the size of the cult has grown, as the children of members have joined. Not all children are asked to join, only those genuinely interested in the ancient teachings are ever introduced to the Cult. Then a series of tests of loyalty weeds out the dangerous and unfit. The cult has never been very big. At its peak, about 300 years ago, it numbered nearly 1000 members. Since then the number has dwindled due to the Plague and a declining interest in the ancient ways among the young.

Cultists are sworn to secrecy. During their meetings and rituals, all members wear masks and hooded cloaks and use an alias. Therefore no members know who the other members are in real life, other than the parent that introduced them to the cult. This prevents timely communication when they are not gathered at a meeting or a ritual, so the Cult meets frequently, usually monthly. During these meetings the Cult discusses recent events and designs for the future. They also decide on the time and place of the next 2 meetings, allowing for a member to miss a meeting without falling out of the cult.

Although the Plague caused a drop in membership, it also weakened the Feldarin Empire, and the cult believes this to be the time of the Rebellion. The cult has come out of hiding and masterminded a number of minor rebellions in smaller cities, and riots in larger ones, to test the Feldarin defenses. A number of rebel leaders have been caught and questioned, but so far all they have told is that a hooded and cloaked person came to their town and talked about the time before the Feldarin, a time without plague and poverty. The rebels all claim that the Plague was sent by the gods to weaken and destroy the Feldarin Empire.

Symbols: None, except their hooded cloaks and masks, which are only worn at meetings and rituals. These come in a myriad of different colors and shapes.

The Cult of the Ascension

Author: paddyfool

The Cult of the Ascension is a secret organization that recruits its members very cautiously from higher level clergy among the Feldarin and, to a lesser extent, their subject races. The Cult's history suggests that similar beliefs may have been held by some of the first Elves, although if such beliefs persist, the Elves have no contact with the Cult.

The Cult's own history describes its origin as the reaction of Feldarin scholars to the multiplicity of similar, yet distinct, deities among the cultures they encountered in their initial wave of conquests on Ursoule. Perplexed by the fact that these alternate versions of the gods they knew appeared equally beneficent in granting prayers, even among the bewildering variety of gods worshipped by the Pahali, various theories were exchanged. One popular view was that they were all worshipping the same gods, but the natives had the details wrong. Another view was that the native clerics were very skilled con-artists and tricksters, and a third was that the gods they were worshipping were warped, diabolical reflections of the gods the Feldarin knew. But some scholars began thinking along the dangerous line that perhaps all these gods were reflections of a greater principle. When discussing, quietly, how a principle could have so many individual faces, they came to the conclusion that perhaps each principle was supported by a faction of higher beings. These scholars placed the Feldarin as the pre-eminent faction, thus causing the superiority of the Feldarin over all others.

Some scholars were doubtful of this idea, however, since it was so against the teachings of their religion, and also because it lacked a reason *why*. Why such a multiplicity of deities? Why, also, would these deities obfuscate the existence of a wider body of other deities in

the teachings they provided? There needed to be a purpose, and one among the scholars provided it. Perhaps, it was proposed, these higher beings hoped to gain more of their kind by encouraging a process of greater spiritual awareness among their worshippers. Perhaps each faction simply hoped to achieve this through different means, or was in charge of a different stage of the process. The Nature faction might be encouraging nature to provide candidates for this "Ascension," hence the multiplicity of different intelligent races. The War faction might be encouraging progress through conflict, culling the weak and enabling the strong to advance. The Arcane faction might likewise be encouraging progress through the understanding of eldritch mysteries, the Travel faction by encouraging exploration and curiosity, and the Death faction by judging the lower beings at the end of their time.

This body of scholars then took the dangerous step of praying to these "Factions of Ascension." Many were startled when their prayers were answered. And they were further startled when they were approached by a "higher being" in person, wishing to shed his own divinity in order to enable their rise toward godhood.

This small body of scholars was divided on how to respond. Some took this as a test of faith, believing such a shortcut to godhood would not be truly offered. Others believed the offer, and went about recruiting a larger body of people from among the more amenable Feldarin. This indecision was to be fortuitous.

Although not a direct part of this Cult, the coincidental appearance of the Elves and the arrival of the Plague Fiend drew unfavorable attention to all scholars involved in divine research. Some repented of their beliefs. Others, convinced they had come closer to a greater truth, continued their research in secret. They found that they could still gain power by worshipping the Factions of the Ascension associated with their original patron deities, and not always by worshipping the patron deities themselves.

Since then, this Cult has continued in tight secrecy to the present day. For their research into the true nature of the divine, they have taken a much greater interest in the nature of all religions that the Feldarin encounter than any other body of clerics. They have also, more recently, arrived at the conclusion that close examination of other intelligent races might yield information on their "progression," with a particular emphasis in experiments on Elves to discern the true nature of the Plague Fiend's gift, and they have a program of kidnapping and examination by experiment.

Note: a prestige class was planned for this cult, called "Initiate of the Ascension."

Custodis Imperia

Author: Tantolian

Location: The Feldarin Empire and any other locations under Feldarin control, mainly the cities of Cadothim, Port Conastinium, Monsordithim, and Caradeithim.

Demographics: Feldarin Paladins and Dwarven Mercenaries, other races usually do not join this group due to the requirements and the allegiances sworn. Members swear an oath to the Empire to lay down their lives if needed.

Year Founded: The Custodis Imperia accompanied the Feldarin invasion of Ursoule.

Size: There are currently around 1150 members spread out over the Feldarin Empire.

General Description: Military and militant, loyal to the Emperor.

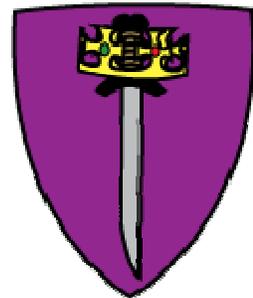
History: The Custodis Imperia existed as a trained militia long before the Feldarin came to Ursoule. After proving during the Landing that they could take care of the fighting better than anyone else, and showing that they truly were a formidable force, Empress Conastinia installed them as an elite group of guards and mercenaries to ensure her personal safety from assassins and other attacks. After the Landing, they were offered a special place in the Feldarin army, and became known by their present name.

During the Time of Many Emperors (356 - 360 A.L.) the Senate flexed its power and also wanted protection, so they decreed that the Custodis Imperia would be loyal to not only the Emperor, but also to the Senate and to certain powerful nobles. Claiming a desire to prevent any single person from abusing the might of the Custodis, they made it more versatile and much larger than at any time in its history.

Now with no Emperor, and the Senate and nobles weakened due to the Weeping, the Empire truly does rely on the Custodis Imperia to protect them from being overrun. In many areas, they are the last line of defense against all-out anarchy.

Symbol: A crowned sword on a purple field (shown at right).

Goals and Motivation: The Custodis Imperia protects and defends the sanctity and safety of the Feldarin Empire, and keeps the Emperor safe no matter where he or she may go.



The Custodis Imperia lives to protect the Feldarin Empire. Any that oppose this sanctity and peace are considered enemies of the state, and are dealt with as quickly as possible. The Feldarin Militia is considered to be under the Custodis Imperia, and follow their orders when given.

Leader: The Commanding General of the Custodis Imperia is a Feldarin General appointed by the Emperor. By tradition, the leader needs to be a father to at least three children. When he takes the position, all his children are sent to court under the care of trusted nobles or royals. If the Commanding General tries to seize the throne, or any other treachery, then his children can be used as leverage against him (true Feldarin politics at work).

A new Commanding General is picked from among the ranks by the Emperor whenever a ruling General falls in battle or is no longer able to command. That General then picks his officers from the ranks to fill the spots below him. It is claimed that the rank structure is an earned privilege, but that is not always the case.

Elegant Surprises (The Guild of the Hidden Death; The Spider's Web)

Author: Doshi

Location: "Elegant Surprises" is a well-known business headquartered in Nekrazzabar. The headquarters of the "Guild of the Hidden Death" and the "Spider's Web" is located in a secret cave complex several days travel from Nekrazzabar. It is known to its members as

The Temple of Certainty. The Guild of the Hidden Death has cells in most Gnomish cities. Since the Plague, it has begun to operate in a few places on the surface as well.

Demographics: Assassins, Expert trap makers, Fighters, Clerics. Mostly Nether Gnomes, and a few Kobolds.

Year Founded: Approximately sixty years ago.

Size: Approximately 300 strong as the Plague is receding.

General Description: Officially, Elegant Surprises is a profitable business owned by Semledda Crafter Elegant Design and is located in the Gnomish capital city of Nekrazzabar. The company designs and manufactures mechanical death traps, which are sold to wealthy clients who wish to deter thieves. Behind this comparatively innocent façade lurks a criminal Assassin's Guild, called The Guild of the Hidden Death, which is considered one of the best Assassin's guilds currently operating on Ursoule. And behind that sinister façade lurks a group of Gnomish Erimimoth clerics who are studying the Plague, who call themselves The Spider's Web. The layers are like an onion when peeled back, and can be confusing.

The Spider's Web hides within, and secretly controls, The Guild of the Hidden Death, which is itself hiding behind Elegant Surprises. Many of the employees of Elegant Surprises have no idea that their business is associated with an Erimimoth cult, and some of the Assassins in the Hidden Death don't know about the Spider's Web (though most wouldn't be surprised, given that the involvement of Erimimoth cults in Assassin's Guilds is no real secret among Gnomish criminals).

History: Why does a Gnome decide to worship Erimimoth? At least until very recently, only a small minority of Gnomes were attracted to Death's worship. In the aftermath of the Plague, the Worship of Death has suddenly begun to acquire more Gnomish worshipers than ever before, but it's still unclear whether Erimimoth worship can become a significant force within Gnomish society.

The Spider's Web was started about sixty years ago as one of a long series of Death cults that has appeared and attracted some worshipers, mostly from the criminal underclass of Gnomish society, and then been largely suppressed by the Dracolich. The Church of Currindor and some other groups have also actively attacked such cults whenever they have been discovered. If one group of Erimimoth worshippers had not found a profitable niche by becoming professional Assassins, the whole religion might have died out long ago.

Most Erimimoth cults have traditionally been divided regarding the issue of whether or not it is theologically acceptable to use Death Magic to cause Death. Some Death worshipers believe it is perfectly acceptable to use the tools of Erimimoth's great rival, Currindor, to advance the cause of Death. Others see any use of Arcane magic by Death Worshipers as a betrayal of Erimimoth's "Axiom of Inevitability." After all, a true servant of Death should not, it is argued, need to rely on magic. Death alone should be sufficient for Death. This long standing theological debate among Gnomish Death worshipers still troubles some of the members of the Spider's Web today.

Most Erimimoth cults throughout Gnomish history were started by murderers or Assassins. The Spider's Web was slightly different from the 'average' Death cult because one of its early leaders was a Craftsman who specialized in the creation of mechanical death traps. It was because of his work that Elegant Surprises was founded. Being able to hide behind the façade of a fairly well respected business has made it easier for both the Guild of Hidden

Death and The Spider's Web to escape notice.

More Gnomes have begun to worship Erimimoth since the Plague, which has made it much easier for The Guild of the Hidden Death to expand. The Plague was a forceful reminder to many Gnomes of the power and inevitability of Death. It was bad enough that so many Gnomes died of the Plague. But the Plague also caused some Gnomes to question their belief in Currindor and magic. There were two things about the Plague that challenged the beliefs of Gnomish society. First was the fact that the Plague could not be cured by magical means. Since the great majority of Gnomes have always believed that magic could solve any problem, the failure of magic to cure the Plague was shocking. And second was the fact that anything, even intelligent Undead, could die of the Plague. This was a revelation to many Gnomes, because Gnomish theology has traditionally pointed to Undeath as an example of the way Magic could liberate sentient beings from Erimimoth's Inevitability.

The clerics of The Spider's Web are currently working to learn all they can of the Plague, in order to understand how it relates to Erimimoth. They have cautiously begun to seek more information about the Plague on the surface. But some members of The Spider's Web are concerned that the Plague might, like death magic, be a diversion from the real path to Erimimoth's True Inevitability. If they decide the Plague Fiend is an enemy of Erimimoth, these concerns will become more important. On the other hand, the Plague offers the potential at least to show all Gnomes just how powerful Death really is. And that gives Death worshipers a reason to be more optimistic about their future than ever before.

Symbols: The symbol of Elegant Surprises is a diagram of a complex death trap. The Guild of the Hidden Death and The Spider's Web do not have official symbols.

Goals and Motivation: Magic alone can not prepare one to face the Inevitability of Death. Death is real and ultimately inescapable. If we are to accept Death we must understand it, and the only way to fully understand Death is to cause Death. Thus, assassination is the Sacred Rite of Erimimoth. Not to kill thoughtlessly or randomly, but rather to carefully contemplate every aspect of any death you cause. Plan out every stage of an assassination, and try to acquire a good understanding of your victim before you kill, so that you gain as much knowledge of the nature of Death as possible from every Sacred assassination. Remember that Death should serve only Death. Do not become dependant on Death magic. The use of magic to cause Death may be occasionally acceptable, but do not forget we serve Erimimoth and not Currindor. Learn as much as you can about the Plague, for it is the greatest manifestation of Death in recent memory.

The members firmly believe in preserving the secrecy of the Guild of the Hidden Death and The Spider's Web, and in performing each assassination with all the care appropriate of a sacred ritual. Do not forget that Death is greater than Magic, for everything ultimately dies, including Magic. Do not fear your own Death. It is far better to die than to be captured by the enemies of Erimimoth.

Leaders: Valannu Writer Wanderer (Male Nethergnome, Cleric 7/ Assassin 8, Neutral Evil), Semledda Crafter Elegant Design (Female Nethergnome, Cleric 4/ Expert 10, Neutral Evil)

Allies and Enemies: The Spider's Web has some contacts with other groups of Erimimoth worshipers scattered through Gnomish society. They also have a very loose connection to a small cult in Kobold society that worships their Death god. They feel a slight sympathy towards Gnomes who worship Nature, Travel or War, but they wouldn't hesitate to accept a contract to assassinate a member of one of those cults. Their worst enemies are the Dracolich and the clerics and paladins of Currindor.

A few members of the Guild of Hidden Death have trained with the Guild of Sunlit Shadows, but they've so far kept their association with an Erimimoth cult a secret from the Sunlit Shadows. The Hidden Death has recently renewed its operations on the surface, in part because they want to learn more about how the Plague affected the surface races, and also because assassinating surface dwellers may give them new insights into Death. The Shadow Guild has begun to suspect that a group of Gnomish assassins may be operating on the surface, and have begun investigations aimed at learning who the culprits are.

Elven Council

Compiled from several sources

The Elven Lords can call together a **Council of the Highest** (eldest/smartest) to give advice and make decisions for all the Elves in the world. The Council takes place at the **Tree of the World**, an ancient Albion holy site whose true location is kept secret, even from some of the attendees. The Council is called together only in times of great stress on the Elves (an Elven Lord called a Council after the outbreak of The Weeping with only mixed results; the Morvanima refused to attend, and many other communities were dealing with the effects of the plague). Another Council is expected to be called again in the near future.

To the Elves, few things are more treasured than knowledge. The Five Gods of the Elves instill a love of knowledge into all Elvenfolk. Many Elf-lords own cathedral-like libraries, housing aging tomes full of knowledge unknown to many of the other races.

In the massive trunk of the Elven Council's **Tree of the World** lies the **Grand Library and Archive**. Appearing to occupy one third of the trunk, the Library is impossibly large when entered, suggesting arcane power at work. The walls are lined with shelves, all of which are packed to capacity with books and tomes from every era, even from before the Landing.

Navigating the Library is an impossible feat for many, and many Rogues have gone mad (and subsequently perished) attempting to filch one of the many priceless tomes held within. In fact, only three people possess the ability to locate any given work without the aid of one of the Arcane Servants: The High Lord of the Elven Council, the High Priest of Zierapparat, god of Magic, and the Archivist Llewellyn, who maintains the Library.

The Archivist's Stair (by AngelSword, GitP Home Brew Forums)

This green marble disc is roughly five feet in diameter and intricately carved with a long Elven proverb along its edge. It hovers a few inches above the ground when not in use.

Crafted as a gift to the Elven Archivists from the Temple of Zierapparat, the stair is able to carry the user to the precise location of any book the user desires. By speaking the name of a book held in the Library, the disc carries its user to the section in which the book is located, and up to its shelf, putting the book at eye level. In addition, if a user asks for a topic, the stair will take them to the three most relevant books on that subject in order.

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *floating disk*, *locate object*; Price 12,000 gp.

The Archivist Llewellyn (by AngelSword, GitP Home Brew Forums)

Wizard 10/ Loremaster 10

Size/Type: Medium Humanoid

Hit Dice: 20d4 -19 (46 HP)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 21 (+8 armor, +2 Dex, +1 Dodge)
Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+9
Attack: Llewellyn's Sword +13 (1d8 + 2)
Full Attack: Llewellyn's Sword +13/+8 (1d8 + 2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Spells
Special Qualities: Elven traits
Saves: Fort: +11 Ref: +12 Will: +21
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 22, Wis 16, Cha 14
Skills: Knowledge (Religion) +30, Knowledge (Arcana) +30, Knowledge (History) +33, Linguistics +35, Perform (Comedy) +6, Profession (Archivist) +26, Spellcraft +30
Feats: Skill Focus [Knowledge (History)], Scribe Scroll, Extend Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Mastery (Legend Lore, Locate Object, Comprehend Languages, Tongues, True Seeing), Improved Counterspell, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Familiar, Spell Penetration, Toughness

Gear: Bracers of Armor +8, Robe of the Archmagi (gray), Ioun Stone (clear), Greater Cloak of Displacement, Boots of Levitation, Llewellyn's Sword (+3 Dancing Longsword)

Archivist Llewellyn is a quiet, studious old Elf, whose only love in life is his beloved Library. It is rumored that he is the original developer of it, but most think this story a derisive jab at his age. Llewellyn is fluent in common, elven, draconic, dwarven, celestial, infernal, abyssal, and sylvan, and can grasp any other language after a short time.

Since he can locate any book within the Library in a matter of moments, he maintains no spellbook of his own, but has access to nearly every spell put to parchment (any spell that is considered 'core' is in the library, non-core spells have a 75% chance of being here, and if the spell is from a setting other than Tears of Blood there is a 25% chance it will be here).

Combat: During combat, Llewellyn's first concern is for his Library, and he will do anything to keep it from harm. He prefers to prepare spells to disable an assailant, instead of eliminating them, but will always have Time Stop prepared to retreat and lock down the Library should it become necessary.

Chosen Secrets: Secret Health, The lore of true stamina, Dodge Trick, Weapon Trick, Instant Mastery

Greater Lore (Ex): Llewellyn can understand magic items as with the *identify* spell.

True Lore (Ex): Once per day Llewellyn can use his knowledge to gain the effect of a Legend Lore spell or an Analyze Dweomer spell.

Followers of Baa'Te

Author: Appolo

Little Shalla was picking berries in the field with her new basket she got for her fourth birthday. It was such a wonderful birthday. First, she got a new basket from her uncle, and then Momma said she could go and pick berries for her birthday cake! Shalla loved cake.

A shuffle in the grass brought her attention to a strange person, standing with his back to her. He looked like a man, but his skin was all flaky and disgusting. It was grey and smelled bad, but Shalla knew there were people who were very sick with an illness her momma and dad called "the Weeping," maybe this man had it. He was dressed in a very pretty, shiny suit, and had a sword on his back. He reminded Shalla of the travelers who had come to town last week, and how nice they were. Maybe he was nice too.

She ran over to him to share some berries, and tugged at his cloak, but he wouldn't pay attention. He just kept looking into the distance. After failing to get his attention, she was about to go picking berries again when she noticed a group of people headed her way. They looked scary. There were big things flying in the air, and huge masses of stuff she didn't recognize. Shalla was scared, but as long as she had this traveler with her, she felt safe.

Suddenly, a loud voice shot out into the summer air "What do you have there, Llurch?"

The strange man replied in a language Shalla didn't understand, but then the loud voice replied, "Bring her to me, she might be useful."

With a speed she never expected from the one she now knew was called Llurch, the sick-looking man scooped her up and started carrying her towards the advancing host.

No longer scared of the nightmarish creatures because the nice stranger liked them, Shalla began whistling and talking to Llurch. He didn't talk much, maybe he couldn't speak her language, like that big traveler last week who just grunted a lot. Shalla and Llurch came to a stop in the middle of the host. There were many more people who looked like Llurch. There were some who must have suffered the Weeping so much their skin was all gone, and all that was left were their skeletons. They looked funny, and Shalla giggled.

"Is something humorous, little girl?" asked a man who strode out from the sea of creatures. Everything was silent but the flapping of wings, and the mutterings of the damned.

"Your people are funny. They don't have faces." She giggled.

"Yes they do, you just can't see them. Now stop giggling, it demeans what I'm doing here."

"What's that, Mr...?" Shalla's voice faded away, asking two questions at once.

"Val is my name, after Valhalla, the legendary Hall of Heroes. As for what I'm doing, I am going to make your town like us." He answered, motioning to the assembled host.

"You're gonna make 'em sick?" Shalla asked, suddenly becoming frightened.

"Yes. I'm 'gonna make 'em' very sick. Starting with you." And with a flick of his wrists motioned to Llurch.

The townsfolk at Riversdale heard the screaming, but couldn't begin to imagine the doom awaiting them, as the unholy army moved closer and closer.

Location: The Followers go from town to town, and either infect the populace with The Weeping or convert them all into undead. In this way, you could say they are "nomadic."

Demographics: Made up mostly of Plaguetoached, Fleshwrought, undead, and minor demons/devils with small groups of Feldarin, Gnomes, and other races. The hierarchy of

followers starts with Sergeants (the leader's favorites), then Plaguetouched and Fleshwrought, Demons and Devils, Undead, Gnomes, Feldarin, and any others. Any class may be present except those that require Lawful alignments. No Lawful alignments will ever be found here, as their ethos would grate against the Demonlord. The class distribution usually stays around 40% Blackguards, 15% Rogues, 10% Clerics, 10% Wizard-Barbarian or Sorcerer-Barbarian, 10% Barbarian, 10% Druid, 3% Ranger, and 2% Bard.

Beliefs: The Followers of Baa'Te believe that the Demonlord Baa'te is a "god" worthy of challenging any deity. They believe that his arsenal of evil includes the Plague, undead, and all evil outsiders. The Followers view being stricken with the Plague, or being spawned into undeath, to be the Highest Blessings of Baa'Te. Therefore they believe that infecting others, or spawning them as undead, leads them to more and more power.

Size: Varies, depending on the success of their most recent "rituals."

Alignment: Since chaos and law are the main alignments in Ursoule, there are actually some Good-aligned NPCs in The Followers. The Main alignment is Chaotic Evil, followed by Chaotic Neutral, Neutral Evil, then a very few Chaotic Good. Since Baa'Te isn't particular about who worships him, he accepts any evil or chaotic person willing to worship.

Rituals/Observances: Baa'Te works his Followers up into a frenzy whenever his scouts report a village or other settlement small enough for them to "convert." This includes capturing sacrifices for the "ceremony" and Baa'Te lecturing the masses in Abyssal.

Symbol: No symbol or other way to recognize a "Follower" is known.

Tactics: The Followers recruit by force, mainly by raiding towns and villages, and then infecting the inhabitants with the Plague or raising the slain as undead. They welcome anyone who wants to join of their own volition, and many Plaguetouched and Fleshwrought have joined this cult after being ostracized elsewhere.

Leader: The Demonlord Baa'te, a demon nearing god-hood. He is the "Demon of Doors," and rewards his followers in many different ways. He is known to his followers as "Val."

Typical Composition: most followers with class levels are Blackguards, due to the bias shown to them by Val. Known as the Masters of Darkness, they get preferred treatment and rewards. In addition to the Blackguards are Clerics, Rogues, and a few Wizards and Sorcerers. Many who join often multi-class as Barbarians for higher combat capabilities. Barbarians are used as the main combat force, backed up by any undead who have class levels in Barbarian (for the rage ability and the extra hit dice).

Gnaritas Occultus (The "Knowledge that Lies Hidden")

Locations: This group is headquartered in Port Constantinum but can be found anywhere in the Feldarin Empire and The Beneath.

Demographics: Wizards, Clerics, Sages, and any who are jealous of Gnomish magic, membership is open to all humanoid races except Gnomes and Halflings. New members are

selected from the senior ranks of wizards, clerics and sages. Progression is by knowledge, secrets discovered, and secrets learned or kept from the Gnomes.

Year Founded: Shortly after The Landing, when the Feldarin became aware of the Gnomes.

Size: Small, approx. 400-500 members.

General Description: The Gnaritas Occultus is a society of Feldarin and a few others who dedicate themselves to the acquisition of power and ancient magic through channels known and unknown.

History: Most members of the Occultus are patriots on one level or another, but some simply thirst for power and control. The Occultus can provide that to its members in full. Members of the group have infiltrated (or are recruited from) almost all known political and military organizations. Only the most professional and talented are ever extended an invitation, and no one has ever declined – the invitee is always evaluated before the offer is made. Only Gnomes and Halflings are excluded due to race – the Occultus knows that in the final analysis, it will be the Gnomes against the rest of the world, and the Halflings cannot be trusted to pick the right side.

Secrecy is the guiding law over everything the Occultus does. If the Gnomes were ever to get a whisper of such an organization, the game would be up. The Gnomes would close up the entrances to the Beneath, completely pull out of the Universities, and that would be it. No one would ever be able to learn long forgotten secrets, and the Gnomes will have won.

But if the secret is kept safe, then they feel they have a chance. Eventually they hope to learn enough to overcome the Gnomes, and force them to deal as equals, not as some poor, uneducated vagabond “taught by them out of pity.”

The greatest secret of the Occultus is that they have recently acquired an Aether airship, and are furiously studying it. The Gnomes only know that the AMS Whisperwind has gone missing, not what happened to it. Some have attributed it to the Plague. Woe unto them that is found with that ship when the Gnomes come looking for it.

Currently neither the Occultus nor the Athu Kimitu are aware of each other. Were that to change, it could result in a very bloody behind the scenes war, unknown to the general populations of both the surface and the Beneath, but with dire consequences for both.

Symbol: No symbol is known for this secret society.

Goals and Motivation: Founded by Feldarin mages the night the first Aether Gnome ship was spotted in the skies over their lands, the Gnaritas Occultus has become one of the most powerful forces ever seen on the surface of Ursoule. That night, three wise sages met to discuss what they had seen, and to determine what omen it might be. A decision was made to investigate the occurrence, and eventually it was determined to be a Gnome ship. Gnomes with the power of flight! Such a thing could not be allowed to stand. So the three, along with some friends, met and founded the Gnaritas Occultus, a society dedicated to acquiring and learning all that can be found of Gnome technology and if possible, other undiscovered ancient secrets. Secrecy above all, finding ancient secrets, studying them, and consolidating its power are what drive the Gnaritas Occultus.

Leader: Officially, the Concilium Tredecim (Council of Thirteen), the most powerful of all in the Occultus, leads the organization. Unofficially, Primoris Tredecim (First of Thirteen) is Arcturus Principe, the most powerful non-Gnome wizard outside The Beneath, and possibly

in all of Ursoule. Unknowing allies include most military, political, and merchant organizations on the Surface World. Enemies are the Athu Kimitu and the Athzu Buxinnu.

Gnomish Secret Societies (Athu Kitimtu and Ahwzu Buxinnu)

Author: Meat Shield

The Athu Kitimtu (the Brotherhood of Secret Knowledge)



Location(s): Gnomish Empire, the Beneath, occasionally above ground on missions

Demographics: All Gnomish, with perhaps a few subterranean races. Entirely Wizards and Clerics. New members are selected from the senior ranks of Gnome wizards and clerics. Progression is tied to knowledge, secrets discovered, secrets stolen from outsiders, etc. Mostly a meritocracy, not an 'assassinate your way to the top' type organization.

Year Founded: Shortly after the founding of the Gnomish Empire.

Size: Low, perhaps 100 members at any given time.

General Description: The Athu Kitimtu are a secret cabal at the highest ranks of Gnome society whose purpose is the recovery, study, and use of all ancient magic and artifacts, while at the same time preventing their use by any one other than those deemed worthy, and never by non-Gnomes. The cabal has no official power outside the Beneath.

Made up of the most powerful Gnome wizards and clerics, the Athu Kitimtu is ever vigilant in their pursuit of ancient secrets and in their persecution of those who would spread those secrets beyond the Gnomish race. Whether this prohibition against spreading knowledge comes from a desire to protect the Gnomes from uneducated use of these secrets, or from simple greed, is unknown.

The group remains secret for many reasons. First and foremost is because there are some 'foolishly naïve' Gnomes who feel that these secrets can be used for the betterment of Ursoule as a whole, while the Athu Kitimtu know that the surface races are not ready for such knowledge and that it would be dangerous and irresponsible to release it to them. They also fear that if the outside world knew of this prohibition against spreading ancient knowledge, there would be surface dwellers who would band together to force the Gnomes to give up their secrets. The second reason is self-defense. If the Gnomes keep the knowledge secret, and it ever comes to war between them and the other races, they will have the clear advantage. If nothing else, every member of the Athu Kitimtu is a staunch patriot.

These two reasons together define one of the characteristics of the Athu Kitimtu – they would rather destroy ancient knowledge than see it fall into anyone else's hands. Partly to protect the secrets, and partly for self-defense so it could not be used against them. Another reason is much more elementary, although not acknowledged - greed. The members of Athu Kitimtu have become obsessed with the accumulation of the mystic energies that drive them ever on to find more and more knowledge.

The other main function of the Athu Kitimtu is running the Ahwzu Buxinnu ('Lamp of Learning'). The Ahwzu Buxinnu is an openly public organization that searches tirelessly for

ancient knowledge, and conducts research into it. The leader of the Ahwzu Buxinnu is one of the highest ranking members of the Athu Kitimtu, and he is the one primarily responsible for bringing the most important artifacts and darkest secrets to the Athu Kitimtu for their own uses.

History: Little is known of their history. Rumors persist of cooperation with subterranean dragons to study ancient texts and artifacts.

Symbols: No known symbols exist for this secret society.

Goals and Motivations:

1. Find ancient and long lost secrets before anyone else does
2. Study the secrets that they find, possibly discovering how to use them
3. Protect the Gnomish race from all outsiders
4. Keep those secrets from the unworthy among the gnomes and all other races

Leader: Known as the Enuru ("Lord")

Allies and Enemies: Most members of the Ahwzu Buxinnu are believed to be unknowing allies, as are certain subterranean dragons that study ancient knowledge for their own uses. There is some cooperation and sharing of secrets between Gnomes and Dragons, sometimes grudgingly, sometimes as acts of friendship. All Gnome wizards and clerics would support the Ahwzu Buxinnu, and thus by extension also support this organization. Enemies include any in search of ancient or Gnomish knowledge besides themselves. Currently neither the Athu Kimitu nor the Gnaritas Occultus are aware of each other. Were that to change, it could result in a very bloody behind the scenes war, unknown to the general populations of both the surface and the Beneath.

The Ahwzu Buxinnu (the Lamp of Learning)

Locations: Gnomish Empire, the Beneath, occasionally above ground on missions.

Demographics: Wizards, Clerics, Artificers, Archeologists, Delves, all Gnomish. New members are apprenticed to existing members. Progression is based on knowledge, secrets discovered, successful application to Gnomish life, etc. They are a meritocracy, and other than academic disagreements, the members are generally polite and friendly to each other.



Year Founded: Shortly after the founding of the Gnomish Empire.

Size: Approx. 5000

General Description: The Ahwzu Buxinnu is an organization whose purpose is to seek out ancient knowledge and adapt it for the betterment of the Gnomish race, and eventually the world. No official power outside the Beneath, but some influence due to the surface-dwelling mages interested in their activities.

The Ahwzu Buxinnu is an eclectic mix of wizards, scholars, archeologists, clerics, tinkerers, and item fabricators that recover ancient artifacts, bring them back to the University for study, and who divine their secrets for use by the Gnomes.

For the most part, the members of the Ahwzu Buxinnu are altruistic and believe that what they are doing is for the betterment of their race. Very few of them realize that they are actually agents of the Athu Kitimtu, who make sure that the most promising secrets are studied only by those the Athu Kitimtu deem trustworthy.

History: little is known of the history of this organization; except that it has existed almost as long as there have been Gnomes.

Symbol: An open book.

Goals and Motivation: Find ancient secrets, study them, and adapt them for use by Gnomes.

Leader: Known as the Lamadu (la-MAY-du, "He who knows")

Allies and Enemies: Most law-abiding citizens of the Gnome Empire are respectful of the Ahwzu Buxinnu, and will actively assist if they can. Surface-dwelling mages will also be respectful of this organization, as they realize it is the only place where they may be able to learn new magic.

The Grinning Dragon Trade Association

Author: Doshi

Location: There are Grinning Dragon Trade Association members on approximately 30 Nether Gnome ships and on at least 5 Aether Gnome Ships. The headquarters is in the City of Nekrazzabar, located roughly between the Nether Gnome and the Aether Gnome sections of the city. There are smaller offices in the Nether Gnome cities of Kalmat, Maqtar and Quagg. Other locations include some cities on the surface where the Gnomes obtain goods.

Demographics: Members include Merchants, Wizards, Rogues, Sorcerers, and Clerics of Currindor, the Gnomish god of Magic. Nether Gnomes are about 35% of the membership, followed by Aether Gnomes at 25%, Half-dragons at 20%, Halflings at 8%, Elves at 5%, Dwarves at 4%, Humans at 3%, and a few members of other races that live in the Beneath such as Kobolds, and reportedly including at least one Mind-flayer. Only Gnomes and Half-dragons are allowed in the City.

Year Founded: Even 4000 thousand years ago, when the ancestors of the Gnomes entered the Beneath, the role of the trader was a respected one in Gnomish society. The Gnome's most ancient historical records occasionally mention groups that conducted some trade, either with surface dwellers or with the other races of the Beneath. Some members of the Grinning Dragon Trade Association like to claim that they can trace the origins of the Association back to those ancient groups. However, the Association's records show that its current incarnation was founded about 500 years ago.

Size: Approximately 225 core members make up the Association.

General Description: This group believes it is both profitable and religiously desirable to encourage some trade between the different races. They specialize mostly in the trading of spell components and magic items. The Gnomish government passed some laws centuries ago regulating what magic knowledge and tools Gnomes can trade to other races, and the Gnomish Church of Currindor, the God of Magic, monitors the Association to make sure these laws are obeyed.

History: As is the case with most things Gnomish, the Grinning Dragon Trade Association began as a plan by the Dracolich. For centuries before the Feldarin Empire was founded, a few Gnomes found it profitable to trade with the Halflings, Dwarves and Humans for various spell components. Most of this trade was loosely supervised by a few families of Half-dragons who had been instructed by the Dracolich to keep track of it. But the massive disruptions of surface society caused by the Feldarin Invasion disrupted these trading relations, so the Dracolich decided she needed a slightly more organized system. The main purpose of the Association was to carry on this trade in a controlled fashion. The Dracolich did not want the trade to attract too much attention from the surface dwellers. She didn't want the Feldarin Empire in particular to pay too much attention to it. So the Association recruited a few members from surface dwelling races, (mostly Halflings, Elves, and Dwarves, but also a few Humans) who were willing to keep the fact that they were trading with Gnomes a secret. Most of the members of the Association who belong to surface dwelling races belong to families that have been quietly involved in the Association for centuries. They also tend to worship their own culture's aspect of the God of Magic.

When the Association's trade with the surface dwellers allowed them to acquire some magic components that were particularly useful to the Dracolich's other race of followers, the Kobolds, the Dracolich decided to allow a few Kobolds to join the Association as well. Most Kobolds hate Gnomes, but this is not universally the case, particularly among those Kobolds with particularly close ties to the Dracolich. The Kobolds in the Association tend to be much more tolerant of Gnomes than the average Kobold, which means they also usually keep their ties to the Association confidential. Still, the fact that Gnomes and Kobolds are both involved in the Association has led it to pay more attention to trade in the Beneath. In the last century they have even begun to do a little trading with the Mind-flayers.

The Plague was a horrific disaster for the Association, because it forced the Gnomes to temporarily sever most of the connections they had with other races. However, as soon as the Gnomes realized that the Plague was ending, the Association began to reestablish these connections.

Symbol: A Dragon with a friendly smile. Sometimes the Dragon will be enclosed in a circle of eight books or a circle of eight coins. Occasionally both are used for important matters.

Goals and Motivation: While the Association is interested in financial profit, they nevertheless share the general Gnomish fascination with magic. They believe they are performing a public service for their race by increasing the availability of certain spell components and other materials. Most of the Gnomes in the Association want to make sure that they learn any important magical secrets that are discovered by the other races they are trading with. Because there are laws regulating what magical knowledge and items Gnomes can share with other races, the Gnomes in the Association need to maintain a certain degree of secrecy. Some Association members believe that their god of Magic would prefer them to be less secretive about magic than Gnomish laws allow. They reason that the growth of magical knowledge among other races will increase those races understanding and worship of the god of Magic.

The Gnomes believe that magic is the key to all things. They will do nothing that could harm the source of Magic. They will sometimes advance the cause of Magic by making certain spell components available. They try to establish mutually beneficial trade with groups that understand and value magic. They try not to let political differences - such as the rift between Nether and Aether Gnomes - get in the way of profitable trade in magic-related items. They keep their activities secret from most surface dwellers, because most of them

do not fully understand and value magic in the same way as Gnomes.

Leaders: Honored Chairman of the Board of Directors Mahat Wizard Dreamseeker (Male Copper Gnome Half Dragon, Wizard 16/Expert 3, Lawful Neutral), Chief Librarian Jasmis Archivist Starseer, (Female Aether Gnome, Expert 13/Cleric (Magic God) 5, Lawful Good), Beneath Trade Coordinator Salanna Merchant Dealmaker (Female Nether Gnome Wizard 3/Expert 18, Lawful Evil), Surface Trade Coordinator Adimpol (Male Halfling, Sorcerer 9/Dragon Disciple 5, Lawful Neutral). Every member of the Association must own at least one voting share in the Association. Every eight years, Association members can vote to determine who sits on the Association's eight person Board of Directors. The Board then elects one of its members as Honored Chairperson, who receives two votes on the Board. The majority of voting shares are held by about twenty individuals with close ties to the Dracolich, so in reality she decides who will be on the Board.

Allies and Enemies: The Association does not believe it is profitable to have enemies, so they try to avoid making any. All of the Half-dragons and most of the Gnomes and Kobolds in the Association are very loyal to their own races and to the Dracolich. They tend to share a common sympathy for anyone who worships an aspect of the god of Magic. They tend to dislike any group that seems to be opposed to magic, causing some of them to dislike the Feldarin Empire due to its attempts to regulate magic use.

All of the Gnomish members of the Association who visit the surface have received at least Basic level accreditation from the Guild of Sunlit Shadows (see separate entry), and sometimes take advantage of the network of safe houses the Sunlit Shadows have established on the surface. On the other hand though, the Sunlit Shadows Guild is responsible for enforcing the Gnomish Surface Laws, and have occasionally arrested members of the Association for violations of those laws.

Halfpint Holesale Merchant's Guild

Author: Tantolian

Locations: Halfling Isles, major port cities across Ursoule. This guild can be found across the open oceans, near the Halfling islands, and even as far out as the Orrkish continent. They have some dealings with the Feldarin, the Phoedran peoples, the Yujung on occasion, and also the lowland Caltan people.

Demographics: Mainly Halflings with a few Humans. Most other races are allowed to buy passage across the ocean, but the Halflings do not truly trust the other races enough to include them on the "inside." Mostly they are afraid that others may learn trade secrets that they have fought long and hard to keep for themselves.

Year Founded: Originally founded in the year 26 B.L. by the great Captain Rendu B'Marne, the great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather to Renard.

Size: There are around 6,500 core members of this trading guild, with a fleet of about 100 ships for transporting goods, supplies and passengers across the seas.

General Description: The Halfpint Holesale Merchant's Guild will usually deal in just about anything that can be bought for a good low cost, while still being of decent quality. For a price, they will usually take passengers from one port to another (the race will determine the cost they have to pay). They have been known to travel to the Orrkish continent for trade, though so far they are not known to have taken anyone there as a passenger. They

usually carry about twenty ballista on any one ship, and have more on some ships. They have gotten very good at hitting their mark, whether it be a price on merchandise or the seam of another ship's sail to slow it down.

History: Not much is known about the history of this guild, except that the Halflings once had to fight a long sea war against the Baran Navy. Both sides claimed victory.

Symbol: A ship, masted and sailed, on a blue field.

Goals and Motivation: This guild is primarily motivated by all the basics: gold, fame, and even a hope for some glory. The 'rules to live by' for this guild are simple, and to the point: "If the Guildmaster says it, and it ain't gonna kill us, we do it!"

Leader: The most recent Guildmaster was Admiral Renard B'Marne, who died in the Plague and has not yet been replaced. A new Guildmaster is usually chosen by the previous one, which has led to the current vacancy. Usually it is a child of the current leader who has proven they can do the job, and want to. This has jumped a few generations of the B'Marne line, though, when either the children were not interested and a grandchild was chosen, or someone else (not of the line) proved that they could and would hold up the Guild. This method has not only gotten the approval and support of the Guild itself, but also of many of their customers over the years. Usually the new Guildmaster purchases a new flagship to operate from, as the old flagship is retired with the former Guildmaster as his or her retirement home. Advancement is by hard work, and a high level of determination to succeed at all odds to get to the top, or to the desired position. Several of Renard's children are currently vying for the title of Guildmaster.

Allies and Enemies: This guild does not have many true alliances, though all Halflings seem to band together when the threat is large enough. Some of the Orrks that they deal with would fight very hard alongside them, if they knew that it was needed. There has even been a sighting or two of an Orrk on some of their ships. Since the incident with the Baran Navy, they are very leery to trust anyone that even looks of Baran descent.

Ilneshit A'dran (loose translation: "Hidden Death")

Author: Infernus

Location: Formerly only in Port Conastinium (Canal City), now all over the Feldarin Empire and possibly operating in other lands as well, most notably in Baran territory. The Guild headquarters is reportedly still in the Canal City.

Demographics: Mercenaries, thieves, thugs and the like, but mostly mercenaries. Racially composed of around 2,000 Humans, 1,600 Dwarves, 600 Feldarin, 400 Halflings, 100 Giantkin, and around 300 of other races. Also a number of slaves, mostly monster races.

Year Founded: 491

Size: Roughly around 5,000 members, as outlined in Demographics.

General Description: This peculiar mercenary guild is incredibly secretive. The rulers of the guild as well as the elite troops are not known to the public. Only the lower ranking mercenaries reveal themselves as members. The guild draws money both from bidders in need of mercenary services and from the many rogues it secretly has under its wing, as well as many extorted merchants. They are in no way lawful, and if a job fails or too many

lives are lost, they are very likely to kill the person who paid to have the job done. Even successful jobs often end with a very high ranking officer of the guild appearing in the job-giver's room and extracting some extra gold, or other goods, if need be. They often arrange jobs of their own, to gain more power or for the simple excitement of their founder, who enjoys chaos greatly. They like to work subtly, through assassination or even more often simple persuasion rather than open warfare, which, if it comes to it, they send their slaves in first, followed by the low-ranking mercenaries if need be. Most high profile jobs are handled by the elite.

History: The Guild was founded in the year 491 by an aspiring Feldarin, and although most would call him overly aspiring and even reckless, he has held the Guild together with the fewest possible casualties, even during the Plague. It quickly spread all over the Feldarin Empire, resulting in many cases a single, or small group, of spies handling the Guild's business. Their leader has ruled for over 20 years, and he plans to stay until either his death or the need to abandon the guild and flee, though he does whatever he can to avoid either possibility. When the Plague struck, the Guild was still small, and there were many casualties, some even say the leader is now a Plaguetouched, though few have seen him recently, and those who have are either dead or too loyal to betray his status. It is known that any member who becomes Plaguetouched is welcome to remain in the Guild.

Symbol: A downward turned dagger with a stream of green flowing down its blade. Some stylizations include a skull in the design of the pommel.

Goals and Motivation: For the Feldarin leader the only goal is power and gold, though he often does things of no particular benefit to him or the Guild, other than simple enjoyment, like seeing two groups fight about something the Guild planted without their knowledge.

Leader: He is usually referred to simply as Guildmaster, but he is sometimes referred to by name: Artax Jarteril. Little else is known about him. The guild's second in command, an Archmage General, fears him highly. Below the Archmage General are the Elite Mercenary Captains, followed by the Elite Guard itself, and under that are the normal Mercenary Captains and their Mercenary Soldiers. Even below these are the rogues, thugs, and merchants (most of whom only belong to the Guild because they were forced to) who are required to deliver a high portion of the money they make or steal to the Guild vault. At the bottom are the slaves, who aren't really guild members and are only used as fodder.

Allies and Enemies: The Guild does not openly ally themselves with anyone, unless it is needed by the job. There are rumors that they have allied with the Imperial Guard in the past, or that some of the Guard's higher ranking members belong to the Guild. There are few enemies, as other aspiring guilds openly fear this one, and the law can easily succumb to things such as bribes or threats, though this Guild more often chooses the second option. (Many a nose and knee have been broken to get what they want)

Oaths and Codes: The only code is to stay loyal and do as your superiors say, or you are executed.

The Imperial Loyalty and Equality Alliance (ILEA)

Author: Doshi

Location: In the cities and provinces where the Feldarin Empire is strongest, primarily in the capital of Cadothim and in Port Conastinia.

Demographics: Wealthy Human merchants, some Human land owning aristocrats, a few Fighters and Wizards. Racial distribution: Humans 90%, Feldarin 6%, Halflings 3%, Nether Gnomes (some disguised as Halflings), 1%.

Year Founded: Approximately ninety years ago.

Size: Approximately 255 core members.

General Description: Not all politically ambitious Humans have reacted to the recent political instability in the Feldarin Empire by deciding they want to commit treason and overthrow the Empire. There are some rich Humans who have profited from the existence of the Empire and who live in the central provinces where the Feldarin are strongest.

Many of these wealthy Humans would like to make sure that the next Emperor is friendly towards their interests. They would also like to see some Humans admitted to the Senate, and generally feel that they should be allowed to become more politically influential than they currently are. They see the current situation as a golden opportunity to advance their interests. They do have enough wealth and influence to make some Feldarin who would like to be the next Emperor want to gain their support.

History: Over the course of the five hundred year history of the Empire, the number of Humans who command some measure of wealth and influence within the Empire has gradually increased. About a hundred years ago, a charismatic Human merchant named Hasim Jumblundi decided to form an organization designed to represent the interests of that increasingly wealthy and influential class of Humans. Because he wanted to make sure that there was no suspicion that he and his fellow Humans were conspiring against the Empire, he worked hard to persuade some influential Feldarin to also join the group that eventually became the ILEA. A few of them did, which is why there have always been some Feldarin in the group.

In its early years the organization never really gained much influence. It attracted some support by advocating improvements in the status of wealthy Humans in the Empire, and by encouraging Humans to be more loyal to the Empire. For years it was little more than a social club for some wealthy Humans and a few Feldarin sympathizers. Jumblundi's family continued to be successful merchants, and they remained part of the ILEA. The current leader, Ali Jumblundi, is Hasim's grandson.

When the Plague shattered the political peace of the Empire, it left the Imperial Throne empty. Suddenly there were many different political factions, each looking for any supporters they could find. Suddenly, the ILEA mattered. Over a hundred wealthy Humans, ten respected Feldarin, and even some Halflings have joined the ILEA in the last two years, as they look for a way to make their political opinions heard. Some of the current members still genuinely want to improve relations between the two races. Others think they can use their ties to the ILEA to advance their own careers in some way.

Symbol: A circle enclosing a Feldarin male and a Human male, smiling, clasping each other's hand with the joined hands raised above their heads.

Goals and Motivation: To advance the interests of wealthy Humans (and now also the wealthy Halflings and Feldarin who have joined) within the Empire. To make sure that the next Emperor owes the ILEA some significant favors in return for their support. To persuade the Feldarin nobility to allow some Human members of the ILEA to join the Senate. And finally, to make sure the ILEA is not accused of treason or disloyalty to the Empire, they

have recently made a public effort to hunt down and kill any known Human traitors in the Nexorum (see separate entry) who have attacked the Empire, and thereby silence the Feldarin reactionaries who accuse them of having ties to that group.

Leaders: Master Trader Ali Jumblundi (Expert 15/Aristocrat 2, Baran Human, Lawful Neutral), Baron Alexandros Panlogos (Aristocrat 4/ Wizard 5/ Fighter 4, Phoedran Human, Neutral), Captain Sir Anthony Casa, (Aristocrat 2/Fighter 16, Feldarin, Lawful Neutral)

Allies and Enemies: Some Feldarin conservatives resent the fact that any Humans would try to meddle in Imperial politics. A few reactionaries have even accused the ILEA of being the "political arm" of the Nexorum. However, this accusation is mostly unfair. True, there are some members of the ILEA who also have ties to the Nexorum. But most members of both the ILEA and the Nexorum would deny any suggestion that there was a connection between the two groups. The Nexorum officially considers the "Illies", as they call the members of the ILEA, to be a bunch of cowards and collaborators. Some Nexorum cells have carried out terrorist attacks on prominent Human members of the ILEA who have publicly called on Humans to remain loyal to the Empire. Most members of the ILEA would like to see the members of the Nexorum hunted down and hung as the seditionist rabble they are.

As a family of successful merchants, the Jumblundis also have longstanding ties to some Halfling groups (one of which, unknown to Ali Jumblundi, is really a Nether Gnome controlled group). He's encouraged his Halfling connections to join the ILEA. The Halflings (and secretly the Gnomes) have started forming some ties with some of the members besides Jumblundi. One of the Gnomes who has joined is a Wizard who has formed a friendship with another of the leaders of the ILEA, the Kvrin Baron Alexandros Panlogos.

Every member of the ILEA has to pay a yearly fee of ten gold pieces. Every member who has fully paid their yearly fee can vote in a yearly election for a five person Council of Trustees. The Council then meets and decides on the actions of the Alliance. The ILEA has a charter, which can only be modified by a two thirds vote of all current members in good standing. The Council of Trustees decides who can join the ILEA, but their decision can be overruled by a vote of the full membership. The charter states that at least one member of the five person Council must always be a Feldarin in good standing with the Empire.

Oaths and Codes: The Empire deserves our Loyalty because it treats Humans honorably. As the Empire moves closer to granting Humans full equality, the Empire will only grow stronger. By working together, the members of the ILEA can advance our own political interests and make the Empire a better place for both Humans and Feldarin, thereby making the Empire better for all races.

Inculpators

Author: ajkkjk52

"They may call themselves Lindarin, but we know what they are. They are the disgraced Feldarin; a race of our noble people who betrayed the rest of the beings of Ursoule, and who have now brought upon us this most horrendous of calamities. They may call themselves Lindarin, but we know that they are The Fallen, and we condemn them!"

-High Pursuer Azokus, in a speech given to the Fourth Council of the Inculcation.

While the Shame of the Elves is ancient history to many of the non-Elves of Ursoule, not all of the Feldarin have forgotten their origin. While many Feldarin long considered the Elves as cowards or betrayers, it was not until The Weeping that the Inculcation was formed. In the mind of the cult's "Council Pursuant," the "Elves" not only fled from their Feldarin heritage, but in doing so brought about the Plague. These Feldarin became known as the Inculpators.

The Inculpators call Elves "The Fallen" because they do not believe that the contract made with the Plague Fiend created the Elves. They believe that it stripped them of their noble Feldarin traits. Thus, they see Elves not as an offshoot species, but rather as a regressed one. Elves are biologically Feldarin, but without the true dignity of their ancestors.

The Inculcation is not a branch of the Feldarin government, but it operates openly with no fear of curtailment. Their goal is simple: hunt down and destroy Elven communities. While they consider the Morvanima the worst of the worst, they grant no leniency to the Vanimar either, despite their own sorrow over their actions. When Inculpator scouts find an Elven settlement, or are tipped off by cooperative locals, they notify the Council Pursuant, who gathers as many Inculpators as they can (often up to 60% or more of the entire force) and sweep in *en masse*, killing every Elf they can find, women and children included, and destroying everything Elven that they find. Though their exterminations are unmerciful, they are not savage. There is a methodical precision to their work, and Elves who submit will be given a quick, clean death.

Many Feldarin view the Inculpators as overzealous fanatics who have leapt to conclusions about the Plague based on events centuries before their birth. But at the same time, there is an unspoken sense of satisfaction at the humiliation of a people who turned their backs on Feldarin society and thought themselves superior.

The Inculpators recruit mostly from the military class, particularly those who have lost family to the Plague. For a young person who just lost their parents, an easy scapegoat is an attractive one, and the evidence presented by the Inculpators is especially convincing to someone raised to think that the Elves are cowards. The idea of craven weaklings betraying their warrior heritage, and selling out all mortal life to a fiend, are easy to imagine for one raised with the Feldarin concept of honor.

Only some of the highest-ranking Pursuers work full time for the Inculcation. The vast majority of the Inculpators are volunteers: Feldarin noblemen and tradesmen who have the financial resources to leave their homes once or twice a year for up to a month to go on a raid. This volunteer nature makes the Inculcation more of a loose-knit society than a formal organization.

The hierarchy of the Inculcation is also somewhat looser than that of many other Feldarin organizations. Many of the members serve part-time, leaving their mundane lives behind to answer the call of the Council Pursuant for a raid.

Cult rankings are numerical, based on the number of raids an Inculpator has been on. Thus, a 5th rank Inculpator has been on five raids. Within their ranks, a higher-ranking Inculpator will informally refer to a lower-ranking member by their number as a form of good-natured ribbing, (i.e. Hey Four, get us some more wine!) but in more formal contexts an Inculpator's name will be used with their ordinal. (i.e. "Second Russil reported Elven movements around the edges of the Al-Barajah deserts after our strike") An Inculpator who has yet to go on a raid is called an Initiate.

When an Inculpator reports the location of an Elven settlement, they receive the special title

of Pursuer, which is placed after their ordinal (i.e. Sixth Pursuer Sallus).

The five highest-ranking Pursuers form the Council Pursuant, the highest body in the Inculpation. They are responsible for evaluating reports and declaring a raid. The Council Pursuant participates in nearly every raid, leading from the front in order to justify their place, as well as to show the Elves how a real Feldarin acts. Members of the Council receive the title High Pursuer, and within the council there is no hierarchy.

Composition: In general, it is safe to assume that an Inculpator will have Class levels equal to their rank, although at higher ranks this may fall off a bit. Inculpators tend to be rangers or fighters, although many are also paladins. There are also a fair handful of clerics, who have learned of the Shame of the Elves in their religious studies and renounced the monastic life. Arcane casters are exceedingly rare among this group.

There are approximately 1500 Inculpators, with the following breakdown of ranks: 200 Initiates, 300 Firsts, 300 Seconds, 250 Thirds, 200 Fourths, 100 Fifths, 50 Sixths, 50 Sevenths, 30 Eights, 10 Nincths and 10 members of Tenth-rank or higher, including the Council. An average raid includes about 500 Inculpators, including 4 of the 5 High Pursuers and nearly all of the Sixths and up. About 70 Inculpators hold the rank of Pursuer, almost all are Fourths or higher.

All Inculpators are Feldarin, and they provide their own equipment, which can vary widely. The only unifying feature of all Inculpators is a blue hat, helmet, or facepaint, which has become an iconic feature of their order, and a terrifying sight for an Elf. The stats below represent average members of the Inculpation:

Typical Inculpator Soldier:

Second Russil, Feldarin Aristocrat 1, Ranger 2

Hit Dice: 2d8+11 (20 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 armor), touch 11, flat-footed 15

Attack: Masterwork Composite Longbow +4 ranged (or +2/+2 ranged) (1d8/x3) or Masterwork Glaive +5 slashing (1d10+2/x3)

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Cha 11, Wis 10

Skills: Sense Motive +6, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (Nobility) +5, Ride +3, Perception +3, Knowledge (History) +1, Heal +2, Climb +2

Feats and abilities: Low-light Vision, Aura of Will (Included in own saves), Noble Education, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Favored Enemy (Elves) +2, Track, Wild Empathy, Rapid Shot, Point Blank Shot

Possessions: Chain shirt, Masterwork Composite Longbow, Glaive, Light horse.

Russil grew up in a minor noble family, and for all of his childhood thought his place would be among the Machiavellian scheming of the petty nobility. However, shortly after he married, both his parents came down with the Plague. Neither survived. Looking for answers, Russil turned to the Inculpation, and he found an answer to his problems. Russil spends about 1 month a year training, and has recently participated in two particularly bloody raids along the northern edge of the Al-Barajah Desert. He doesn't see the Inculpation as the most important part of his life, but he's looking forward to his next raid.

Typical Inculpator Elite:

Sixth Pursuer Sallus, Feldarin Fighter 2, Ranger 3, Rogue 1**Hit Dice:** d10+3d8+d6+22 (39 hp)**Initiative:** +6**Speed:** 30 ft.**Armor Class:** 16 (+2 Dex, +4 armor), touch 12, flat-footed 14**Attack:** Sling +7 ranged (1d4+3) or +1 *Longsword* +10 slashing (1d8+4/19-20/x2)**Full attack:** Sling +7 ranged (1d4+3) or +1 *Longsword* +8 slashing (1d8+4/19-20/x2) and MW Cold Iron Kukri +7 slashing (1d4+3/18-20/x2)**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Cha 8, Wis 12**Skills:** Knowledge (Geography) +6, Climb +8, Swim +7, Intimidate +2, Ride +7, Stealth +7, Survival +5, Acrobatics +2, Knowledge (History) +2**Feats and abilities:** Low-light Vision, Aura of Will (Included in own saves), Military Education, Weapon Focus (Longsword), Improved Initiative, Combat Reflexes, Quick Draw, Favored Enemy (Elves) +2, Track, Wild Empathy, Two-Weapon Fighting, Stealthy, Endurance, Sneak Attack +1d6, Trapfinding**Possessions:** MW Chain shirt, Sling, +1 Longsword, MW cold iron kukri.

Sallus was a moderately successful adventurer who had joined the Inculpation early in his career. He saw his membership more as a means of upward social mobility than a true cause. After his party helped a newly established village of elves fight off an attack, he reported their location to the Council Pursuant, and was granted the title of Pursuer. At this point, he gave up adventuring full time to hunt for elves, a far more socially lucrative profession, and one on which he has since focused his efforts.

High Pursuer (11th-rank) Catal, Feldarin Paladin 9**Hit Dice:** 8d10+28 (64 hp)**Initiative:** +0**Speed:** 20 ft.**Armor Class:** 21 (+9 armor, +2 Deflection), touch 12, flat-footed 21**Attack:** +1 *flaming elfbane* Greataxe +14 slashing (1d12+1d6 flame+5/19-20/x3)**Full attack:** +1 *flaming elfbane* Greataxe +14/+9 slashing (1d12+1d6 flame+5/19-20/x3)**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +8**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 12, Cha 14, Wis 14**Skills:** Knowledge (History) +8, Knowledge (Nobility) +7, Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +15**Feats and abilities:** Low-light Vision, Aura of Will (Included in own saves), Military Education, Weapon Focus (Greataxe), Aura of Law, Detect Chaos, Smite 2/day, Divine Grace (included in saves), Lay on Hands 18/day, Aura of Courage, Divine Health, Power Attack, Turn Undead, Remove Disease 2/Week, Cleave, Improved Critical (Greataxe)**Spells Memorized:** Blessx2, Divine Favor, Eagle's Splendor**Possessions:** +1 Full Plate, +1 *flaming elfbane* Greataxe, Ring of Protection +2

Having risen quickly through the ranks, High Pursuer Catal is the youngest and most militant of the High Pursuers, and one of the most popular. His devotion to the cause is absolute, and he is justifiably feared by elves. Despite being the lowest ranking member of the Council Pursuant, he is considered a rising star and is often the face of the movement when dealing with other Feldarin organizations, especially the military

Plot Hooks:

As enemies: Defending an Elven village from a raid by the Inculpators is a challenge far outside of anything that most Parties can manage. However, an Elven village could entreat them to eliminate a Pursuer scout who had located the village.

As allies: If the Party knows the location of any Elves, any member of the Inculpation will personally pay them a small fortune for this information. The chance to become a Pursuer is so lucrative that this information is extremely valuable.

The "Ironthunder" and Her Crew

Author: levi

[Editor's Note: this organization's description includes firearms. If your campaign does not use firearms you will need to make some changes]

Author's note: Unfortunately, not all the NPCs presented here are fully statted out.

However, many of them are and the others have a list of their classes and levels for those that wish to use them. There are various plot hooks sprinkled throughout the descriptive texts, but they are not called out as such.

History and Original Crew

Captain Kugan makes a living, unlike other Gnomes, as a merchant of sorts. His primary business is fencing various goods (often magical or exotic) of questionable providence. He also engages in more mundane trade and isn't above a bit of piracy on occasion (almost always attacking watercraft). Although he usually has some justification for it, such as somehow acquiring a charter as a privateer (usually under false pretenses), or claiming to have been hired to attack a specific vessel or fleet.

The vast majority of non-Gnomes he does business with never see him or his ship and don't even know that they're dealing with a Gnome. He has several non-Gnomish helpers who the actual dealing with their respective races, and his dealings are conducted in a no-questions-asked semi-anonymous manner. A notable exception is in dealings with a few Halfling pirates. While many Halflings despise Gnomes for their aloofness and tendency to disguise themselves as Halflings, Kugan's valuable services have gained him some slight trust among those who have goods they wish to discretely sell. It is by this relationship that he has acquired several powerful weapons for his ship, in exchange for sinking the vessels of rival Halfling groups.

All of the Gnomish members of Ironthunder's crew have been with her since before the Weeping. When the infection spread to the ship, several of her crew abandoned her in fear of the Plague, but most stayed on, knowing that the cities had the Plague as well, and that the few ships that hadn't been exposed were not accepting new crewmembers.

Of those that stayed, five died from the illness (including Kugan's wife) and several were affected but survived with varying degrees of mutation (including Kugan's daughter, Zime).

After the Weeping began to pass, the Ironthunder was shunned to some extent by other Gnomes due to the presence of Plaguetouched onboard. During this time, its business became more and more illicit and erratic, until the current scheme of fencing goods was settled on. This provided both a steady income and a lack of any required contact with Gnomish settlements. It was also during this time that Ironthunder was rebuilt several times to its current, highly unorthodox, configuration. Originally an elegant ship of the Aethergnome design, it was heavily damaged several times and very nearly destroyed on one occasion. After that event, the hull was rebuilt in a utilitarian, warship fashion, inspired by Halfling warships, and gained the heavy iron plating of the Nethergnome ships.

The non-Gnome members of the crew are those who replaced the Plague losses and have proven invaluable to Kugan's business as a smuggler. While they may appear to have joined up in a series of bizarre coincidences, they were actually carefully selected such that their desperate circumstances would ensure loyalty to Kugan for helping them out of their "unfortunate" situations. They are quite possibly the only non-Gnomes to have an intimate understanding of airship technology, but due to their fierce devotion to the ship and her captain, they are very unlikely to reveal any of this knowledge.

Kugan Captain Ironthunder

Kugan is middle aged, with graying brown hair and a slightly wrinkled face. He is short, even for a Gnome, and stocky, but well muscled. He bears a number of scars and has a slight, but chronic cough (a remnant of a youth spent tending engine fires and several injuries to the lungs over his years as a warrior). He spends much of his waking hours in his thick armor. It is enameled black (to hide the soot) and has a helm that incorporates goggles and a gas mask.

The Captain runs his ship through a combination of mutual respect and intimidation. If his crewmembers perform their duties swiftly and without complaint, he treats them well and pays them a good wage. However, those that balk at orders or lay about, he won't hesitate to backhand severely. His current crew is competent and loyal, so he hasn't had to resort to such measures in a long time.

When he finds himself in combat, he prefers to open with a volley of ballista and canon shots. If he has time, he'll reload for another blast. Once he gets into melee range, he tends to fire pistols and then drop them (they are on lanyards and only fall to waist level), wading into battle wielding his massive two-handed pick. However, he does have the skills to safely reload in combat and has been known to fire a well placed shot to aid his crew whilst being assaulted himself.

Kugan Captain Ironthunder: Male Gnome Fighter 10; CR 10; Small Humanoid (Gnome); HD 10d10+20; hp 90; Init +0; Spd 15'; AC 20 (+1 size +9 armor), touch 10, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +10; Grp +11; Atk Great Pick +15 melee (1d8+6 19-20/x4 P) or Pistol +12 ranged (2d6 19-20/x3 P 80'); Full Atk Great Pick +15/+10 melee (1d8+6 19-20/x4 P) or Pistol +12/+7 ranged (2d6 19-20/x3 P 80'); SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 90', Gnome traits; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +4; STR 15 (+2), DEX 10 (+0), CON 14 (+2), INT 15 (+2), WIS 12 (+1), CHA 13 (+1).

Skills and Feats: Craft (small arms) +4, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +6, Profession (airship hand) +6, Profession (airship navigator) +6, Profession (airship pilot) +6, Sense Motive +6; Combat Loading, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (small arms), Improved Combat Loading, Improved Critical (great pick), Negotiator, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (great pick), Weapon Focus (pistol), Weapon Specialization (great pick).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 11), *prestidigitation*. Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: Ironthunder, Fullplate (+1), Great Pick (+1), Two Military Pistols (14 rounds), Bandoleer of Strength (+2), Gloves of Dex (+2), Signet Ring (50 gp), Coinage (79 gp).

Zime First Mate Ironthunder

The daughter of Kugan and one of his "wives," Zime is young and attractive even for a

Gnome. Her adolescent figure is just starting to show the curves of womanhood. Her hair is long and dark and falls to the small of her back. She is fair skinned and has penetrating green eyes (like her mother's, she claims). While she possesses a fine breastplate which is enameled a deep blue, she wears it only when her father insists she do so. She prefers to wear tight blouses, short skirts, and knee high boots.

She has a carefree attitude and views her life as a continual adventure, but often becomes bored on long journeys. She resents the isolationist attitude of Gnome culture and is especially annoyed that Ironthunder never docks at major non-Gnomish ports. If given the opportunity, she would run away from Ironthunder, but her father keeps a close eye on her and she hasn't gotten away yet.

Zime fights with vigor, wielding her cutlass with enthusiasm but not much skill. She tends to favor mobility and keeping her distance from the enemy. While she sometimes uses her small pistol to make a quick shot, she'd rather be in melee and never reloads in combat.

Zime First Mate Ironthunder: Female Gnome Ftr 1; CR 1; Small Humanoid (Gnome); HD 1d10+1; hp 11; Init +1; Spd 20'; AC 18 (+1 size +1 dex +5 armor +1 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +1; Grp -1; Atk Cutlass +4 melee (1d4+1 18-20 S) or Holdout Pistol +3 ranged (2d4-2 19-20/x3 P 20'); SA spell-like abilities; SQ bleeding eyes, Gnome traits; AL C; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; STR 12 (+1), DEX 13 (+1), CON 12 (+1), INT 10 (+0), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 15 (+2).

Skills and Feats: Craft (small arms) +3, Perception +2, Profession (airship hand) +2, Profession (airship pilot) +1; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (small arms), Plague Touched.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 12). Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: Breastplate (MW), Buckler (MW), Cutlass (MW), Holdout Pistol (swivel barrel, 6 rounds), Jewelry (200 gp), Coinage (34 gp).

Iziganak Mage Ironthunder

Iziganak's body is twisted and deformed. Not a single one of his limbs are straight and his torso isn't symmetrical, the left side being much larger than the right. His head is larger than it ought to be and sits heavily on his short neck. His bloodshot eyes are sunk deep into his skull and constantly stream forth a sluggish flow of sticky, dark red blood. His flaxen hair is patchy and he keeps it cropped short.

Iziganak dresses in a flowing white hooded robe and carries a heavy oaken staff which he uses to balance his unsteady gait. His waist is wrapped about several times with a white silk belt, the folds of which are stuffed with all manner of obscure items. He carries himself with dignity, not allowing his disease to sully his self-respect.

Iziganak Mage Ironthunder: Male Plaguetoached Gnome Wiz 7; CR 7; Small Humanoid (Gnome); HD 7d4+14; hp 35; Init +2; Spd 20'; AC 15 (+1 size +2 dex +1 armor +1 deflection), touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp -3; Atk Quarterstaff +3 melee (1d4-1 B) or Heavy Crossbow +6 ranged (1d6 19-20 P 120'); SA spells, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 90', bleeding eyes, deformed bone structure, summon familiar, gnome traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +5; STR 6 (-2), DEX 14 (+2), CON 14 (+2), INT 18 (+4), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 13 (+1).

Skills and Feats: Craft (alchemy) +13, Linguistics +14, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Perception +7, Profession (airship hand) +10, Spellcraft +16; Blood Magic, Improved Counterspell, Pyromancy, Rapid Reload, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (ranged spells).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 11), *prestidigitation*. Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/5/4/3/2; Save DC 14 + spell level): 0th -- *Message*, *Resistance*, two slots open; 1st -- *animate rope*, *burning hands*, *floating disk*, *magic missile*, *true strike*; 2nd -- *fog cloud*, *locate object*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*; 3rd -- *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *shrink item*; 4th -- *flame arrow*, *greater invisibility*;

Spellbook (6050 gp, copper bound, vellum pages, hardness 7, hp 8, 7 lb.): 0th -- all; 1st -- *animate rope*, *burning hands*, *floating disk*, *identify*, *magic aura*, *magic missile*, *true strike*; 2nd -- *arcane lock*, *fog cloud*, *locate object*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*; 3rd -- *dispel magic*, *explosive runes*, *fireball*, *shrink item*; 4th -- *hallucinatory terrain*, *flame arrow*, *greater invisibility*;

Possessions: Bracers of Armor (+1), Ring of Protection (+1), Quarterstaff (MW), Crossbow (MW, 20 bolts), Ring of Feather Falling, Spellbook, Dried Blood, Pearls (2, 100 gp ea), Gold Dust (50 gp), Blood Ink, Pen, Coin (44 gp).

Ulaulla Helmsman Ironthunder

Ulaulla is a lithe fellow, tall for a Gnome, and quick on his feet. He keeps his blond hair trimmed fairly short, but it's often unkempt. His blue eyes are always darting about and, like the rest of him, can't seem to keep still. Dressing in simple hemp clothing, he sometimes looks more like a Halfling sailor than a Gnomish airship crewman.

Despite his restless nature, Ulaulla manages to keep a steady hand when piloting the ship. (His feet, on the other hand, never seem to stop tapping.) When not flying the ship, he tends to scurry about, going from level to level, performing odd jobs, but never for more than ten minutes or so before he's off to do something else.

Ulaulla Helmsman Ironthunder: Male Gnome Expert 5; CR 4;

Zeladara Mechanic Ironthunder

Zeladara is very small and thin. Under the grease and soot, she's a good looking woman. She keeps her medium length brow locks tucked into a close fitting leather hat to keep them out of her way. When working, she wears heavy leather clothing with a large apron, the pockets of which are stuffed with all manner of tools and parts. When not working, she tries to clean herself up and wears nice outfits.

A mechanical genius, Zeladara was the designer of the rebuilt Ironthunder. She is unhappy about being exiled from Gnomish society because she wants to keep track of all the latest developments in her field. However, she's not willing to leave this ship and the years of work she has put into it's intricate mechanisms. She hopes to convince Kugan to return to Gnomish society and would even be willing to turn the non-human members of the crew over to authorities if it would achieve this goal. The captain is unwilling to do so, and this occasionally creates tension between them.

Zeladara Mechanic Ironthunder: Female Gnome Expert 5; CR 4;

Dubsar Supercargo Ironthunder

Dubsar is a hulk of a gnome. (It's sometimes rumored he has dwarf blood in his ancestry.) Tall and wide, his thick body and limbs are well suited to his work. His face is dominated by a continual wide grin, overshadowing his brown eyes. His hair falls to shoulder length in the back, but the bangs are cut short.

While he may appear to be nothing more than a big dumb ox, Dubsar is actually very bright. He has a keen head for figures and manages the inventory and accounts of the ship. He is at his happiest when the cargo hold is full and isn't pleased when transporting a single high-value item rather than a large quantity of goods. While not a good salesman, he hopes one day to own a merchant ship of his own.

Dubsar Supercargo Ironthunder: Male Gnome Exp 5; CR 4;

Zuzikumak Gunner Ironthunder

Zuzikumak has the body of a hardened soldier. Her thick muscles have all but obscured any hint of feminine curves. She shaves her head, which unfortunately detracts from her otherwise attractive face. Her dark grey eyes are continually fixed in a steely gaze, as if looking for the next target to shoot. She's always wearing her armor, even sleeping in it. She lives to shoot heavy weapons. In her youth, she specialized in ballistae, but has recently fallen in love with the newly installed cannon. Of all the crew, Zuzikumak is the most "pirate" at heart. She wishes Ironthunder saw more combat than it does and is often bored and brooding when on the more usual trading missions. If not for her loyalty to the captain, she'd have likely fallen in with a Halfling pirate crew by now.

Zuzikumak Gunner Ironthunder: Female Gnome War 2; CR 1; Small Humanoid (gnome); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +1; Spd 15'; AC 20 (size +1 dex +1 armor +8), touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +2; Grp -4; Atk Greatsword +1 melee (1d10-2 19-20 S or P) or Heavy Crossbow +5 ranged (1d8 19-20 P); SA spell-like abilities; SQ Gnome traits; AL C; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; STR 7 (-2), DEX 13 (+1), CON 10 (+0), INT 13 (+1), WIS 12 (+1), CHA 8 (-1).

Skills and Feats: Craft (cannoneer) +6, Intimidate +1, Perception +3, Profession (airship hand) +3, Profession (siege engineer) +3; Ballista Training.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 9), *prestidigitation*. Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: Fullplate, Heavy Crossbow (MW, 20 bolts), Greatsword, Grenade, Tinder Twigs (3), Coinage (45 gp).

Masdara Hand Ironthunder

Masdara is of average build and height. His brown eyes and short hair are fairly nondescript. His face is round and well proportioned, but somewhat forgettable. He dresses in simple peasant clothing without much adornment. He and his brother are often seen together.

Masdara and his twin brother Adabar joined the crew just before the plague hit the major Gnomish cities. Masdara is eager to learn airship operations and has quickly adapted to shipboard life. He finds the politics of Ironthunder's relations with the outside world frustrating, but feels that it's not his place to question the captain and his position.

Masdara Hand Ironthunder: Male Gnome Com 2; CR 1; Small Humanoid (gnome); HD 2d4; hp 5; Init -1; Spd 20'; AC 10 (+1 size -1 dex), touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp -4; Atk Gaff Spear +2 melee (1d3-1 x3 P) or Gaff Spear +2 ranged (1d3-1 x3 P); SA spell-like abilities; SQ gnome traits; AL L; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +1; STR 8 (-1), DEX 9 (-1), CON 11 (+0), INT 12 (+1), WIS 13 (+1), CHA 8 (-1).

Skills and Feats: Craft (woodworking) +6, Perception +3, Profession (airship hand) +9, Profession (navigator) +3, +4; Skill Focus (airship hand).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 9), *prestidigitation*. Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possessions: Gaff Spears (2, MW), Knife (MW), Airship Tools (MW), Gas Mask, Backpack, Silk Rope (50'), Grappling Hook, Grenades (3), Smoke Grenades (3), Flasks of Acid (3), Tinder Twigs (12), Coinage (424 gp).

Adabar Hand Ironthunder

As an identical twin, Adabar looks almost exactly like his brother. To make matters worse, they cut their hair the same and they share clothing to the point that almost no one can tell them apart. The rest of the crew has learned to read subtle body language that tells which is which, but even they get it wrong from time to time, which the brothers find highly amusing. Sometimes they speak to each other in a private language that only they understand (unique slang).

Unlike his brother, Adabar is serving on the Ironthunder because of the pressure exerted by their father to continue the family trade and a desire to stay with his twin. Although he doesn't mind the work and does his job well, his heart's not in it. He would rather have studied wizardry, but isn't unhappy with how his life has turned out so far. He's begun attempting to learn magic from Iziganak, but has yet to pick up the art.

Adabar Hand Ironthunder: Male Gnome Com 2; CR 1; Small Humanoid (gnome); HD 2d4; hp 5; Init -1; Spd 20'; AC 10 (+1 size -1 dex), touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp -4; Atk Quarterstaff +2 melee (1d4-1); Full Quarterstaff +2 melee (1d4-1) or Quarterstaff -2/-6 melee (1d4-1); SA spell-like abilities; SQ gnome traits; AL L; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will -1; STR 8 (-1), DEX 9 (-1), CON 11 (+0), INT 15 (+2), WIS 8 (-1), CHA 12 (+1).

Skills and Feats: Knowledge Arcana +7, Perception +2, Profession (airship hand) +4, Spellcraft +6, Use Magic Device +5; Magical Aptitude.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 11), *prestidigitation*. Caster level 1st. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spellbook (1050 gp, copper bound, vellum pages, hardness 7, hp 8, 7 lb.): 0th -- Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Light, Prestidigitation, Ray Of Frost, Read Magic; 1st -- Magic Missile.

Possessions: Quarterstaff (MW), Spellbook, Spell Component Pouch, Scrolls of *Magic Missile* (3, CL 3rd), Wand of *Ray of Frost* (39 charges), Ink and Pen, Knife, Coinage (124 gp).

The Story of Jesilae the Elf

Jesilae is outcast from Elven society for reasons she chooses not to reveal. Some suspect

she worships the Plague Fiend, while others claim she's a wanted murderer. Still others tell a sordid tale of romance gone wrong which, depending who tells it, varies from adultery, to rape, to incest, to an arranged marriage she wanted no part of. She generally views these speculations with scorn. She sometimes drops subtle hints that the darker of these tales may be true, but this may be only to cultivate fear among the other crewmembers.

The first non-Gnome to join Ironthunder's crew, Jesilae was approached by captain Kugan to replace the ship's previous cleric who had died during the Weeping. She was staying in Nekrazzabar and had raised considerable ire by attempting to learn about airship technology. Having a hard time finding an experienced healer willing to join the crew of an "infected" ship, he decided to offer her a position aboard Ironthunder. This was lucky for her, as it had been recently decided (in secret) to have her put to death to protect Gnomish security interests.

It wasn't so lucky for Kugan or his crew. Due to this act, he is also considered a traitor, and has a substantial price on his head. Shortly after this was decreed, several attempts to retrieve the bounty were made, but the devastating firepower of the Ironthunder repelled all attempts and no one has attempted to capture him recently. Officially, he is charged with treason, murder, and heresy. The last two charges may be considered trumped up as he has never made any statements contrary to Gnomish religious beliefs. The charges of murder stem from attempts to capture or kill him by bounty hunters.

As a result, the Ironthunder has gone from merely ostracized, to completely exiled from Gnomish society. While it occasionally stops in smaller Gnomish settlements, it hasn't been to any of the major Gnomish cities in years.

Jesilae Medic Ironthunder

Jesilae is tall and thin. She is quite aged, but her features, other than her platinum hair, do not show it. She dresses in long, tight-fitting, black dresses, and often has her hair done up in an elaborate coif with silver combs. Her face is long and pale and is dominated by her large black eyes and their long lashes. She does not wear any visible arms or armor and reveals no hint of her class from her outward appearance.

Jesilae is the only non-Gnome member of Ironthunder's crew to have added a Gnomish profession title to her name or to use "Ironthunder" as a surname. Sometimes, she even goes by the assumed Gnomish name of "Urmanusak".

In combat, she prefers to feign helplessness until the enemy gets close enough to touch, at which point she lays into them viciously, usually with *Inflict* spells. She fights determinedly, but without honor, and will not give up her life to save another. If overmatched, she will attempt to retreat and will surrender if necessary. As a prisoner, she is not to be trusted and will attempt to kill her captors or escape if an opportunity presents itself.

Jesilae Medic Ironthunder: Female Elf Clr 7; CR 7; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 7d8-7; hp 32; Init -1; Spd 30'; AC 18 (-1 dex +9 armor), touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +3; Atk Great Falchion +9 melee (2d6+3 18-20 S) or Longbow +6 ranged (1d8+2 x3 P 110'); SA spells, spell-like abilities, rebuke undead (X/day); SQ low-light vision, elf traits; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7; STR 14 (+2), DEX 8 (-1), CON 8 (-1), INT 12 (+1), WIS 16 (+3), CHA 15 (+2).

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +7, Heal +15, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +4, Profession (airship hand) +8, Spellcraft +10, Combat Casting, Martial Weapon Proficiency

(longbow), Precise Shot, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (great falchion), Weapon Focus (longbow).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day -- *detect magic, message, prestidigitation*,; Caster Level 7th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1; Save DC 13 + spell level): 0th -- *cure minor wounds (3), guidance, resistance (2)*; 1st -- *bless, cure light wounds (2), deathwatch, magic weapon**; 2nd -- *bear's endurance, cat's grace, cure moderate wounds (2), death knell**; 3rd -- *cure serious wounds (2), magic vestment**; 4th -- *death ward, divine power**.

*Domain Spell. Domains: Death (death touch), War (longbow proficiency and focus).

Possessions: Fullplate (+1, Glamerd), Great Falchion (MW), Composite Longbow (MW, Mighty +2, 60 Arrows), Silver Unholy Symbol, Healer's Kit, Notebook (airship technology), Ink and Pen, Coinage (179 gp).

Jaryn and Lazia

Lazia was the younger daughter of a minor Feldarin duke. She was raised to believe that humans deserved their fate. Her bland existence as a highborn with little hope of real power caused her to become bored with her life. She spent her time partying and sought to drown her meaningless existence in alcohol. This caused Caltan rebels based in the Emaich Forest to believe she'd be an easy target to assassinate, which is how she met Jaryn.

Jaryn was a rebel assassin assigned to kill Lazia. He accepted the mission with vigor because he viewed her as a spoilt rich girl living off the labors of his fellow serfs. When the time came to do the deed, he hesitated. He'd killed a fair number of Feldarin before - officials, guards, oppressive landholders - but never a defenseless young woman, hardly more than a girl, passed out in her bed. Lazia claims it was "love at first sight" and it may have been, but he says he just didn't see how her death would support the revolution.

Instead, he ended up kidnapping her. Originally, he had planned to ransom her for arms and supplies, but her father decided to respond with force instead. Jaryn was accused of compromising his fellow rebels and, thus, he was marked for death by both sides. After a pair of assassins nearly killed them both, he fled the country, with her in tow.

After various misadventures and numerous attempts by Lazia to kill Jaryn, they began to develop a strange mutual affection. Still on the run from both rebels and the Feldarin, they were seeking transport on a Halfling vessel when Kugan offered them a position as part of his crew. Passing as a Halfling, he offered them passage to "anywhere in the known world" in exchange for one year of service on board his ship. Desperate and nearly out of money, they accepted these steep terms.

By the time they realized the truth about their employer, they had already signed a binding magical contract and it was too late to back out. Their contract has been expired for several years, but they've stayed on, serving out of a true loyalty they have developed despite the deception involved in their initial hiring. Several years after joining the crew, Jaryn and Lazia were married by captain Kugan in a simple ceremony attended only by the other crewmembers.

Jaryn A'Ruark Ironthunder: Male Human Ftr 3 Rog 2; CR 5;

Lazia A'Ruark Ironthunder: Female Feldarin Ars 3 Rog 2; CR 5;

A Trio of Orrks - Eztli, Tlaloc, and Xoco

Eztli

Eztli is of about average height and muscular build. She wears red leather armor and a helm made from a large bird's skull. Her long brown hair is kept in braids and she has worked numerous wood and bone carvings and semiprecious gems into it. Her face is round, with no nose to speak of and large black eyes. Her skin is of a grey cast and tanned from the sun and wind.

It was Eztli's idea to run away to save her friend Xoco from the sacrificial altar. While she had rejoiced in the deaths of many warriors she'd captured, she didn't want to lose her friend. She believes that the only reason Xoco was selected for sacrifice was that she had rebuffed the high priest's advances towards her. In her travels outside Orrk lands, she's learned that other races do not make blood offerings to the gods, and she has begun to question her religious beliefs. At times this makes her wonder if she's tainted her soul with all the blood of the captives she's taken who were sacrificed.

Eztli Ironthunder: Female Orrk Bar 4; CR 4;

Tlaloc

Tlaloc is a tall and handsome warrior. He tends to wear little clothing, which reveals his muscular build and numerous tattoos. His broad face is marked by several scars which give him a rugged quality. His eyes are black and his skin a dark green, but his long hair is red. When in battle, he wears Masterwork quality armor of black leather.

Tlaloc is troubled by his current circumstances. He still believes that the gods demand blood, but his (so far) unrequited love for Xoco drove him to defy his elders in the matter of her sacrifice and escape with her. He is aware that these actions have not won him her love and is now unsure of what to do. Sometimes he considers returning to the Orrk lands and offering her as a gift to the gods, while at other times, he contemplates suicide.

Tlaloc Ironthunder: Male Orrk Bar 2 Rog 2; CR 4;

Xoco

Xoco is an exceedingly attractive young Orrk woman. Her unusual violet eyes are unforgettable and matched only by her waist length black hair. She dresses lavishly, her rich clothing acquired as gifts from ardent suitors when she still lived in Orrk lands. She moves her well proportioned limbs with a grace and fluidity that belies her underlying strength. Her light green skin has a nearly flawless complexion.

As beautiful as she is, Xoco has a hard time being taken seriously as anything other than a sex object. She resents the way that others tend to see her and is saddened that her looks have led to her friends being outcast. She finds the cramped and unnatural quarters aboard Ironthunder disturbing, but stays because she doesn't want to abandon her friends after all they've done for her, and out of a loyalty to the captain for rescuing them.

Xoco Ironthunder: Female Orrk Bar 1 Drd 3; CR 4;

The HMS Ironthunder Herself

The Ironthunder is a hulking mass of wood and metal. Her basic shape is best described as a coffin. Approximately rectangular, her sides taper back into a narrow stern, and also, although not as much, towards the cockpit in the bow. Her beam is the widest about a third of the way aft, with the front and rear squared off and the upper and lower deckplates level.

She is armored with heavy steel plates securely fastened with iron bolts the size of a Gnome's fist. Rusty streaks run down from these bolts, tarnishing the gleaming blue steel. The cockpit is paneled with thick windows of transparent crystal. Rimmed with brownish sooty grime, it's a wonder they can be seen through at all. Adamantine shutters cut through with narrow slits lie beside these portals. In the center of the stem, a similar shutter without a slot sits closed. Four heavy iron doors line each side, hinged with corroded bronze rings at the top.

Two sets of three short copper smokestacks rise astern from her deck. They belch forth plumes of blue grey smoke, spreading a haze over and behind the vessel. Twelve stout legs sprout from her underside, each pair ending in a battered skidplate. Down each side of the cockpit, a set of heavy brass rungs form ladders going from ground level to the deck above. A short wrought iron railing festooned with sharp spines lines the deck, lending a fearsome appearance. Two massive hatches are the only notable features on the bare steel deckplate, one towards the bow and another, larger one, near the stern. Each one features a thick brass wheel mounted in the center of the square doors and well greased bronze hinges.

At first glance, she appears to lumber ponderously through the sky, but when pressed into full power, her arcane engines push forward with incredible speed. It would be stretching the truth to say she flies with grace, but she posses an uncanny swiftness and bold maneuvering.

Interior Description

The interior of Ironthunder is split into three decks about five feet in height, except for the foremost part of the ship, which is split into two taller decks, the larger of which houses the cockpit. The rear of the ship is occupied on all three levels by the smoky engine and its firebox.

The uppermost deck houses the crew's quarters and the galley. The main crew quarters are little more than tightly packed bunks. Space is at a premium, especially after the addition of several members of larger races to the crew. The officer's quarters are hardly any better than the crew quarters, again, basically just tightly packed bunks.

The captain's quarters, occupied by Kugan and Zime, are somewhat more spacious. They are lavishly decorated, but no amount of effort can keep the dirt and grime that permeates the ship from dulling even this space. The galley is compact and utilitarian, much of the space being occupied by a large stove and some creaking tables. Stores of food line the walls, but most of the supplies are stored below, in the cargo hold.

The cockpit is an expansive room, paneled on three sides, with thick crystalline viewports. In the center of the room are the complex levers and other mechanisms that control the ship. The back wall is festooned with maps and star charts. These maps show everything from continents, to seas, to passages of the Beneath. Scrawled across them in obscure Gnomish handwriting are notes and figures.

The middle deck is dominated by a number of large siege engines. Four very large ballistae and two imposing cannon line each side of the open chamber. Each of them is mounted on a complex mechanical platform that can be rigged to fire from the sides of the ship by means of large portals set in the walls. Two more of these platforms allow for ranged or melee combatants to exit the ship during combat. A large winch with a thin iron chain is mounted next to each of the ballistae. The center of the room is occupied by ammunition (ballista bolts, cannon balls, barrels of gunpowder) and miscellaneous cargo, all lashed down haphazardly to prevent it from moving about.

The lowest deck is the cargo hold. It is filled with a maze of barrels, crates, and loose items held in place by a sea of netting. Towards the rear, it is filled with burnable materials. Wood, coal, dried corpses, and even barrels of sticky black oil are used to fuel the mighty engines. The firebox has two doors that open into the hold to allow the crew to steadily feed the hungry flames.

In the center of the rear, there is a large freight elevator can be extended up through all levels of the ship, and even up onto the main deck (when the large hatch is opened). This allows for large quantities of cargo to be moved into and out of the ship. However, it does leave gaping holes in the decks and occupies a lot of space. In particular, getting from one side to the other of the second level is rather tedious unless the elevator is parked on that level. (During combat, it is moved to the fighting deck and locked into place.)

At the front of the hold is a massive cannon and its supplies of ball and powder. Unlike the other weapons, its mounting is fixed and does not extend from the ship. It merely has a large gun port out of which it fires, mostly in line with the heading of the ship herself. Three pairs of ladders run from the bottom to the top of the ship. The frontmost of these go from the cargo hold into the cockpit area. The second set provides access to all three decks, passing through the galley and crew quarters to a hatch that opens onto the upper deck. The third pair also passes through all three decks and provides access to the crew and officer quarters, but not out of the ship.

Statistics

Author's Note [edited]: These statistics are from a 3rd edition SpellJammer conversion. (Specifically, the Shattered Fractine ship combat rules.) Tears of Blood hasn't decided on airship rules yet, so I decided to use what I'm familiar with. If someone wants to convert this to whatever system they use, feel free to do so. Once ToB has an official set of airship rules, look for an updated set of statistics.

Name: Ironthunder

Tonnage: 24.5 spelljammer tons

Cost: 319,525 gp

Hit Dice: 34d10+80 (260 hp)

Initiative: As Helmsman

Tactical Speed: 80 ft. (16 squares 2 hexes)

Tactical Maneuverability: Average

Armor Class: 12 (-8 size +10 natural)

Armament: Blunt Ram, Heavy Cannon, 2 Light Cannons, 4 Heavy Ballistae

Special Qualities: --

Crew: Y / Z

Air Capacity: 4096 Man Days

Landing -- Land: Yes

Landing -- Water: No

Hardness: 10
Material: Steel
Power Type: Gnomish Masu Engine
Cargo Space: 6.5 spelljammer tons
Keel Length: 180 ft.
Beam Length: 50 ft.

Armament

Ironthunder's armaments are all Gargantuan weapons, so Medium creatures take a -6 to fire them and Small creatures take a -8 to fire them. However, they are mounted on specially constructed platforms that negate -4 of this penalty, bringing the penalties down to only -2 and -4 respectively.

- 1 Heavy Cannon (6d8 19-20/x3 P 200')
- 2 Light Cannon (6d6 19-20/x3 P 160')
- 4 Heavy Ballistae (4d8 19-20 120')

Please adapt and modify the Ironthunder to your campaign as you see fit.

The Mah'kaarite Sect

Author: Mephibosheth

Aditi tiptoed furtively into the temple, totally overwhelmed by the immense, cavernous stone space. The large empty room seemed to consume her, and the line of dim oil lamps seemed to draw her inexorably toward the shrine in the alcove at the far end of the main chamber. Stepping over the threshold carefully, she clutched her small plate of herbs colored with red powder to her chest, careful lest she spill any of the offering on Mah'kaari's floor and incite his anger. Her mother had always said that Mah'kaari's temples and shrines must remain completely clean.

When she reached the other end, she knelt in front of the alcove, proffering the plate of reddened herbs by placing it in front of her before prostrating herself on the ground. Out of the shadows behind the alcove's doorway stepped one of the silent priests of Mah'kaari, his bare skin still wet and raw from one of countless ritual baths and his mouth covered by a sopping wet cloth that smelled strongly of alcohol. He reached down to inspect the plate and, looking at Aditi's prostrate figure, quietly grunted his acceptance of her offering and gestured that she should cross the threshold into the shrine itself. Shaking with fear, Aditi rose, took the plate from the priest's hands, and brought it before the image of Mah'kaari himself. She knelt again at the base of the image and placed the plate at its feet before beginning the slow, lilting song that was her individual performance offering. Then, having completed her song, she lifted the plate over the idol and upended its contents onto the deity with shaking hands before backing slowly out of the shrine. Once in the main room, she turned and ran from the temple, tears of fear and relief coursing down her cheeks. She had assuaged Mah'kaari and ensured another month of safety for her and her family.

Hopefully, her brother could make the trip next month.

Details: The Weeping has wracked Ursoule, leaving devastated populations, unanswered questions, and paranoia in its wake. Some attribute its ravages to the Plague Fiend, the entity who governs disease and pestilence. Most fear and hate this figure, hesitating even to speak his name. A few secretive groups are devoted to serving and worshipping him. Many

deny his existence and attribute the plague to a bewildering variety of causes mystical and mundane.

In Pahal, where the divinity takes countless forms, a new deity has risen to prominence in the wake of the Weeping. Known by the name "Mah'kaari," this new god is widely believed to be responsible for the spread of the deadly disease. Unlike the hatred inspired by the Plague Fiend, Mah'kaari's name is freely spoken in Pahal. However, few (if any) are devoted to the service of Mah'kaari, for he is seen as a master impossible to please who demands the ultimate sacrifice of his servants. Instead, Mah'kaari is placated, and offerings are made at his temples and shrines as a way of ensuring that the supplicant and his/her family will avoid the deadly wrath of the deity.

Mah'kaari – Pahali God of the Plague

Mah'kaari image by BearofbadNews

Symbols and Iconography: Mah'kaari is most often represented as an emaciated figure, clad in a loincloth made of the leaves of a wide variety of plants (usually stylizations of important herbs). He is usually seated in a meditative pose on a stool made of the bodies of his victims. He has 10 arms, each holding a vial or incense-burning device (the exact nature of these implements depends upon location and the prominent diseases of the area). His hands are usually posed to indicate waving or shaking as he distributes disease over the world. His symbols include an incense burner, a stoppered vial, a leaf, a scarf, and a drop of water or blood drawn in ash.

Alignment: Mah'kaari is usually represented as Chaotic Neutral, his diseases being nothing more than a part of life, though he spreads them with a wantonness and joy that many find disturbing. However, as happens so frequently within Pahali religions, this view is far from universal. Some factions within the sect represent him as Neutral Evil, and the bringer of destruction. Others represent him as Neutral Good, and one who prevents plagues when properly placated. Mah'kaari's actual alignment is the providence of the individual DM.

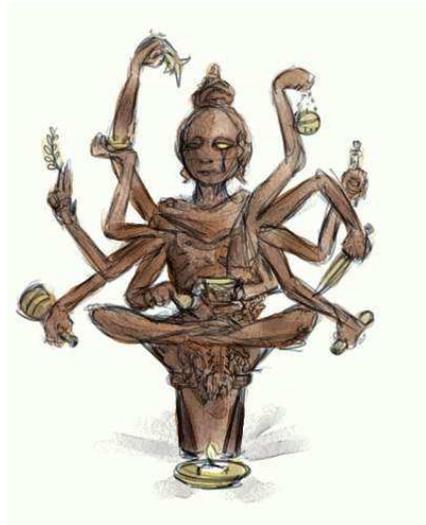
Portfolio: Disease, plague, pestilence, healing, death, life, purity and impurity

Domains: Chaos, Death, Healing, Madness

Favored Weapon: Light Flail

Personality: Mah'kaari is most often depicted as a dangerous god who must be placated to forestall disease and epidemic. In some representations he is vindictive and will instigate a plague at the slightest provocation. In others he is more benevolent, preventing outbreaks of disease but ultimately bound to set them free on occasion. His personality differs from temple to temple and village to village. The only universal in this sect is the need to placate him, lest disease be set free.

Broader Association: Mah'kaari is associated with Life and Death in the Pahali pantheon, linking him closely with Jekhaharti. Indeed, he is often seen as nothing more than a form of Jekhaharti, created to fulfill some important role in the play of life.



The Sect and its Devotees

General Background

The official apparatus and hierarchy of the Mah'kaarite sect is very small, often only one or two priests at every temple. It is also widely dispersed and largely unorganized, having at least some presence in almost every town where the Weeping hit but lacking much central direction. Most often, individual priests conduct the affairs of their temples in isolation.

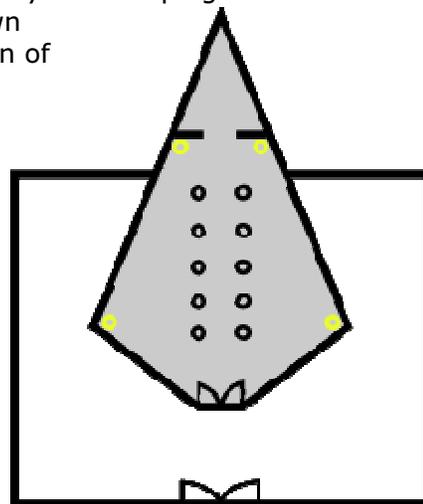
The high hierarchy of the sect is centered in the city of Milanaa, one of the hardest hit by the Weeping. It is often thought that the worship of Mah'kaari originated in this city. This rumor that is more than likely true, though the rapidity of the sect's spread makes it difficult to trace its origins. Nonetheless, such guidance as there is for the larger sect flows from the priests at Milanaa. The Mah'kaarite sect is primarily a religious institution, making little effort to involve themselves in politics. However, some of the more benevolent branches of the sect attempt to pressure local rulers to institute public health services, and all branches of the sect try to secure the patronage of local powers and prominent local citizenry.

Mah'kaarite ritual is complex and laborious, especially for priests who engage in ritual ablutions at least ten times daily, hoping to purify their bodies and ward off disease. These baths are vigorous and intense, and involve scraping the body with ritually-pure implements and the application of several kinds of salves and soaps. Priests also refrain from all but the most basic conversation and keep their mouths covered with an alcohol-soaked scarf, hoping to prevent the transmission of disease through their breath. Mah'kaarite temples are also kept spotlessly clean and ritually pure. Often, fragrant herbs and spices are burnt in incense burners in all corners of the temple so that their healing smoke wafts through the building and prevents disease. Lay devotees often offer a selection of medicinal herbs to the deity in hopes of placating him. These herbs are always sprinkled with red powder to represent the tears of plague victims. Visiting a Mah'kaarite temple is often a frightening and emotionally-draining experience for the lay devotee, with silent priests and the perpetual chance of catching disease or offending the god with improperly performed rituals. Often, the sick are brought to the temples to make special offerings for cures and health, contributing to the risk of infection at a Mah'kaarite temple.

While local organization is light and most members of the sect are concerned only with their own rituals and struggles, there are factions of the sect operating throughout Pahal. One of these factions, known as the Tears of Mah'kaari, is a benevolent organization that seeks to heal and assuage the wounds caused by disease, especially the Weeping. The other faction, known only as the Censers, is a shadowy and little-known organization that researches the spread and transmission of disease, often with the purpose of intentionally aiding it.

Temple Architecture

Above all, Mah'kaarite temples are symbolic, representing the nature of Mah'kaari and the overall goal of the devotees (i.e. dealing with disease). When viewed from above, the temple structure itself looks like an angular teardrop which, combined with the reddish sandstone almost always used to construct the temples, reminds the viewer of the bloody tears that represent both the Weeping and Mah'kaari himself. Mah'kaarite temples are always located adjacent to a source of running water; either a river or a man-made channel or canal. The temple structure and grounds



are always constructed in a recession in the ground of about 7 feet deep (again, either natural or man-made), and water is diverted over the outer wall of the structure and the doorway. This water is released slowly through small holes in the door frame, producing a constant shower of water. As devotees enter the temple through this door, they are required to spend a few moments cleaning themselves before entering the temple grounds. The grounds surrounding the central temple structure are always perfectly flat and are usually marked by one or more bathing pool, where priests and devotees frequently conduct vigorous cleansing rituals.

The inside of a Mah'kaarite temple is always kept spotless, and is a remarkably open space. It is supported by a series of pillars that guide the devotee from the front door to the shrine of Mah'kaari at the back. Oil lamps are mounted on many of these pillars, providing light to supplement the few beams of sunlight that come in through the front door. In all corners except near the front door, incense burners remain constantly lit, filling the temple with fragrant smoke and symbolically killing any air-borne diseases that may be present. The shrine itself is found at the apex of the teardrop-shaped structure, and is separated from the rest of the temple by a wall and doorway. The priest serving the temple most frequently sits behind this door until a devotee requires his attention. The image of Mah'kaari is enshrined in this structure. The image itself is always constructed of red sandstone and, depending on the wealth of the temple, may be lavishly decorated.

Purpose

Again, the Mah'kaarite sect is exceedingly diverse and relatively disorganized. Most priests only seek to maintain their local temple and continue to placate the god. Most devotees only seek to protect their immediate families from disease.

The Tears of Mah'kaari and the Censers, however, have much more well-defined goals. The Tears seek to prevent epidemics and efficiently treat diseases that do occur. They conduct intense magical research into methods of curing diseases and disperse their agents throughout Pahal, seeking to become involved at the local level in preventing disease. They often take up residence in or near Mah'kaarite temples to give themselves better access to those that need their services.

The Censers, on the other hand, work to understand methods of disease transmission. Often they work to prevent anti-disease efforts or to guide the course of epidemics in what they believe to be natural patterns. Other times they seek to start or facilitate epidemics, using disease as a tool to re-establish natural population patterns. Sometimes their activities are guided by political or economic concerns, and the services of individual Censers can occasionally be bought.

History

While the popularity of Mah'kaari worship is a relatively new phenomenon dating only to the spread of the Weeping, Mah'kaari is actually a much older deity worshiped in the small villages around Milanaa. The tropical climate of this region combined with its proximity to the ocean (and a major trading port) made disease a relatively common occurrence and encouraged the development of Mah'kaari as a local deity to deal with the ravages of the various diseases that plagued the villages.

With the passage of the Weeping through Pahal, people began to seize on everything that could possibly help prevent and cure the plague. As a result, worship of Mah'kaari began to spread quickly to all corners of the land, and people flocked to the temples that were sprouting up to offer their collections of herbs and assuage the wrath of the god.

Even now, as the plague has largely subsided and life is beginning to return to normal, a steady stream of nervous suppliants trickles into and out of Mah'kaarite temples, and plates of herbs are offered with shaking hands to appease Mah'kaari.

Resources and Benefits

The average Mah'kaarite temple has very little resources. Most of the contributions to the deity are made in herb form and though herbs can be sold, the income to the temple is meager. In larger cities where disease is more virulent, temples tend to have larger incomes, but nowhere can Mah'kaarite temples be called truly wealthy.

The only exceptions to this general rule are the two major active factions within the organization. The Tears of Mah'kaari earn substantial revenues by selling medicines and preventative measures. These monies go to fund their research and distribution apparatuses. Members of the Tears can usually acquire any item or service up to 10,000 gp with a little effort, and can sometimes acquire items or services valued at up to 50,000 gp in dire situations.

The Censers tend to be wealthier than the Tears, "earning" their revenues by extorting money in exchange for plague cures, looting towns destroyed by disease, and similar activities. Members of the Censers can acquire any item or service up to 20,000 gp with a little effort, and can sometimes acquire items or services valued at up to 100,000 gp if the need is dire.

Demographics

The Mah'kaarite sect is very racially homogenous, with the vast majority (about 95%) of the membership being Pahali humans. Indeed, the entirety of the priestly and administrative groups is composed of humans. There are a few Halfling and Baran devotees of Mah'kaari, but most of them are amongst the traders that set up shop in centers of commerce like Milanaa and Phataka.

The class diversity of the sect (amongst the leadership) is slightly higher, and is divided as seen below. The devotees are of all classes possible, as almost everyone offers herbs to Mah'kaari at least once in their life.

- Cleric: 50% - Mostly levels 5 and lower, though many of the sect's leaders, high priests, and members of the two active factions are higher-level Clerics. Many of the temple priests are Cloistered Clerics.
- Monks: 20% - Along with Clerics, Monks help serve at temples, and some temple priests are Monks. Monks also feature prominently in the ranks of the Tears of Mah'kaari.
- Rangers: 10% - Rangers are especially prominent in both the Tears of Mah'kaari and the Censers, where their travel and wilderness abilities help extend the reach of these factions and give them access to the wider world.
- Druids: 5% - Druid members of the sect are mostly engaged in research into the nature of diseases and how diseases progress when left unchecked.
- Arcane Casters: 5%
- Other: 15% - Mostly members in administrative roles (including Rogues, Bards, Experts, and other classes). Very few Fighters and Barbarians are members of the organization, and no Paladins.

The Censers and the Tears

The Tears of Mah'kaari and the Censers are the two most active factions within the

Mah'kaarite sect, both in the world at large and (as often as not) against each other. Two sides of the same coin, these two organizations coexist within the Mah'kaarite hierarchy but rarely work together and frequently clash over the general direction the sect leadership should take.

The Censers

The Censers are an organization of individuals who believe that disease is a part of nature and should be allowed to run its course. The ideology they espouse is one of the superiority of natural processes and patterns, especially the importance of maintaining "natural" population levels and allowing epidemics to run their course.

The Censers are involved in a variety of projects, ranging from the theoretical to the concrete. They research the nature of disease transmission and spread, including patterns of disease outbreaks and plagues, population levels and birth/death rates, and the influence magic can have on disease. Agents of the Censers occasionally act to start diseases, releasing carefully-prepared pathogens into water and food supplies or starting magical infections in selected targets. They also work to allow diseases to spread, interfering with quarantine and treatment efforts and helping to guide the progress of diseases.

Individual members of the Censers operate with a high degree of independence, and don't necessarily follow the dictates of their leaders to the letter. It is often possible to compromise, bribe, or otherwise sway a member of the Censers, and many politicians and power-brokers work to maintain influence with at least one member of the organization.

The Swinging Censer Prestige Class

The advanced arm of the Censers, a Swinging Censer is an expert in disease transmission and initiation and uses his/her unique abilities to start infections and interfere with efforts to stop the spread of disease.

Requirements: Empower Spell, Heighten Spell; Knowledge (Geography) 5 ranks, Heal 13 or Profession (Doctor) 13 (or similar, at DM's discretion); Ability to cast *Contagion* as an arcane or divine spell; Membership in or acceptance by the Censers or a Censer agent

Class Skills: Craft, Decipher Script, Heal, Knowledge (Arcana), Knowledge (Geography), Knowledge (Nature), Knowledge (Religion), Linguistics, Profession, Perception, Spellcraft

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Table: The Swinging Censer

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Diseased Body	+1 Level
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Rapid Degeneration	+1 Level
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Empowered Contagion	+1 Level
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Virulent Disease	+1 Level
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Deadly Disease	+1 Level

Class Features

Diseased Body: Beginning at 1st level, a Swinging Censer's frequent exposure to disease give him/her a bonus equal to his/her class level on saves to resist diseases. In addition,

he/she gains a bonus to natural armor equal to half his/her class level (minimum +1).

Rapid Degeneration: Beginning at 2nd level, a number of times per day equal to his/her class level, when a Swinging Censer casts the *Contagion* spell, the infected creature must make a fortitude save every 2 rounds to avoid repeated damage instead of the 1 day duration normal for diseases. Beginning at 4th level, the character must make a fortitude save every round to avoid repeated damage.

Empowered Contagion: Beginning at 3rd level, thrice per day a Swinging Censer can empower his/her *Contagion* spells with no effect on the spell's caster level or casting time.

Virulent Disease: Beginning at 4th level, any creature that has an ability score reduced to 0 by a disease caused by a Swinging Censer's *Contagion* spell must make an additional fortitude save or die.

Deadly Disease: Beginning at 5th level, a Swinging Censer gains the ability to use the *Contagion* spell to infect his/her foes with a unique disease. This disease, known as the Fragrance, is particularly deadly, dealing 2d6 points of Constitution damage if the target fails a fortitude save (DC equal to the save for the caster's normal spells).

Swinging Censers - New Spell

Carrier

Transmutation

Level: Clr 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature Touched

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude Negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

When casting this spell, the caster selects one of the diseases usable with the *Contagion* spell and makes the subject of the spell a carrier for that disease. For the duration of the spell the subject has a 75% chance of passing the chosen disease on to every creature he/she meets who can contract that disease. The subject must fulfill any requirements for passing on the disease (touching in the case of a contact disease, breath/sneezing/coughing/etc in the case of an inhaled disease, etc). The subject of the spell does not suffer from the ordinary disease and remains unaffected once the spell's duration ends. The spell does not, however, grant the subject immunity to the chosen disease in general, and the subject could even possibly catch the disease from one of the people he/she infected.

The Tears of Mah'kaari

As has been said, the Tears of Mah'kaari are concerned primarily with mitigating the effects of diseases, whether it be researching cures for especially deadly plagues, providing minor care for those suffering from diseases that cause mere discomfort, and helping enforce quarantines. Often, this mission brings them into conflict with the Censers, and it's often difficult to believe that the two factions are part of the same religious group.

The hierarchy of the Tears of Mah'kaari is much tighter than that of the Censers, and individual members most often travel with detailed orders and specific missions. The

organization also hosts clinics attached to Mah'kaarite temples in a few major cities, though their resources aren't large enough to support more than those in the largest cities.

The Tears of Mah'kaarite aren't entirely benevolent, however. The organization can act ruthlessly to stamp out disease, should the need arise. The history of the sect records a few seldom-mentioned incidents when the Tears destroyed the populations of entire villages to halt the spread of the Weeping. These incidents of killing the patient to cure the disease are few in number, but there is always a fear that every mission the Tears undertake will degenerate into this kind of strategy.

Mah'kaarite Healers Prestige Class

Mah'kaarite Healers, like the Swinging Censers, are the front lines of the Tears of Mah'kaarite. They are the individuals dispersed throughout Pahal, fighting diseases and epidemics wherever they go. As such, they are infinitely familiar with the kind of physical and mental degradation that disease (and, by extension, poison) can visit upon an individual, and have developed many unique techniques for enhancing their effectiveness at combating this sort of damage.

Requirements: Self-Sufficient feat; Heal 13 ranks, Profession (Herbalist) 5 ranks; Ability to cast *Remove Disease* and *Lesser Restoration* as divine spells; Membership in or acceptance by the Tears of Mah'kaarite

Class Skills: Craft, Diplomacy, Heal, Knowledge (Arcana), Knowledge (Religion), Knowledge (Nature), Profession, Perception, Spellcraft, Survival

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Table: Mah'kaarite Healers Prestige Class

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Heightened Immunity	+1 Level
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Efficiency	+1 Level
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Improved Healing	+1 Level
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Immunize	+1 Level
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Killing Cure	+1 Level

Class Features

Heightened Immunity: Beginning at 1st level, a Mah'kaarite Healer's constant exposure to disease gives him/her an improved immune system. The Mah'kaarite Healer gains a bonus equal to his/her class level on saves against diseases.

Efficiency: Beginning at 2nd level, a Mah'kaarite Healer's ability to care for illness and injury improves. Any time he/she makes a Heal check that requires more than a standard action, the time required is halved. Alternatively, the Mah'kaarite Healer can care for twice as many individuals, though the time required is not reduced. Finally, the Mah'kaarite Healer can provide first aid as a move action instead of a standard action.

Improved Healing: Beginning at 3rd level, whenever a Mah'kaarite Healer casts a spell that heals ability damage or removes ability penalties, he/she can make a Heal check as a free action to increase the amount of ability damage healed. A DC 20 Heal check adds 1

point to the amount of damage healed, and every 10 above 20 adds an additional point (DC 30 heals 2 extra points, etc).

Immunize: Beginning at 4th level, a Mah'kaarite Healer can impart immunity to disease or poison onto an individual. He/she can only provide immunity to a disease or poison he/she has experienced (either through personal suffering or observation). The Mah'kaarite Healer makes a Heal check as opposed by the disease's fortitude save DC, accepting a -5 penalty to represent the increased difficulty of providing the immunity. Each immunity lasts a number of weeks equal to half the Mah'kaarite Healer's class level, and any given individual can be immunized against a number of diseases or poisons equal to their Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

Killing Cure: Beginning at 5th level, a Mah'kaarite Healer's devotion to eliminating disease reaches a fever pitch, and he/she gains a potent but dangerous healing ability. Three times per day when he/she makes a successful melee touch attack, a Mah'kaarite Healer can force all foreign particles and organisms from the body of the target. This automatically cures all diseases and poisons afflicting the target and restores all ability damage, but also inflicts 2d8 points of damage per class level of the Mah'kaarite Healer on the target. A successful fortitude save (DC 10 + class level + Wisdom modifier) halves this damage.

Adaptation and Adventure Hooks

The Mah'kaarite sect can easily be inserted into any campaign taking place in Pahal or any area influenced by Pahali civilization (likely only a few cities on the southwestern coast of the Baran desert). Because the widespread worship of Mah'kaari is a recent phenomenon, it is quite possible that the PC's might not have encountered it at all until the DM introduces it. In fact, the only region that absolutely must have a Mah'kaarite presence is Milanaa and the region immediately surrounding it. The sect can be introduced in a multitude of ways. There might be a Mah'kaarite temple or shrine in the town the PC's pass through. They might cross paths with an adventuring member of either the Censers or the Tears of Mah'kaari. They might have been stricken with a disease and go to a Mah'kaarite priest for healing.

The Mah'kaarite sect can serve almost any role in a campaign. A member of the Censers could be a major or secondary villain, attempting to thwart the PC's efforts to end a plague. A member of the Tears of Mah'kaari could be a major or secondary villain, attempting to kill the PC's or their loved ones or random strangers in an effort to wipe out a disease. The PC's may be the ones starting the disease and look to the Censers for help or fight against the Tears efforts to stop the plague. The sect could just be a background organization, affecting the politics of the setting and adding verisimilitude.

Adventure Hooks

- The local Mah'kaarite temple is overwhelmed with an outbreak of a disease. No other agents of the sect are available in this isolated area, so the temple priest turns to the PC's for help.
- One of the PC's is stricken with a deadly disease and goes to the Mah'kaarite temple for healing, where he/she is quickly rebuffed and sent away by an obviously nervous priest. If the PC's investigate, they find that the disease was started by a Swinging Censer and that the PC was picked as a carrier to spread the disease.
- The local Mah'kaarite temple, which is known throughout Pahal as a pilgrimage center where people have received miraculous healing, has suddenly lost its power to heal. The priest begs the PC's to investigate.

- The PC's are approached by a Swinging Censer, who wants their help to infect the local well with a virulent disease. What will they do?
- A small village is infected with a deadly disease, and the Tears of Mah'kaari are at a loss for what to do. They ask the PC's for help to cure the disease/eliminate the population/maintain the quarantine until the disease burns itself out.
- A family of villagers has run out of sources for herbs to donate to Mah'kaari, and it's almost time for the monthly offerings. They ask the PC's to track down some important healing herb.
- The PC's are agents of the Tears of Mah'kaari and find themselves suddenly falling ill after an encounter with some other devotees of the god. How did this happen? Are the other devotees Swinging Censers? What will the PC's do?

Campaign Notes: Essentially, this is a new religious sect that was developed in Pahal after the Plague went through. The Pahali religious tradition is one of a multitude of gods, with the classification into the Five categories used on the rest of the continent being a more recent addition to Pahali religious faith. Thus, local deities like Mah'kaari are still worshiped in Pahal.

The Mah'kaarite Sect can easily serve as a foe or a friend for the PC's, most likely through interaction with the organization's central hierarchy or the two active branches of the sect, the Tears of Mah'kaari and the Censers. For example, if the PC's are trying to cure a disease in a small village, a member of the Tears of Mah'kaari might assist them in their search for the cure while a member of the Censers might serve as the BBEG, having started the disease in the first place. Alternatively, the sect might merely serve as background for the campaign, with a temple or small shrine in almost every village and city the PC's visit. Finally, this sect is likely limited to the Pahali region, with perhaps a few shrines and temples in any areas where Pahali live overseas (likely only on the edges of the Baran desert).

The Nexorum

Author: Meat Shield

Location: Most major Feldarin population centers that also have a large non-Feldarin population. This includes most previous Caltan cities and some Kvrin.

Demographics: The Nexorum consists of groups of Humans residing in all major cities and much of the countryside. Many cities and locales actually have multiple independent groups operating at the same time, with no knowledge of the others to ensure that the elimination of one group does not remove all Nexorum influence in an area.

Year Founded: At about the same time as the Feldarin Invasion (or what they call the "Landing")

Size: The number of rebels has fluctuated over the years, due to efforts of the Feldarin to quash all opposition and most recently due to the Plague. The Nexorum itself currently numbers only a few thousand, but they are actively seeking new members and alliances.

General Description: The Feldarin view the many recent acts of insurrection as a new rebellion begun since the Weeping spread across Ursoule and weakened their hold on the populace. In reality, the rebels have been around almost as long as the Feldarin have.

History: The Nexorum came into being shortly after the Feldarin conquest. Over the centuries, they have gone from a small group of dispossessed humans meeting to communally vent their frustrations, to an extensive network of spies and saboteurs spread throughout the Empire. The membership has also grown to include non-humans who have become embittered with Feldarin rule. All see the current post-Plague situation as an opportunity to finally remove the Feldarin boot from their lands.

Symbols: As a secret organization, no visual symbols are known to exist. Members recognize each other by hand signals. Some have attributed a newly seen symbol of a black letter "F" pierced by an upraised red sword to the Nexorum.

Goals and Motivations: Most Nexorum activities revolve around intelligence gathering, harassment, and sabotage. Occasionally however, ambushes and assassinations are carried out against the Feldarin and their allies.

Leader: The current leader of the Nexorum is a Human simply known as Aquillus. His real name is not known to any of his people, and he does not know the actual names of his immediate subordinates in the name of mutual protection.

Aquillus has been in the Nexorum since childhood, starting out as a spotter for infiltrators and thieves used to gather supplies and food, then moving up to participating and then leading raids on Feldarin troops and their dwarven mercenaries.

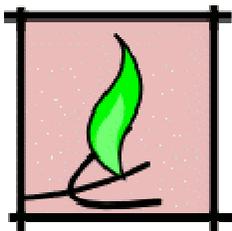
Having seen his parents killed as a reprisal for Nexorum activity in his home village (when all they did was care for a wounded member), Aquillus has no pity when it comes to the Feldarin, and will ruthlessly pursue and dispatch any he views as a threat. His leadership style is no nonsense and direct – you always know exactly where you stand with Aquillus.

Although he is in his mid-thirties, he appears a decade older due to a lifetime of field activity and hiding from authorities. He has black hair that is graying at the temples, with light blue eyes. His face is heavily lined and, running from left temple to his chin, he bears the scar from a Feldarin longsword that nearly ended his crusade against the invaders. The command and control functions of the Nexorum is handled by a surprisingly small group of dedicated anti-Feldarin zealots, mostly Human but with a few Elves, a Giantkin, and some Halflings (DM note: one of the Halflings is actually a Nether Gnome, perhaps planted by one of the Gnome organizations). The Giantkin is a powerful Druid who uses his animal friends to convey messages to various far flung cells of Nexorum agents.

There has been some recent conflict with members of the Imperial Loyalty and Equality Alliance (ILEA, see separate entry), who are Humans seeking more involvement in Feldarin politics. ILEA openly supports all efforts to destroy any Human rebels to prove their loyalty to the Empire.

Order of the Hidden Fire

Author: Mephibosheth



"It is said that a flame that is covered is useless, giving light to no one, for no one can see a flame that is covered, except he who covers it. To some, this can make all the difference, for a covered fire still burns."

- Henri B'Artaign, founder of the Order of the Hidden Fire

Location: Anywhere there are Plaguetouched being persecuted may have members of this order.

Demographics: For those who find out about its existence, joining the Order of the Hidden Fire is rather easy. The only real requirement is that the members actively work to assist Plaguetouched and other individuals persecuted because of the Weeping. This assistance may take many forms, including providing sanctuary, resources, spellcasting, and other services. The racial Makeup of the Order is shown in the Table at the right.

Typical Races	
Humans:	40%
Feldarin:	25%
Halflings:	20%
Dwarves:	10%
Others:	5%

Of the races included in the Tears of Blood Campaign Setting, only Humans, Feldarin, Halflings, and Dwarves have any significant presence in the Order of the Hidden Fire. Elven Plaguetouched are very rare and are too reclusive to join the Order, Giantkin do not contract the Weeping, and Gnomes are too wrapped up in their own concerns (and were only lightly affected by the plague). Occasionally members of these races will join, either as outcasts from their communities or in order to help Plaguetouched.

Classes: The membership of the Order of the Hidden Fire includes members of every class. Rogues, rangers, bards, and arcane spellcasters tend to be slightly more common, as their talents naturally lend themselves to the secretiveness of the organization, but anyone can be a member so long as they are loyal to the organization and are willing to pitch in. Also, the percentages below are based on the number of members with class levels. The classes found among the Order are shown in the Table to the right.

Typical Classes	
Rogue	20%
Bard	15%
Fighter	10%
Ranger	10%
Sorcerer	10%
Wizard	10%
Barbarian	5%
Cleric	5%
Druid	5%
Monk	5%
Paladin	5%

Year Founded: During the time of the Weeping Plague.

Size: This is a large and loosely organized group whose numbers continue to increase as those who survived the Weeping become aware of its existence.

General Description: In the wake of the ravages of the Weeping, a new and oft-persecuted minority arose: the Plaguetouched. These shaken survivors of the deadly disease carry with them permanent scars of the Weeping, as blood flows periodically from their eyes and their bodies and minds bear the lingering effects of the disease.

Along with the physical and mental aspects associated with their condition, the Plague-touched must contend with the societal prejudices brought about by the Weeping. Anything associated with the deadly plague carries immense social stigma, and many people are unwilling or unable to look past the link the Plaguetouched have with the Weeping, persecuting them as carriers or causes of the deadly disease. As the disease subsided and the population began to heal, organizations have sprung up seeking to combat the plague by eliminating the Weeping, and stories of Plaguetouched killed or driven into exile by angry mobs have become commonplace.

This has caused many of the Plaguetouched and a few of their supporters to band together, forming the Order of the Hidden Fire to work toward the safety of the Plaguetouched and all others scarred by the Weeping. The Order works in secret to establish safe-houses and resources for Plaguetouched in trouble, and works publicly (through "front" organizations) to educate people about the Weeping and to changing perceptions of the Plaguetouched.

History: The Order of the Hidden Fire was formed during the period of chaos when the

ravages of the Weeping Plague threatened to end peace and order the world over. Few were able to survive the Plague, and even fewer were able to come through unscathed. Many that managed to survive were permanently scarred, becoming Plaguetoached, and suffer from a variety of afflictions as a result of their brush with death.

Early on, the Plaguetoached became associated with the suffering brought about by the Weeping, and almost as soon as their existence became known, people began to despise them, chasing them away from settled areas in disorganized mobs, killing them on sight, and even forming groups bent on promoting the "greater good" by exterminating the Plaguetoached as carriers of the Weeping. Many of the Plaguetoached had to go underground (both literally and figuratively) to survive.

One day, in the land known as Pahal, where the ravages of the Weeping were seen as a device of the civilization's enemies to weaken its defenses, a Halfling merchant named Henri B'Artaign witnessed the persecution of a Plaguetoached man while on a visit to the city of Milanaa. The Plaguetoached, bleeding profusely from his eyes and convulsing from a combination of his Plague-weakened health and the torture of the mob, tried to fight them off by shooting rays of fire at them, evidently hoping to reduce the mob's numbers and weaken its resolve. However, he was in danger of being overwhelmed by the angry citizens. Outraged and appalled, Henri and his crew ran forward, grabbed the man, and swiftly carried him aboard their ship and set sail from the harbor. On board the ship, the man (whose name was Zukam) told Henri about the persecution of the Plaguetoached in his homeland. Henri, who had heard similar stories and seen similar occurrences in other ports, decided to try and do something to protect the Plaguetoached and their allies. They realized that although overt fire had failed Zukam in Milanaa, perhaps a hidden fire, one of solidarity and stealth, might be able to save many of the Plaguetoached from death and exile.

Whenever they stopped in a port, Henri and Zukam sought out the Plaguetoached of the community and also searched for allies. The two traveled throughout the world, seeking out Plaguetoached and sympathizers and establishing networks of safe-houses. It is during this time that Zukam developed the spells allowing the creation of the Plaguefire Rings and the symbol and methods of the Order of the Hidden Fire were developed. Since its founding, the Order of the Hidden Fire has grown quickly, as Plaguetoached everywhere joined in hopes of living safe lives once again. The leaders of the Order (such as they were) also expanded the Order's scope, tacitly encouraging research into methods to aid Plaguetoached (spells, medicines, etc) and subtle campaigns aimed at promoting acceptance of the Plaguetoached. They hope to use the metaphorical light and heat generated by their hidden flame to bring about enlightenment in the populace and provide comfort and succor for Plaguetoached.

While the Order is widespread and well-known among Plaguetoached and their supporters, it has been remarkably successful in staying under the general radar. Many only know of its existence as a shadowy rumor, easily discounted. In the rare cases where members have turned traitor, they have been dealt with swiftly and brutally by those they tried to betray.

Symbols: The Order of the Hidden Fire uses symbols as a means of recognizing each other and communicating with members. Almost all members of the group eventually acquire Plaguefire Rings, a unique magical item created by members that produces a small green flame on command. Members of the Order use this flame as a signifier of their membership. The symbol of a hand holding a tongue of green flame is also used in a number of ways to denote Order safe-houses and locations friendly to Plaguetoached. Some members draw or tattoo the flame symbol on themselves to serve as an indicator of their membership until they are able to acquire Plaguefire Rings. Flames of all kinds have become symbols for the

Order, and everything from candles in the window of a home or store to bonfires on the hills surrounding a town can signify the presence of the Order of the Hidden Fire.

Goals and Motivation: The Order of the Hidden Fire seeks to keep Plaguetoached hidden and safe, much the way a traveler keeps a flame within a lamp to protect it from the elements and to prevent its light and heat from aiding those he would keep blind to its existence. They also seek to shed light on the true nature of the Weeping and the Plaguetoached, much the same way a lamp or torch reveals that which is hidden by darkness. Finally, they seek to assist the Plaguetoached in removing the signs of their condition or alleviating the negative symptoms, much the same way a fire cleanses or provides comfort in the cold. It is normally a non-violent organization, though it will sponsor adventuring parties and certain limited violent actions from time to time. These actions are usually initiated by local chapters of the organization and hope to accomplish local aims (assassinations, thefts of important artifacts and documents, etc).

Leaders: While there is no official hierarchy for the Order of the Hidden Fire, there are a few individuals whose importance and power has placed them in a position to direct the general activities of the Order. These individuals were all instrumental in the founding of the Order, and continue to work to further the goals of the Order:

Zukam (Plaguetoached Human [Pahali] Wizard 10, Loremaster 5)

A powerful and wise wizard, Zukam was a member of the formative cadre of the Order of the Hidden Fire, and was the first member to undertake magical research to disguise the effects of the Weeping and to work to cure the afflictions of the Plaguetoached. Over time, he has grown increasingly paranoid and reclusive, gradually withdrawing from open work for the Order. He still organizes research into new spells and items to help members of the Order.

Henri B'Artaign (Halfling Rogue 6, Legendary Captain 9)

Henri's intervention in Zukam's life, and his cooperation with Zukam to help Plaguetoached, sparked the formation of the Order of the Hidden Fire. While the diffuse nature of the Order makes it difficult to truly lead, Henri is able to nudge the Order in the direction he feels best. He has astounding influence among members of the Order, and he and his crew constantly sail the world, helping existing groups of Order members and establishing new safe-houses.

Angelos Theopoulos (Human [Phoedran] Bard 8, Virtuoso 4)

Angelos was a highly skilled poet who was one of the few in his hometown who was able to overlook the physical disabilities of the Plaguetoached and see the internal beauty that still resided within their broken frames. When Henri and Zukam first traveled to Phoedra, he was one of the few non-Plaguetoached to join the Order of the Hidden Fire. Since then, he has focused his considerable skills in persuasion, rhetoric, and leadership to spearhead the Order's efforts to educate people about the Weeping and the Plaguetoached. His subtle campaigns have been crucial to maintaining the secrecy surrounding the Order while simultaneously spreading their message throughout the world.

Important NPC's: The diffuse and informal nature of the Order of the Hidden Fire tends to reduce the importance of all but the most influential. However, any member can be called upon at any time to provide aid to another member or to a victim of the Weeping.

Resources/Benefits: The Order of the Hidden Fire is a diffuse organization. It has little by way of a central treasury, relying mostly on the resources of its members to accomplish its

goals. Thus, the resources available to members are highly dependent on the location and circumstance of those with whom one has contact.

Members of the Order of the Hidden Fire can access the resources of the members of the Order in any given location to receive protection and hiding places. Often, members will provide goods and services to other members at a discount, including the sale of magic items and spellcasting.

Gather Information/Knowledge DCs, Order of the Hidden Fire:

- **DC 15:** "Yeah, I heard something about the Order of the Hidden Fire once. Something about those *spit* Plaguetoached creatures. Sounds dodgy."
- **DC 20:** "Ah, the Order of the Hidden Fire! I've heard that they actually try to *protect* the Plaguetoached! They think that they're not actually responsible for the Weeping. Load of nonsense if you ask me."
- **DC 30:** "The Order of the Hidden Fire! No one's asked about them in a while. I heard that they're behind all these guys trying to teach us about the Weeping, and that they have a bunch of hideouts and secret labs. Bet they've got some pretty heavy disguise spells in the works. Maybe even a cure for the Plaguetoached, or for the Weeping itself!"
- **DC 40:** Reveals the names of the Order's founders, or of specific members in a city.

Note that discrete use of flame symbols will lower these DC's by 5 and will result in a 20% chance of contact by a member of the Order. Use of a Plaguefire Ring will lower the DC's by 10 and result in a 40% chance of contact by a member of the Order.

Adventure Hooks

- Zukam has become increasingly reclusive in recent years, finally disappearing from sight completely. Henri is worried about his old friend, and asks the party to find out what happened to him.
- Important members of the Order in the city in which the party is currently staying have been captured by an anti-Plaguetoached organization. The party must rescue them before they are forced to divulge information that could spell doom for the Order.
- An agent of the Order of the Hidden Fire has infiltrated the [royal palace, city hall, etc] and attempted to kill the [king, mayor, etc.], who barely escaped. The [king, mayor, etc.] asks the party to hunt down the local Order and eliminate it.
- An anti-Plaguetoached riot breaks out in the city. Will the party join in, or will they attempt to aid the Plaguetoached?
- Henri asks the party to travel to a particularly dangerous area to investigate the state of things in the region, possibly starting new chapters of the Order if none exist already.

Order of the Hidden Fire - New Spells

Plaguefire Flame

Evocation [Fire]

Level: Brd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0

Components: S, V

Casting Time: 1 Swift Action

Range: 0 ft

Effect: A small tongue of flame in the palm of your hand
Duration: Concentration (up to 1 round/level)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell was developed by Zukam as a method of identifying members of the Order of the Hidden Fire. Using this simple spell, many rings were crafted that allowed the spell to be used by non-casters, making it a symbol of membership in the Order of the Hidden Fire.

This spell creates a small tongue of bright green flame appears in the palm of your hand. The flame sheds light as a candle, and can be used to set combustible objects on fire. This flame cannot be used to set a creature on fire.

The flame produced by this spell can also be caused to flicker in any pattern the caster desires, allowing it to function for the transmission of short coded messages.

Mask

Illusion [Glamer]

Level: Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: S, V, F

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Touch

Target: 1 Creature Touched

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will Negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell was developed by Order of the Hidden Fire researchers to provide a quick, easy, and cheap way to disguise the facial features of Plaguetoached. When cast by a powerful enough caster, it even allows them to cover the bloody tears that mark the Plaguetoached.

This spell allows the caster to alter the minor facial features of the creature touched. Changes are limited to: changing eye color, covering or adding scars/birthmarks/etc, altering the shape of facial features, and other minor changes of a similar scope. The appearance of the target's face is altered at the time of casting the spell, and does not change (however, see below).

In addition to altering already-existing facial features, this spell allows the caster to attempt to anticipate future changes in appearance. Whenever the facial features of the subject of this spell change (i.e. gets a scar or a burn, eyes bleed, etc.), make a Spellcraft check using the modifier of the caster of the spell. The DC to successfully cover the change in facial features is 15 + 2/hour since the casting of the spell. If this check is unsuccessful, changes appear on the target's face as normal.

This spell only changes the appearance of the subject's face. It does not disguise the texture of the subject's skin, nor does it prevent any other senses from detecting the subject's true features. This spell grants a +5 bonus to Disguise checks when used to create a disguise.

Focus Component: A mask of any type

Obscure Symptoms

Illusion [Glamer]

Level: Brd 3, Sor/Wiz 2
Components: S, V, F
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Touch
Target: 1 Humanoid Touched
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Will Negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell was developed as a more robust version of *Mask* to obscure some of the more dramatic symptoms of the Plaguetouched.

This spell can be cast on any humanoid that has been affected by a disease or is currently suffering from a disease. The spell seeks out the remnants of the disease, determines the external, physical symptoms of that disease, and masks those symptoms so that it appears to all observers that they are not occurring. This spell only obscures visual evidence of the symptoms. Other senses may register the symptoms as normal.

This spell grants the target a +10 bonus on Disguise checks to appear whole and healthy when his/her symptoms would otherwise be apparent.

Focus Component: Some bandages or other health-related material taken from the target.

Suppress Symptoms

Conjuration [Healing]

Level: Clr 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 Minute

Range: Touch

Target: 1 Creature Touched

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude Negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

One of the greatest breakthroughs of the Order of the Hidden Fire's researchers, this spell can be used to suppress the symptoms of any disease for a period of minutes, allowing Plaguetouched to exist in normal society for a short period of time.

Upon completion of casting, all disease symptoms suffered by the target are suppressed. Any physical evidence of the disease temporarily disappears, and all ability scores are temporarily restored to normal. Sores recede, tremors cease, any seizures that would be suffered during this time period do not occur, etc. This spell effects even diseases immune to *Remove Disease*. At the end of the spell's duration, the symptoms return.

Material Component: Healing oils and ointments

Order of the Hidden Fire - New Magic Item

Plaguefire Ring

This simple pewter ring is set with a small piece of circular green glass. These are commonly used to indicate membership in the Order of the Hidden Fire. Whenever a command word is spoken (usually something simple and unobtrusive that can be whispered), it allows the wearer to cast *Plaguefire Flame*.

Faint Evocation; CL 1st; Forge Ring, *Plaguefire Flame*; Price 900 gp

Sample Chapter of the Order of the Hidden Fire

The Order of the Hidden Fire located in the town of Brasov (located to the north of Osijek in the midst of the Kvrinzemyan Mountains) is a typical rural chapter of the Order, focused on providing safe-houses to Plaguetoached that pass through on their way to other locales as well as protecting the identity of the few Plaguetoached who have remained in Brasov. The town itself is intensely prejudiced against Plaguetoached, having suffered heavily from the Weeping and from an intense bout of thievery perpetrated by Plaguetoached driven out of the surrounding communities.

The members of the Order in Brasov are very careful to maintain a low profile, and are very reluctant to attempt the type of education campaigns going on in other cities. They focus on getting Plaguetoached safely through the town, hiding them from the authorities, and supplying them with provisions and necessary items. They even have a small stock of Plaguefire Rings to give to new members of the Order. They also maintain a bonfire on the hills above town indicating their presence. This bonfire occasionally flickers green for a few seconds, ensuring that the right message is communicated.

There are a few members of the Order in Brasov that chafe under the secrecy and relative inaction required to survive in the town. A few of the younger members have begun to contemplate violent action in retribution for offenses against Plaguetoached.

Overall, around 20 people in Brasov are members of the Order. Most merely provide supplies and services to the Order, but a few operate safe-houses in their homes and in the surrounding hills.

Important Members

Andrei Alexandru (Male Human [Kvrin] Wizard 8)

Andrei was among the first non-Plaguetoached in Brasov to join the Order of the Hidden Fire, and has since risen into a leadership role, providing guidance for the Order as a whole in Brasov. He's a very cautious man, advocating secrecy above all other goals. Some of the younger members of the Order chafe under his leadership, wanting to act more openly and aggressively.

Bogdan Cezar (Male Plaguetoached Human [Kvrin] Rogue 6)

Bogdan is Andrei's most trusted agent, acting as a second-in-command when required and helping Andrei communicate with the other members of the Order. He too recognizes the need to be exceedingly careful, having had a few brushes with discovery himself.

Ioana Laurentiu (Female Human [Kvrin] Expert 2, Rogue 2)

Ioana operates Brasov's largest safehouse for Plaguetoached in the secret basement of "Brasov's Best," the Inn she owns and operates. A complex series of secret passages have been constructed to hide this safe-house, which can easily accommodate 15 people, 25 in a pinch. Ioana falls into the same camp as Bogdan and Andrei, believing secrecy to be necessary. She's paranoid of being discovered and sometimes regrets joining the Order, but she remains committed to the cause (though how far her loyalty will go is unknown/up to the DM to decide).

Vlad Silvio (Male Plaguetouched Human [Kvrin] Rogue 5, Assassin 1)

Vlad recently moved to Brasov from a larger city in the foothills of the mountains, bringing with him the more active tendencies of the Order in larger cities where secrecy is easier to achieve. He has become bored and angry at the Brasov Order's inaction, and is something of a rabble-rouser for younger Plaguetouched in Brasov that support taking more overt action. Currently their violent tendencies are being kept in check by older and more powerful members of the Order, but who knows what tomorrow may bring.

Adventure Hooks

- Andrei has become worried that Vlad and his followers will strike against the mayor of Brasov in retribution for a recent anti-Plaguetouched riot. He asks the party to watch over the mayor in secret and prevent any assassination attempts without the townsfolk being any the wiser.
- The wealthiest landowner in Brasov (a noted hater of Plaguetouched) has recently heard a rumor about the Order of the Hidden Fire, and asks the party to look for evidence of its existence.
- The party are Plaguetouched (or supporters) passing through Brasov on their way out of the mountains, and they need to access the safe-house run by Ioana. In return for their stay, she asks them to help her construct improvements to the safe-house (perhaps requiring some exotic substance or a specific spell).
- The Order in Brasov has been exposed! The authorities found a minor safe-house, and the party has to rescue a captured member from the local jail to help preserve the secrecy of the rest of the Order.
- Vlad comes to the party with news that Ioana has buckled under the pressure and plans on turning the Order over to the authorities. Is this true? Is Vlad just trying to provoke violence? What will the party do?
- The bonfire in the hills has gone out, and the two members sent to investigate have disappeared. Andrei asks the party to investigate.

Author's Notes: So, the Order of the Hidden Fire is done, I think. I encourage people to examine it and provide feedback. I have a couple of specific requests:

1. I'm unsure as to the balance of some of the crunchy content. At this point, I'm unsure that 3rd level is too high for *Obscure Symptoms*, since it's benefits are very situational and specific. On the other hand, it is powerful and can be extremely useful. Any input?

2. It's difficult for me as someone involved with Tears of Blood to view this organization without the influence of my familiarity with the setting. If those of you who don't frequent these boards would provide input on how to make the organization more well-defined and clear for those who aren't familiar with the setting. Any assistance would be appreciated.

I may add some more crunchy content, and may flesh out the flavor, and add some more images. I hope you like it. Again, any comments are welcomed.

I know that it the Order of the Hidden Fire is pretty setting-specific and that not everyone is going to want to convert/use it, especially since it relies so much on the existence of Plaguetouched in the setting.

However, I do think that you could adapt it without too much work, replacing references to Plaguetouched with some other oppressed group (say, Half-fiends or Half-Orcs) and have

the organization work to protect them. *Suppress Symptoms* wouldn't be that useful in that case, but the other spells would, and I think that the conversion would be pretty easy. But you're right, it is intended to be used in the Tears of Blood setting, and is written from that frame of mind. I guess I'll just have to hope that people can look past the specificity ;).

Thanks for your comments! Mephibosheth

The Order of Salvation *"They'll save you, even if it kills you."*

Author: Fire_Wolf

Formed after the onset of the plague, the Order of Salvation (OS) is a group dedicated to the eradication of the Plague and Plaguetoached at all costs. Their devotion knows no bounds, leading them to wipe out entire populaces to prevent them from catching the plague from nearby villages. OS members believe that they serve the good of all people, not realizing the atrocities they commit in their fervor. To them, they are the heroes of the people and consider themselves Lawful Good. The chain of command in the OS is:

High Councilor (level 17+, varies) - the head of the OS, a successor is usually chosen by the High Councilor shortly before they die

Elder (level 14-16, spellcaster and leadership roles) - the three commanders serving under the High Councilor, they organize the finer points of the OS

Archwarden (level 11-13, spellcaster) - powerful figureheads sent into cities and political positions throughout society to further the OS agenda

Warden (level 8-10, semi-melee ex: melee spellcasters) - advanced hunters, usually sent in task forces of 6-12 for eradication of settlements

Cleanser (level 5-7, melee) - the basic grunt of the OS; for mass attacks and wars

The OS headquarters is the Sanatorium, frequently called the Insanitorium by those who have visited it. This massive structure sits in a remote area surrounded by wasteland for several miles. The building is described as a plain looking cube of steel. From the positioning of a few sparse windows, the Sanatorium has about four floors, yet the maze-like halls of the building are a mystery even to the most seasoned OS member. The roof is watched by a large flock of gargoyles (5d4 at any one time), trained to stay still until the building is threatened. Once a herd of Plaguetoached are brought to the Sanatorium, they are either dropped into the Pit or carted off into its many laboratories in search of a cure. OS members are entitled to many services provided by other members. Service rooms, blacksmiths, and rental stations reside on the second floor. Living quarters are on the third floor. Leaders go over plans and live in the fourth floor. The Chapel is also on the fourth floor, the place to initiate newcomers and where spellcasters go to meditate (if needed).

In the middle of the first floor, with a straight path to the giant metal doors leading into the Sanatorium, is the entrance to The Pit. The gate is a 20'x20' solid metal portcullis at about two feet thick. It takes the combined work of four winches to open it, yet it can close in a split second if the door is released or the winches are not operated in sync. Falling through the opening, one falls fifty feet below into a pool of liquids and plague victims. The room, though hard to make out in the dark, is shaped like an upside-down pyramid. Those who survive the fall tend to travel out to the slopes of the Pit to await their eventual deaths. All manners of tortured spirits dwell in the Pit, including Undead. Those uninfected succumb to

the plague quickly in the infected depths of the pit. While in the Pit, one becomes nauseated from the omnipresent decay and filth. Four crystals are placed at the corners of the Pit gate on the inside of its depths. Each one radiates an anti-magic zone across the Pit.

The High Councilor of the OS is Sandori Thesar, a human Rogue 3/Fighter 4/Duelist 10. He has run the OS for a year now, but shortly after his initiation as High Councilor, he was infected by the plague in a botched attack he personally led on a small fortified city. Sandori tries to hide his affliction from his followers while maintaining his goal of wiping out all Plaguetoached. Several victims that he has infected were thrown into the Pit to cover up his curse. To disguise the visible symptoms, Sandori wears his signature Mask of the Skull and a red Dueling cloak. He knows that he will have to kill himself to complete his task, but first the OS leader must rid of the world of the others.

The three Elders take different roles in the Order's actions, though the High Councilor may override any action they wish to bring about. Collectively, their branches in the Order are referred to as the Eldership. The Elder of Eyes maintains the wide spread intelligence gathering exploits of the OS. The Elder of Fists organizes the Order's military agenda. The Elder of Fervor is the public relations and diplomatic branch of the Eldership, also handling the recruitment. The Eldership came about in the second year of the Order of Salvation. The First High Councilor, Evarik Olandir, originally had a second-in-command, Javori Telthorn as Councilor, rather than having the Elders. However, Telthorn betrayed Olandir to try and create a schism in the Order and ultimately destroy it. Olandir killed Telthorn after the traitor failed to convert a single Order member. His body was cast into the Pit, which had been created beneath the Sanatorium only months before. In the stead of the Councilor, Olandir created the Eldership.

The typical OS member is a melee fighter or divine spellcaster. Paladin, Monk, and Fighter are especially common choices. Psions are common among basic squads, usually employing their powers to keep the infected at a distance or move bodies without coming in contact with them. Outfits consist of white robes and cloaks atop medium armor with a balaclava or similar accessory to obscure their face. Almost any other color is attributed to some negative aspect of the plague (black for decay, red for blood, etc.) and avoid them. Favored weapons are the scythe and sickle (*"To reap the infected and harvest a new world"*, as the OS motto goes). These two weapons and their motto is a part of the **OS sigil**: a skull within the blade of a large sickle (the handle to the bottom right), the scythe crossing behind it (handle to the bottom left) and the motto on a strip of parchment trailing from the left (*"To reap the infected and"*) into and out of the eye sockets and ending on the right (*"to harvest a new world."*). This elaborate tattoo is put on the backs of initiates and serves as a flawless symbol of their entry into the OS. Each member refers to their peers as "brother" or "sister", even among different ranks. Altogether, there are about two-hundred fifty agents spread across the world with about a fourth of them are stationed at the Sanatorium.

Recruitment into the Order has slowed as the Plague has declined over the years. OS combat is fast and furious, seeking to bring down the Plaguetoached opponents in as little time as possible, with no concept of collateral damage or innocent deaths. Overkill is to be expected, they take no chances when it comes to their missions. Fire is always a first tactic, to wipe out as many as possible and purge the area. Cleansers are sent in while Wardens strike major targets. Decapitation is the preferred method of execution. Sometimes orders are given to take captives if the stock at the Sanatorium is low. Captives are taken with bolas, then they are bound in animated nets and ropes and levitated into carts to prevent exposure to them. Many a Cleanser finds their white clothes soiled and bloodied after an attack on a village. OS warriors achieve an almost suicidal vigor when attacking, though they take great care to not become a part of what they are fighting.

Devout OS zealots will end their lives upon infection, while newer members may try to flee.

The OS Doctrine of Purification relies totally on eradication rather than finding prevention. Some OS mages seek cures, but by no means are they pressured to find one any time soon.

Initiates must contact an Archwarden at the Sanatorium and have brought in at least four Plaguetouched. The average initiate is human, and gender is generally equally mixed. Those who try to leave the OS are sent into the Pit as traitors. Showing mercy to any plague victim is forbidden and inexcusable. Former members have their tattoos forcibly (and painfully) removed, resulting in horrific scarring. They are devout followers of the Death God (which the OS always refer to as "The Purifier") and are enemies of the Plague Fiend (referred to as "The Defiler").

Specific Members:

High Councilor - Sandori Thesar, male human Rogue4/Fighter4/Duelist10

Elders (Branch)

- Obrek Almderas, female human Paladin 15 (Fists)
- Ekir Daen, female halfling Rogue 8/Sorcerer 8 (Eyes)
- Cayor Nightwind, male human Cleric 16 (Fervor)

Making an OS guild member from Cleanser to Archwarden

Choose a race, or roll a d6. If 3 or greater, they are human. Otherwise roll a d8 and consult the following table:

- 1 - Gnome
- 2 - Halfling
- 3 - Elf
- 4 - Half-Elf
- 5 - Dwarf
- 6 - Orrk
- 7 - Giantkin
- 8 - Other, at DM's discretion

Roll a d12 to determine rank, if randomized:

- 1 - Cleanser
- 2 - Cleanser
- 3 - Cleanser
- 4 - Cleanser
- 5 - Cleanser
- 6 - Cleanser
- 7 - Warden
- 8 - Warden
- 9 - Warden
- 10 - Warden
- 11 - Archwarden
- 12 - Archwarden

Determine the class levels by rolling (d6 or d8 where appropriate):

Feel free to set up your own tables for the class levels of OS members in your encounters, this is just a base set-up for quick gameplay. However, ECL, races, and feats should be

relatively similar to what is listed.

Cleanser (5-7) melee focus:

1. Fighter 1d3+4
2. Rogue 3/Fighter 1d3+1
3. Ranger 1d3+4
4. Paladin 1d3+4
5. Monk 1d3+4
6. Wizard 1d3+4
7. Cleric 1d3+4
8. Rogue 1d3+4

Warden (8-10) melee spellcasters:

1. Rogue 1d2+3/Wizard 1d2+3
2. Paladin 1d3+7
3. Ranger 1d3+7
4. Fighter 1d3+7
5. Cleric 1d3+7
6. Monk 1d3+7

Archwarden (11-13) spellcasters:

1. Wizard 10+1d3
2. Cleric 10+1d3
3. Fighter 10+1d3
4. Ranger 10+1d3
5. Paladin 10+1d3
6. Rogue 5/Assassin 4+1d4

Multiclassing between base classes is fairly common, you may want to do that for OS members set out to different tasks. Only higher ranked members (Archwarden+) tend to take prestige classes. Templates are rather rare, and you may decide to apply them for the 'Other' when determining race. Just re-roll for the base race. Low LA templates are most common, rarely exceeding +1.

Feats for OS members are usually geared around their classes without being too build-like. They may take part of a feat chain but rarely complete it at low levels. Usually a member has a few random feats such as Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus, or a +2/+2 feat. The higher the member, the greater the chance that they will have optimized feats. There is a 50% chance that a member with an appropriate class ability will choose an Order ability feat. Each member has the Order of Salvation Initiation (see below) and has been in the Order for a given time depending on rank (add a month for every three character levels):

Cleanser, 1d4 months (1-4 mo.)

Warden, 2d6 months (2-12 mo.)

Archwarden, 3d8 months (3-24 mo.)

Order of Salvation Initiation

Must kill at least 4 Plague-touched and have visited the Sanatorium, non-infected.

You will then join the ranks of the Order. Upon your next arrival to the Sanatorium, you are branded with the sigil of the Order and are an official Cleanser. You may gain ranks in the Order as you progress. You receive a +2 bonus to all Charisma skill checks involving Order of Salvation members and they are automatically friendly to you.

After 1d3 months of membership, you become devoted to the Order. As a devotee, you cannot willingly harm or obstruct the Order of Salvation, its agenda, or its members, and gain a second saving throw against any magical effect that would cause you to do so (being told to attack an Order member by the *Suggestion* spell, for example). You must also make a Will saving throw equal to DC 20+months in the Order to leave the guild and the DC for someone to persuade you to leave increases by 3 + the number of months you have served the Order (typical attempts use skills like Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, etc.).

Leaving the Order nullifies all bonuses and marks you as a traitor to the Order of Salvation. Order members are automatically hostile and will seek to kill you on sight. Assassins may be sent out, with a 5% chance of such an encounter per day until they are sure (or can be convinced) that you are dead. Apprehension near the Sanatorium will lead to being thrown into the Pit.

The following feats modify existing class abilities for use against the infected:

Command of the Order [Salvation]

Prerequisites: Turn/Rebuke class ability; Order Initiation; Ritual with the High Councilor

Bonus: You may turn or destroy Plaguetouched (rebukers turn Plague-touched as well) as you would any other creature you can turn/rebuke.

Fist of the Order [Salvation]

Prerequisites: Smite class ability; Order Initiation; Ritual with the Elder of Fists

Bonus: You may use your Smite attempts against those with the Plaguetouched template.

Eyes of the Order [Salvation]

Prerequisites: Detect class ability; Order Initiation; Ritual with the Elder of Eyes

Bonus: You may choose to modify your Detect ability to Detect Plague (only one Detect can be in effect at any given time).

Fervor of the Order [Salvation]

Prerequisites: Favored Enemy class ability; Order Initiation; Ritual with the Elder of Fervor

Bonus: You may replace any one of your Favored Enemies with Plaguetouched, or you may take Plaguetouched the next time you gain a Favored Enemy.

Plague Hunter [General]

Bonus: +2 morale bonus to all melee or ranged attacks on Plaguetouched or infected.

The Order of the Sword and Shield, Magical

Author: Doshi

Location: The Paladins of the Order travel on both Nether and Aether Gnome ships, and defend all of the cities of the Gnomish Race. The headquarters is in the City of Nekrazzabar.

Demographics: Nether and Aether Gnomes who are Paladins or Clerics of Currindor, the Gnomish god of Magic.

Year Founded: The Order was founded approximately 700 years ago by Shakka Planner Victory, a Paladin of the Gnomes.

Size: Slightly over 800 official members.

General Description: Gnomish theology recognizes that there are Gods besides Currindor. But to some in the Gnomish world, the gods of Travel, Nature, War and Death are spiteful, vile entities who are bitterly hostile to Gnomes. The Gnomish race in general, and the Church of Currindor in particular, must be defended against the followers of these monstrous hateful gods. And so the god of Magic, in its limitless wisdom, empowers some Gnomes with the Magical powers of a Paladin, that they might defend his Church and People.

History: About 700 years ago, a Half-dragon Paladin known as Shakka Planner Victory was so successful in fighting against the followers of the Four Evil Gods and their Mindflayer allies that he was granted the great honor of Undeath by the Dracolich herself. Since then, a few other Paladins of the Order have been granted the honor of Undeath as well.

Shakka originally divided his new Order into eight different groups, four of which were dedicated to hunting down and destroying the followers of each of the four other gods: Travel, Nature, War and Death. The other four groups were dedicated to defending against the followers those same four evil gods. Each of the eight groups was given specialized training to make them more effective in fighting their respective adversaries.

About 600 years ago, the group of Paladins that were fighting against the god of War were infiltrated by War cultists. They were eventually discovered, but not before they had done a lot of damage to the Order's reputation. The Dracolich then decreed that the Order would be supervised in the future by Clerics of Currindor, who would be led by a Judge of Theology. It would be the duty of the Judge to make sure that the Order never deviated from the True Orthodox path of worship of Currindor again.

The split between Nether and Aether Gnomes was a difficult problem for the Order. Because some of the Order's greatest leaders are older than the split, it remains the official policy of the Order that Nether and Aether Paladins shall work together against their common foes. Some younger Paladins from both groups strongly dislike members of the other culture and have suggested that the Order be divided into a Nether Order and an Aether Order. "That will happen over my dead body," Shakka the Lich has reportedly replied.

Because the members of the Order are almost all Paladins, they have always played a significant role in fighting outbreaks of disease. Disease has been one of the weapons used by cultists of the gods of Nature and Death. When the first Gnomes fell victim to the Plague, members of the Order's Enemies of Nature, led by Shakka and the other leaders of the Order, rushed to intervene. But it was soon discovered that Paladins, even Undead ones, were not immune to this horrible new disease. Shakka and some of his highest ranking followers fell victim to the Plague, though in time Shakka recovered as a Plaguetoached.

Since the day Shakka was afflicted by the Plague, the Order of the Sword has resolved to fight a new enemy, in addition to the Four Evil Gods. Now they also fight the followers of the Plague Fiend. Shakka has created two new groups within the Order, one dedicated to fighting and one to defending against this new, and in some ways more dangerous, foe.

Symbol: A glowing sword pointing downward underneath a dragon's skull made of silver,

against a background of black.

Goals and Motivation: The Paladins of the Order are utterly dedicated to the worship of Currindor. They also feel a strong loyalty to the Dracolich, who grants their greatest leaders the ultimate honor of becoming Undead. Every Paladin of the Order strives to earn that greatest of all accolades.

Leaders: The Sword and Shield of Wizardry Shakka Planner Victory (Male Gold Gnome Half-dragon Plaguetoached Lich, Wizard 2/Paladin 18, Lawful Evil), Her Holiness Laandir Cleric Truthseeker, Judge of Theology for the Order of the Sword and Shield Magical (Female Nether Gnome Paladin 1/Cleric 15/Expert 2, Lawful Neutral)

Allies and Enemies: The Order shares the same allies and enemies as the Dracolich and the Gnomish race. All who oppose Currindor, the True Divinity of Magic, must and will be defeated. They are still trying to determine the best way to combat the Plague Fiend, and might be willing to make alliances with other groups that also oppose the Fiend and its followers. Immediately under Shakka, whose title is The Sword and Shield of Wizardry, are ten sub-leaders. Five are called The Swords of the Enemies. (As in, the Sword of the Enemies of Death, or the Sword of the Enemies of Travel, or the Sword of the Enemies of the Plague). The other five are the Shields of the Enemies. (As in, The Shield of the Enemies of Death, and so on.) Before the Plague, the eight Swords and Shields were all Undead liches. But the Swords of Nature, Death and Travel, and the Shields of Nature and War, died in the Plague. Shakka has appointed new mortal Paladins to fill those offices, along with the new offices of the Sword and Shield of the Enemies of the Plague.

Individual Paladins can and do transfer between the ten different subgroups within the Order. Though many Paladins specialize in fighting one particular Enemy, a certain amount of cross training is also valued. It is difficult, though, for a Nether gnome paladin to get assigned to work on an Aether Gnome ship and visa versa. The amount of prejudice that most Nether and Aether Gnomes have for members of the other culture make it hard for Gnome Paladins to work on the other side of that cultural divide, though a few do manage it successfully.

All of these leaders, including even Shakka himself, can be questioned in matters of faith by the Judge of Theology, who is always a mortal Cleric of Currindor.

Red Sun Rising Merchant House

Location: On the open ocean is where these fierce merchants can be found. They travel between ports to carry merchandise for sale, or for transfer to local allied merchants to be delivered, and also carry passengers.

Demographics: Merchants of all races, mostly human.

Year Founded: Uncertain

Size: Roughly 75 large ships and around 4000 guild members on Ursoule. This includes officers, sailors, merchants, warriors, and diplomats (usually mages and clerics). The Guild is also present on multiple other worlds and is one of the few ways to travel (and ship) to and from Ursoule safely.

General Description: Red Sun Rising is a very powerful merchant guild that can easily

double as a very powerful and destructive fighting force. While it is usually difficult to agitate them, once done, very few survive to tell the tale. Their ships sail in groups of five to fifteen in a formation that could be construed as either protection from bad weather for a merchant convoy, or a strategic military formation. They will always make a fairly even trade, although through their trading, they will always come out ahead on any deal. The sailors that crew the ships are the reason for their hard core reputation as a military force. Tales are told of one sailor taking out six assassins with nothing more than a dagger (and one of the assassin's own blades), while another tale claims that a sailor bested eight armed guards while unarmed.

History: Red Sun Rising first came to Ursoule in the year 293 BL, and started trading with the Halflings, as they seemed to be the most developed, civilized group on the world. Over time they started to trade with the Orrks as well (174 AL), to alleviate some of the burden that was falling upon the Halflings to supply the Orrks with desired things. During that time, Red Sun Rising also helped the Halflings upgrade their ships to faster, more efficient designs. At the first outbreak of the Plague (The Weeping), they withdrew from most of their contacts to avoid spreading the disease to other worlds, and also to try to find a cure. Red Sun Rising also lost a few ships when hostilities broke out between the Baran and the Halflings, and consequently will not currently trade with the Baran nation. They have lost some people to the Weeping, though not many. The Red Sun Rising guild is just now starting to resume trade, which comes at a crucial time for Ursoule as production of many staple items is down, and most farmers are currently in need of seed and animals to recover from those bad times. While it will be some time before full recovery from the Plague, Red Sun Rising is trying to assist in this process.

Symbol: Gold and Red Sun on Blue field.

Goals and Motivation: Little is truly know about the goals of the Red Sun Rising Merchant Guild. While they are a very prosperous trading company, they have in the past made deals that definitely seemed to benefit those they traded with more than it helped them in any way.

Leader: Guildmaster Vartesiad Bladesilver. Bladesilver is said to be the direct descendant of the originating founder of the guild, and spent years working among the ranks in every possible position before taking over from his predecessor. The next Grandmaster will likely be one of his children, if one proves that they can handle every aspect of the guild.

Due to the way that the guild is run, all of its members fully support the Guildmaster, and are willing to die for him if he were to ask it of them. He also has a firm alliance with multiple kingdoms on multiple worlds. Whether this is out of fear, friendship, or respect is known only to those specific rulers. Lord Bladesilver has been known to frequent many worlds that have alliances with his Guild. Control is maintained by respect, honor, love, and even some fear. But mostly, all who work for him know that they will be treated fairly and respectfully and will get exactly what is due them. The guild members also get healthy bonuses for doing well in the guild, within the rules and guidelines set down.

Advancement is done through honest hard work, and by being the best at what they do. People have advanced within the guild to the level of being a fleet admiral in charge of several hundred ships and their respective crews. Different ways to progress are as a sailor, as a merchant, or as a warrior to defend the others. Usually though, most of the people try to advance in all three to be better for their Guildmaster.

Allies and Enemies: On Ursoule, Red Sun Rising has allied with the Halflings to bring them

supplies from far away lands to trade with mainlanders, as well as allying with the Orrks to bring them much needed supplies that the Halfling traders are not always able to bring. They are also allied to the Star and Moon Merchant Guild, Gaerbahth's Merchant guild, The Order (from the world of K'Slarisbor), and "The Guild" (off world, of which little is known).

Oaths and Codes: The 'rules to live by' for Guild are very near those of a paladin in nature, though there are no true paladins among the guild currently. All members should be respectful, always hold true to the Guildmaster and his ways, not attack unless provoked, never leave a job unfinished, always help those in need if at all possible, always give a fair deal, and continue to bring in a profit for the guild where possible.

Servants of the Red Tear

Author: Capfalcon.

Location: The Servants of the Red Tear live in a cavern system that used to be an old mine near a Kvrin mining city. A "nice underground cavern near a source of fresh blood".

Demographics: Former miners and those who have been kidnapped.

Beliefs: The Servants of the Red Tear serve a vampire named Starkad who had been staked in the recesses of a mine. During the chaos of the Weeping, several tremors in the area caused cave-ins and also caused the stake to be removed. Starkad quickly learned what had happened during his absence and hatched a plan to regain some of the influence he had when he was last active. He used his gaseous form to quickly scout out the area and search for survivors. He quickly extracted oaths of fealty, killing those who refused to give an oath, and rescuing the others. He repeated the process with the surrounding mines, gathering about 100 followers. In the process, however, he contracted the Plague. He did not die from it, but he became a Plaguetouched, and this ate at his sanity.

Since then, he has started kidnapping children from the city and training them in the arts of war and the arcane. He also instilled them with a fervent belief in his divinity. The cult is not large enough to take the town, but it is growing, and if something is not done, maybe not this generation, maybe not the next, but eventually the city will fall under the sway of Starkad. After all, he has eternity to wait.

The former miners live in constant fear of attracting Starkad's wrath, but the newly trained and indoctrinated members (the wizards and the fighters) see Starkad as a divine being.

Size: The cult is near a mining city, but it doesn't control it. The mining town knows that the cult is in one of the nearby mines, but they can never pin the cult down due to the number of mines and the fact that the cult moves frequently. However, the town could stamp the cult out if it was a straight up fight, but the vampire is slowly bleeding the city dry. The cult has about 100 commoners (former miners), 20 fighters, 10 spellcasters (trained from birth and raised to worship the vampire), and the vampire himself.

Alignment: Entirely Chaotic (Evil).

Rituals/Observances: None known at this time.

Symbols: A fang with a tear drop of blood dripping from it.

Tactics: Starkad is dismissive of the lives of his cultists. However, he realizes that he will be swiftly crushed without their aid, so he mostly feeds from the town, sending cultists into

town under cover of darkness to kidnap a few midnight snacks. If confronted in his lair, he will use his cultists as fodder to set up flanking for the fighters and to run interference for the wizards. If the fight turns against him he will flee.

The Shadows of the Sunlit World (Commonly called: The Shadow Guild)

Author: Doshi

Location: In the Beneath, the Guild has bases in all Nether Gnome cities. On the Surface, they have safe houses in most major Halfling cities. The College of Shadows is located in the capital city of Nekrazzabar.

Demographics: Illusionists, Rogues, Wizards, Experts, Clerics, Sorcerers, and Assassins who are mostly Nether Gnomes, Aether Gnomes, and a few Dragons and Half-dragons.

Year Founded: According to legend, over 3,500 years ago. The College of Shadows was founded over 2,000 years ago.

Size: Over 10,000 Gnomes have completed the eight month course needed to receive the Basic Level of Guild Accreditation, but very few of them are ever on the surface at any particular time. The Shadows have around 2000 permanent members.

General Description: It is not against Gnomish law for any Gnome to go the surface and disguise himself or herself as a Halfling. Such a law would be very difficult to enforce, given that many Gnomes could easily slip away to the surface if they really wanted to do so. But it is against the law for a Gnome to reveal to any surface dweller, either intentionally or unintentionally, that he or she is a Gnome falsely pretending to be a Halfling. Therefore, any Gnome even considering going to the surface is strongly encouraged to pass the eight month course offered by the College of Shadows.

Besides teaching Gnomes how to pass as Halflings, the College also reminds students of all the laws regulating their behavior while on the Surface. The Guild is also responsible for monitoring the actions of Gnomes who visit the surface, and has powerful magical tools to help them do so. They will arrest Gnomes who reveal to surface dwellers that they are really Gnomes in disguise, or who commit crimes such as unauthorized killing or stealing while disguised as a Halfling. They also try to rescue Gnomes who are captured or imprisoned by surface dwellers. Gnomes arrested by the Guild are tried by the Ecclesiastical Courts run by the Ministry of Currindor's Law. The only Gnomes who are legally allowed to commit thefts or assassinations while disguised as a Halfling are those which have received proper authorization from a legitimate Gnomish Authority.

Gnomes must understand that while they have the right to visit the surface and infiltrate its societies, they also have responsibilities. Gnomes who visit the surface must not do anything that makes it harder for other Gnomes to become Gnomish infiltrators. They must not reveal to surface dwellers that Gnomes disguise themselves as Halflings. They must not commit crimes while disguised as Halflings that could turn surface dwellers against Gnomes, unless they have the proper authorization to do so. They must be careful not to spread diseases like the Plague to other Gnomes. If they agree to gather information for the scholars of the Sunlit Shadows of Knowledge, they must be careful to gather and report accurate information. They must help other Gnomish infiltrators whenever possible.

History: Long ago, the first Gnomes to visit the surface discovered that they could 'pass' as Halflings. The Dracolich instantly recognized that this was a valuable ability that should be

preserved and developed. She knew that if the Halflings became too paranoid about the possibility of Gnomish infiltrators, it would become much harder for Gnomes to adopt this disguise. She made it illegal for any Gnome to reveal that some Gnomes disguised themselves as Halflings, but she knew the secret would eventually leak out anyway. She also knew that some Gnomes would be tempted by the anonymity provided by disguising themselves as Halflings, and might decide to commit serious crimes while disguised. If a surface race discovered that Gnomes disguised as Halflings were killing them or stealing from them, there would be powerful efforts made to detect all Gnomish infiltrators.

So the Dracolich also passed strict laws that forbade any Gnome from harming surface dwellers unless they had proper authorization to do so. The ability of Gnomes to infiltrate Halfling society was just too important an ability to allow a few Gnomes to damage it for their own personal amusement or profit.

Having made the Surface Laws, the Dracolich needed to create an organization to enforce them. This was the beginning of the Sunlit Shadows of Law. At first, it was not too hard for a Gnome to successfully disguise themselves. But as the two races and their cultures matured over the centuries, Gnomes found they needed more and more training and preparation to deceive the Halflings. The training provided by the Guild became steadily more elaborate, until eventually The College of the Shadows was established.

As more Gnomes decided to visit the surface, the Guild began to acquire secret safe houses in some Halfling cities for their use. Over the centuries, these secret facilities gradually became more elaborate. The need to cut off contact with the surface during the Plague disrupted some of this infrastructure, but the Guild is currently in the process of restoring its network of surface assets.

About a century after the formation of the College, the function of the Shadows was expanded to include the gathering of information about a wide variety of subjects. At first, subjects of critical interest were investigated by permanent employees of the Guild. But it was soon found that many students who did well at the College could easily gather less critical knowledge during their visits to the surface. They were offered the opportunity to make additional money from their visits to the surface by investigating certain matters that surface dwellers did not consider secret, and then detailing their findings for use by Gnomish scholars. This was how an offshoot of the organization known as the Sunlit Shadows of Knowledge began. After the split between Nether and Aether Gnomes, the Sunlit Shadows of Knowledge were also split into two groups, but the leadership of the Nether and Aether Shadows of Knowledge still cooperate with one another.

The Plague forced the Gnomes to temporarily halt all contact with the surface world, which naturally disrupted Guild operations, until the Plague began to recede. At present, significantly fewer Gnomes wish to visit the surface than did before the Plague. But as fears of the Plague decrease, the numbers of Gnomes interested in visiting the surface is once again increasing, so the Guild has begun reestablishing itself.

Symbol: A picture of a Halfling standing and casting a shadow. The arms and head of the shadow are positioned slightly differently from those of the Halfling. Gnomes are also taught a secret sign language by which they can be identified to other Gnomes, even while disguised as a Halfling. This language is never shared with others.

Goals and Motivation: In Gnomish culture, the surface has a reputation for being a strange, mysterious place filled with weird foreign races. The idea of visiting the surface is attractive to those Gnomes looking for excitement or adventure. Many of the Guild's

permanent employees believe the surface cultures are potentially very dangerous to Gnomes, and see themselves as the Gnomish race's first line of defense against the surface dwellers. This view has become more prevalent within the Guild since the Plague. Many of the Sunlit Shadows of Law, in particular, worry that irresponsible Gnomish infiltrators could someday start a war between the surface dwellers and the Gnomes.

Other members of the Guild see the surface primarily in terms of profit, both of an intellectual and monetary nature. In the past, some Gnomes have learned valuable spells and other occult secrets from the surface dwellers. The leaders include:

College of Shadows: Chancellor Ascandor Infiltrator Slippery Serpent, H.E.S, (Male Nether Gnome, Illusionist 13/ Infiltrator 5/ Cleric of Currindor's Law 2, Lawful Good)

Lord of the Sunlit Shadows of Law: Salandra Spy Anonymous H.E.S., (Female Nether Gnome, Rogue 6/Assassin 5/Infiltrator 7, Lawful Evil)

Lord of the Sunlit Shadows of Persuasion: Kallina Cleric Dragon's Faith, M.S.S., (Female Aether Gnome, Cleric of Currindor's Trickery 9/ Infiltrator 6, Lawful Neutral)

Nether Lord of the Sunlit Shadows of Knowledge: Mikkasil Scholar Truth Seeker, S.S.S, (Male Nether Gnome, Illusionist 9/Loremaster 4/Infiltrator 4, Neutral)

Aether Lord of the Sunlit Shadows of Knowledge: Rolindi Trickster Skyspy, Scholar of Shadow, S.S.S. (Female Aether Gnome, Illusionist 8/ Infiltrator 8, Lawful Good)

In order to join the Guild, a Gnome must pass the eight month training course offered by the College of Shadows, and become a Basic Shadow (B.S). Some Guild members advance past the Basic level to higher levels of accreditation: Journeyman Shadow (J.S.) requires that the Gnome has successfully visited the surface at least once, and passed additional courses at the college. Intermediate Shadow (I.S.), Advanced Shadow (A.S.), Expert Shadow (E.S.), Master of Sunlit Shadows, (M.S.S), Scholar of Sunlit Shadows (S.S.S.) and Honored Embodiment of Shadow (H.E.S) all require successful visits to the surface of a specific nature and further studies.

Reaching each of the Eight levels requires a Gnome to demonstrate to those of a higher level that they possess an increasing degree of knowledge regarding the surface world, and an increasing degree of skill in successfully infiltrating and manipulating surface societies. The Dracolich is known within the group as the Eternal Embodiment of Shadow, and personally interviews any candidate for entry into the ranks of the two highest levels: the Scholars of Sunlit Shadows, and Honored Embodiments of Shadow.

Allies and Enemies: The worst enemies the Guild has are other Gnomes who, for whatever reason, either commit really serious crimes on the surface or who try to expose Gnome infiltrators. Some Gnomish worshipers of War and Death have occasionally attempted to commit both of these two types of crimes.

The Shadow Guild also opposes any surface group that is hostile towards Gnomes, or seeks to steal Gnomish secrets. They secretly oppose any group that is unreasonably hostile towards Halflings. Since the Guild is made up of Gnomes disguised as Halflings, any nation or group that discriminates against Halflings can easily cause problems for the Guild as well. The members of the Guild share the common Gnomish fascination with magic, and therefore tend to sympathize with surface groups that wish to advance the arcane sciences, unless of course they intend to accomplish this worthy goal by stealing Gnomish secrets. They also

approve of surface dwellers that have the good sense, as they see it, to worship a god of Magic, as opposed to a god of Travel, Nature, War, or Death.

The Sisters of Pleasure

"You can have anything you want... for a price." – 'Mother' Terbon McTly

Location: Found in every major Human city, and some others.

Demographics: Primarily made up of attractive Commoner females, there are also quite a few NPC's who work in the background keeping the Sisters in business. The general distribution of classes, for both local chapters and the group as a whole, is shown below:

- 75% 0 lvl Commoner females, mixed races, Cha 14+
- 8% 1 lvl Fighters (bouncers, double as male prostitutes as needed)
- 2% 3 lvl Fighters (guards and lookouts)
- 5% 3 lvl Rogues (spies, females, mixed races, Cha 17+)
- 5% 5 lvl Rogues (spies, females, mixed races, Cha 17+)
- 1% 5 lvl Wizards (tactical and mission support)
- 2% 5 lvl Clerics (Remove Disease, anyone?)
- 2% 10+ lvl Rogues (local leaders, mixed races, Cha 18+)

Year Founded: The Sisters of Pleasure first appeared approximately 20 years ago.

Size: Uncertain, some local units have a few dozen members, some have hundreds.

General Description: Known as harlots, prostitutes, and unclean women, the Sisters of Pleasure have bases of operation in every major human city. Even the most tired traveler gets a small smile when he sees the Sign of the Sisters: a man and a woman intertwined in passion on a black background. While the rank and file of the membership caters to more carnal desires, the organization also makes money by trading in secrets and intrigue.

History: "Mother McTly" (she has never revealed her actual name) was born in the Baran city of Sharbai and had a rough life. Sold into slavery at a young age and "pressed" into service, she eventually became the favored treat of a young prince. She convinced him to "acquire" a considerable amount of wealth and run away with her. Unfortunately for the prince, he soon found out that he was expendable.

Symbol: A man and a woman intertwined in passion on a black background.

Goals and Motivations: The overall goal of the Sisters is to infiltrate all the major noble houses of the world. They then use positions of trust to learn useful information, which is then sold to the highest bidder. Officially, the Sisters of Pleasure deny that this is the case.

In addition to espionage, they are also rumored to specialize in assassination. Although few would agree to use a dagger, there are other ways that are less noticeable. As most of their working women have diseases in various ways, it is not uncommon for them to attempt to pass a disease as a stealthy way to kill a person. Sometimes even worse than killing the person is killing the reputation, so another source of income comes from blackmail.

Important NPC's:

Mother Terbon McTly - Human – NE Bard 10

Str: 12 Dex: 14 Con: 12 Wis: 16 Int: 17 Cha: 20

Although she admits that her current position is somewhat hypocritical, she does not let that get in the way of her quest for coin.

Bad Bart - Human NE - Fighter 10
Str: 19 Dex: 12 Con: 16 Wis: 10 Int: 13 Cha: 11

Bad Bart was one of the bouncers at Mother McTly's original place of employment and he helped her escape with the young prince. Of course, he also helped her escape "from" the young prince. Since then he has been her most loyal servant. It has been rumored that the two are lovers, however, whoever spreads the rumor has a tendency to end up missing.

Typical tactics for local organizations:

They begin by purchasing one large building in a run down portion of town and open a house of pleasure. They soon begin acquiring 'talented' women either by purchasing them, taking them from orphanages, and of course hiring them. This initial investment comes from the head group. Each individual organization keeps in constant communication with the head group so they can maximize the usefulness of their information.

Once a presence is established they will attempt to gain influence in the noble houses, usually from 'special' arrangements with the nobles. They need to do this quickly in order to ward off any attempts from religious groups to drive them out of town.

Plot hooks for PCs:

Quests:

1. This person stole my [whatever], please retrieve it for me.
2. This person is beating up my women. Please take care of them for me.

Double-cross:

1. They stop for a night of pleasure only to get magical items stolen from them.
2. While in a drunken stupor they let slip their masterful plan to sneak into a local mages tower and steal treasure.

Exotic:

1. Six months after returning to the same house of pleasure one of the PCs learns that the woman he had is now pregnant.
2. One of the party members is attacked by a jealous boyfriend after doing the deed, who he must now defeat naked and weaponless.

The Slaves of Telus

Author: Wunderhund

"Legends speak of a great guardian, fashioned in a long-forgotten age by Teon, god of war, to forever protect a sea-nymph he loved. Leaving her on her island with the giant automaton, Teon went off to war for many years. But he had instructed his creation poorly, and it prevented the nymph from ever returning to the sea. When Teon returned, many years later, he discovered to his grief that the nymph had wasted away and died. Broken-hearted, he returned to the home of the gods, never to return - but he gave no thought to the guardian, which some say still paces round and round the island, doomed to guard it till the end of the world." -Phoedran storyteller

Location: The Isle of Etecre, a small island off the Phoedran coast not far from Cardith.

Demographics: The cult is made up of islanders who survived the Plague, and a band of Plaguetouched who have set themselves up as the "Prophets of Telus" and rule the others.

Beliefs: The cultists believe an ancient prophesy that Telus has watched over and guarded the island since the dawn of time, only awakening in times of dire need. When the Plague arrived, it came to life once more to protect the inhabitants of the island. The "Prophets of Telus" (the Plaguetouched) are believed by the cultists to have died of the Plague and been resurrected by Telus to serve as his priests. The cult is not inherently evil, but they believe that the only way to prevent the Plague from returning to their island is to prevent anyone from landing on it. They also believe that if the outside world thinks the island has been abandoned, no one would return there. Anyone who does succeed in landing must be given to Telus, to prove to him that the cultists are obeying his will and defending the island.

Size: 5-25 Plaguetouched Fighter/Monk "Prophets of Telus"; around 200 low-level NPC class or Commoner "Slaves of Telus"

General Description: Known in happier times as a welcoming seaport and a source of excellent dyes, Etecre now appears to be uninhabited. Since the onset of the Plague its population has all but disappeared. Sailors putting into the island's main harbor for water and supplies have reported that the town seems deserted. It was assumed that the entire population was either killed by the Plague or fled to the mainland.

Recently, however, treasure-hunters and scavengers have begun returning to the island to pick through the ruins. Many have not returned, and derelict ships have been reported adrift in the vicinity of the island. Just a few days ago, a ragged vessel arrived in Cardith with hardly a crewman aboard. They reported encountering a bizarre cult on the island.

According to their account, 200 or so survivors are still on the island. However, they have come under the sway of a band of Plaguetouched who have set themselves up as the de facto rulers of the island. They worship a being they call Telus, which the sailors claim is a giant bronze statue that has been given some kind of unholy life. They say it patrols the shores of the island, attacking any who attempt to enter or leave. These sailors claim they waited until it was patrolling on the far side of the island before landing to investigate, whereupon they encountered the cult. They were quickly overpowered by the numerous cultists and tied up on the beach as offerings to Telus. Thanks to a concealed knife, one of the sailors managed to get free of his bonds and released a few others before the bronze giant arrived and slaughtered the rest of the crew.

Alignment: Neutral. Although they have taken things to extremes, the cultists believe they are rational people doing the only rational thing they can in the face of an apparent apocalypse.

Rituals/Observances: Captives are immediately taken before the "Prophets".

Symbols: Crude bronze dolls and statues, made by melting down bronze tools and temple decorations. They are supposedly meant to represent Telus and are worshipped daily.

Tactics: Although the island appears deserted, it is regularly patrolled by groups of cultists looking for intruders. These will typically include one or two "Prophets of Telus" who are 6-7th level Plaguetouched Fighters or Monks. Additionally, there will be anywhere from 10 to 30 "Slaves of Telus" who are low-level fighters or commoners armed with simple weapons

(adjust their level as needed to suit the party). These bands will attempt to capture the party alive (or coerce them to come willingly) so that they may be brought to the cult leaders located in a desecrated temple of the Phoedran war-god Teon. There the "Prophets" will pass judgment on them, which is invariably that they must be sacrificed.

At this point the cultists will attempt to overwhelm the party, tie them up, and leave them on the beach to be found by Telus, who patrols relentlessly around the island. Telus himself turns out to be a Bronze Golem whose instructions were to prevent anyone from entering or leaving the island. Usually everyone tries to run back to their ships, so he kills them. All someone has to do to avoid this is stay where they are when Telus walks by. He will only attack people if he sees them running toward a boat or getting out of one. (Or perhaps entering or leaving the surf, DM's option)

If the party manages to figure this out, the cultists become friendlier, believing Telus has spared them for some higher purpose. If the party manages to kill Telus, the cultists' faith is shattered and they beg the party to protect them from the return of the Plague.

Further investigation will lead them to the abandoned tower of Mencilides, formerly the island's greatest wizard. His diary reveals the truth: in the earliest days of the Plague, Mencilides decided that the island could be protected from it by a quarantine. So he created the Bronze Golem, modeling it after a local legend, to prevent anyone from coming or going. Unfortunately he was mistaken and the Plague arrived anyway, killing many of the island's inhabitants, including Mencilides himself. The party may be able to use this diary to convince the cultists of the truth.

At the DM's option, the diary may also contain instructions for altering the golem's "programming" or destroying it altogether. Mencilides' tower would also be a good place for the party to find magical items and/or information pertinent to an ongoing campaign.

Possible Adventure Hooks: The party could be hired by a merchant who tells them that the island is abandoned and that its treasures will be easy pickings. Or, the captain of a ship who has lost most of his crew on the island could hire the adventurers to return there with him to try to rescue them. Or, the island could be rumored to be the location of a powerful magical item, treasure, or person the party is looking for.

The Stehngaard (Knights of the Honor Guard)

Author: General Leitmann (*modified from the original to fit Tears of Blood*)

This knightly order of Kvrin began as the defenders of a remote outpost known as Ouran Keep, nestled high in the Kvrinzemya Mountains. It is the elite of the garrison's bravest and boldest knights. The current Order has only seven members, led by the Stehmarshal Marius Vannov. They gained stature after a Humanoid invasion of Sohnumburg Dale, the province in which Ouran Keep is located. The Keep sent all its warriors except for ten who were to act as the Keep's guard and only security. While the Kvrin force went to the border to meet the hordes, a flanking force of Humanoids attacked Ouran Keep directly. The ten warriors fought fiercely and used their knowledge of the area to their advantage. Of some 250 invaders, only a dozen remained alive at the end of the day with only three casualties among the ten Kvrin guards. The Kvrin Archduke Viktor Greathern IV commended them on their efforts, knighted each, and presented each with his own garrison and village in the area of the Keep. These villages grew and eventually merged to form a single settlement that was recognized by Archduke Greathern as its own autonomous zone.

The Knights were invited by Archduke Greathern to become his personal guard, but they all refused this invitation. Instead, the Knights agreed to become the Archduke's word and his arm. They perform his will as he commands it, frequently taking on suicidal missions of rescuing besieged outposts and protecting ancient sites.

As is tradition, each of the Knights selects an heir to replace them after they die in battle, or when they become too frail to continue the fight. The heir is selected after a tournament of all the prospective heirs, organized by the respective Knight.

Unlike most orders, they have no oath to swear but to their liege. As for religion, each member is entitled to his own deity.

Symbol: A sword facing upwards surrounded by a set of laurels.

Ranks: The leader is called the Stehnmarschal, everyone else is a Knight Errant.

Origin of name: The name means 'Honor Guard' in an ancient Kvrin language that the Archduke had learned. The name was chosen for the ten soldiers of the garrison who had shown the greatest mental and physical prowess. By royal decree it became their title.

Allies: They assist any lord who is fighting an invasion. They have no quarrels with any other order near them, and they know little or nothing about other orders in farther lands.

Enemies: Being spiritual and religious knights, they battle oppression in all its forms.

Class types: The Knights themselves are Paladins, but the Stehnmarschal is a fighter, as he doesn't devote himself to a single deity, and follows the lawful orders of the Archduke. His knights know his word as law.

Goals: To protect the Kvrin lands by force if necessary, to die for their liege, and to serve until that death.

Terdusas Adventurer's Guild (TAG)

Author: Citizen Joe

Location: All major Feldarin cities, most other major cities near Feldarin lands.

Demographics: Adventurers make up the majority of TAG. There is no typical member.

Year Founded: Approximately five years ago.

Size: The TAG has swelled over the past five years to hundreds of members.

General Description: This Guild was formed by the Feldarin government after open conflicts started breaking out as the Plague subsided.

History: Due to the Plague, much of the militia has disbanded, leaving many adventuring men and women no trade skills or jobs. Not wanting armed banditry in addition to open revolt, the Feldarin created this Guild as a means to keep tabs on and train adventurers and other persons of interest.

Most other guilds think derisively of TAG. Some say it's just a collection of human refuse

and losers. Others believe it to be some sort of spy system for the Feldarin. Some keep a close eye on it, ready to poach potential members for their own guild or organization if someone proves themselves worthy.

Most of the Feldarin lands know of TAG and some small hamlets use its members as a makeshift constabulary. However, most people view its members as a mixed blessing. Adventurers have a tendency to attract trouble, but if they remain in good standing with the Feldarin, and tend to stay on task, they are accepted by most as productive members of society.

In order to maintain liquidity of Feldarin gold, TAG uses a scrip/credit system for their members. In place of hard currency, TAG offices reward members with credit or scrip which can be exchanged for other TAG services such as food and lodging, spells, healing, and minor magic (typically healing scrolls and potions). Some shops are also TAG authorized and accept the scrip. On the one hand, credit is hard to steal, on the other it only has value so long as the organization is strong, giving members a vested reason to keep it so. Eventually, some members retire out of TAG and they may cash out at the rate of 1 gold per 2 credits, and only after a two week audit to verify the credit balance.

Services include food and lodging, free nightly entertainment, and dance and social etiquette lessons (or ANYTHING to keep them away from the general populace). Other services include limited scribe work and translation (suitable for sending and receiving letters). Larger towns and cities offer concierge and pawn services (TAG gets right of first refusal). Foreign currency exchange is done with no fee when converting to credits or scrip and at a good rate when converting to local currency (although the quantity could be limited). Large scale money transfers are normally done with letters of credit.

TAG also tries to foster a benevolent attitude towards different cultures and races. Although this is mostly just a facade with deep resentment still running deep, members accept that understanding and acceptance is the grease that allows the system to work. Open hostility is rare and generally handled in tribunals or quiet disappearances when out on the frontier. Troublemakers are rarely missed.

Symbol: An outline of the continent with the capital letters TAG across it with a crossed spear and sword behind.

Goals and Motivations: Publicly, the goals are to better the lives of those with adventuring backgrounds by providing supplies, training, and employment. The Feldarin Empire also uses the Guild to keep those busy who might otherwise want to join the rebellions against the Empire.

Leaders: TAG is under the control of a branch of the Feldarin government, and as such its leadership is subject to frequent change.

The Timeless Fellowship

Author: Fire_Wolf

"In the afternoon strangers came to me at the eastern-most site. There were only a few of them, backs red under the sun, and nearly dead from thirst and starvation. Though only fools cross the desert unsupplied, I took them into my tent and gave them my aid. But though they seemed weak, suddenly one of them, looked like he'd seen a devil, leaped up and forced me away from the others! He told me to leave the ancient Pyramids, which I

have studied for over twenty years! But by the Sages, that man's face was all the persuasion I needed. I shall be on my camel tonight, that's for sure."

- from the recovered diary of Abadum Shayamburu, Baran scholar.

Location: The two eastern-most Haunted Pyramids in the depths of al-Barajah, and the lesser tombs around them.

Demographics/Size: Jafid and 8 surviving soldiers.

Beliefs: It has long been the thankless task of many to watch the burning desert. Across al-Barajah, watch towers are home to those who are charged with observing the movements of monsters, barbarians, and other evils of the desert. In a land where the air is too hot to breathe, where the sun has no mercy, alone, near-forgotten, and exhausted, many go mad.

At one such watchtower, a supply-man by the name of Jafid came to bring the young men their weekly rations. Little did he know he had brought them more. When Jafid next returned to that tower, he found many of the men suffering from pains and fevers. He sent up a distress flare, and the men of the nearest tower came to give medical aid, but once Jafid realized that this was the Plague he had seen back in the cities, he fled in fear.

As he crossed the sands, Jafid slowly succumbed to the Weeping, but rather than die, strange mutations helped him to survive. He went mad from the sun and sickness, losing his path. On the verge of maddened suicide, however, he was visited by a devil: "In the deepest desert lie the burial grounds of an ancient folk," it told him. "Gather your people and take them there, and time cannot hurt them."

Jafid did what he had been told, telling the dying soldiers that only he could save them, and dragging the rest along. In the end, only a few survived the harsh journey, but true to the devil's word, they found hundreds of Haunted Pyramids stretching for miles. Resting amongst the undead each night, protected by the devil's evil, they stopped the ravages of the Plague in its tracks, but have sacrificed their sanity.

The Fellowship believes that the devil Jafid encountered was a messenger from the Wise Sages (gods), and Jafid to be a prophet. As the Pyramids stop the effects of sickness, starvation, and slow death, they believe they are the immortal chosen of the Sages.

Alignment: Chaotic (Neutral). Though all once good men, the soldiers are mad through the hardships they faced, and have descended into savagery and selfishness. Jafid is Chaotic (Evil) due the effects of madness and his encounter with a devil.

Rituals/Observances: None in common use, although the soldiers will sometimes give unholy prayers to the desecrated icons of their old faith, or to the strange animal gods of the ancient civilization whose death-homes they inhabit.

Symbols: None, although Jafid always wears a strange amulet on a chain around his neck.

Tactics: Although Jafid and his followers are all weak opponents (level 5 commoner and level 4 warriors, respectively), they have found ways to command the mummies and skeletons in the tombs to fight for them. The undead will return to normal if Jafid is killed.

Possible Adventure Hooks: A Baran lord has sent scholars to examine the Pyramids, but none have ever returned. The abandoned watchtowers show signs of some blasphemous

beliefs. Mummies and skeletons have been seen wandering in the desert far from their normal resting places. He hires the party to investigate.

The Weeping Lily

Author: Maerok

[**Editor's Note:** this organization's description includes firearms. If your campaign does not use firearms you will need to make some changes]

"From the shores of your small coastal village, you look out onto the open ocean in awe of its majestic blue expanse. The waves crash by your feet, erasing the footprints you left behind seconds earlier. Suddenly, there is an explosion and the healer's shack erupts into flames and shards of wood. Three more blasts ring out, followed by screams and smaller explosions. From the mountainous peninsula to the south emerges a huge ship. It is a wooden monstrosity; its sides painted red with the blood of its victims. From its mast hangs a skull and cross bones flag, with crimson tears pouring from its red eye-sockets. A horrific wail radiates from the terrible machine, and you run from the ruins of your village..."

-The Legend of the Weeping Lily

The HMS Lily was at one time the flagship of a great Halfling fleet that pirated the eastern coast of the continent. They were rarely heard of, as survivors of their attacks were few. After the onset of the Plague, the fleet split into several smaller groups and set off to different parts of the continent, with plans to meet again in a few months.

When the time came to regroup, only half the ships had survived. Of those, three-quarters had crews who'd been partially or completely infected by the Weeping Plague. But this was realized too late, as the captains had already boarded the Lily. The crew of the Lily fought valiantly, destroying the remaining ships of the fleet and throwing the Plaguetoached intruders overboard to a watery grave.

The Lily wasn't without losses. Many of the crewmembers had been contaminated during or after the fight. Without proper aid or knowledge of who could be trusted, the crew soon met the same fate as the others. Thus the "Weeping Lily" was born. From that battlefield on the high seas, they set off to continue their lives of pillaging and adventure. But the crew no longer lasted as long as they once did, and replacements would be needed. So the Weeping Lily began to take captives, infecting them with the Plague and locking them away in the lower decks to row the ship. Their laments can be heard as the ship approaches, causing fear and tactical advantages. Those that come willingly are given higher roles among the crew, which has become mixed with those of other races.

The Weeping Lily's captain is Redark Volshen. He is a fierce commander and combatant, despite his height as a Halfling. His crew is completely loyal to the rather insane pirate leader. His insanity hasn't handicapped his abilities as a captain, but instead has made him all the more deadlier. (Chaotic Evil Plaguetoached Halfling, Rogue 8 [scale Rogue level to fit party levels]/Dread Pirate 10)

Stats

The crew of the ship is usually melee combatants. The chance of a spellcaster is rare, but possible. This chance increases with each rank. Multiclassing is very rare as well, it is preferred to take a Prestige Class. With the exception of Officers, the other ranks tend to lack specific character builds.

Crew: The crew consists of Slaves, Guards, Soldiers, Officers, and the Captain.

Slaves: The typical slave of the Weeping Lily is level 1d8, as a Commoner, Expert, or Aristocrat. They row the Weeping Lily from the lower decks and provide the sorrowful wail that incapacitates many of the ship's victims. A very small number are casters, but hide it from the crew. They are leading a rebellion among the slaves seeking to escape.

Guards: This rank of the crew keeps an eye on the slaves to make sure that the work is carried out. The typical guard is level 3d4, as a Fighter, Warrior, Ranger, Swashbuckler or Rogue. Prestige Classes are rare but may include Duelist and Dread Pirate, and even Assassin. Around 5% have spellcasting ability of some type.

Soldiers: Soldiers are the crew who actually get to plunder and pillage, or pillage and plunder. They are organized into teams of 3d3 under the control of an Officer. 5d5 of these teams are sent out, on average, per assault. More or less may be needed to suit the size of the target. Their average level is 4d4, with levels in Fighter, Rogue, Ranger, and Swashbuckler. Prestige Classes are rather common, at about 50% of the Soldiers when possible. Prestige Classes are the same as ones that a Guard might take. Around 10% have spellcasting ability of some type.

Officers: Officers maintain most of the ship's discipline, controlling nearly every aspect of life on the ship. They lead raiding parties of Soldiers, scout for future targets, solve basic problems among crew, and serve as the Captain's bodyguards. Officers are trusted with important matters. An Officer is usually level 6d3, and usually gains a Prestige Class when able to.

Captain: Captain Redark commands the Weeping Lily.

The Weeping Lily is home to about 150 to 200 crew. It is 440 feet in length. Every 40 feet across each midside are nine cannons. The ship can fire 3 of its cannons in a single volley, and it takes 1d3 rounds to refill and prime a cannon. The tactic is to fire every third cannon in succession, never leaving all the cannons empty in any given round. However, if it would mean certain victory or the ship's defeat is possible, the firing sequence quickly loses its pace and becomes a fire-at-will tactic. Any survivors or captives are taken hostage and forced onto the ship by the Soldiers. The statistics for the cannon are:

BAB +12, 120' range (-1 for every 10' after 60'), 6d6 damage in a 10' radius, 18-20/x4

The cannon can attack a target on land or water, such as a specific building or a Large or larger creature, or another ship.

The Wives of Caerwyn

Author: Wunderhund

"Gethin, ye say? Aye, I know where it lies - but why would ye seek that cursed place? 'Twas all but destroyed in the Plague, so they say, all but Caerwyn and his witches. Cross the river and follow the old road north to find them if ye must - but I'll speak of it no more."

Location: The Caltan village of Gethin, located in a remote range of foothills on the south slopes of the Kvrinzemyan Mountains. The area is moderately forested.

Demographics: The mad sorcerer Caerwyn, his "wives," and "daughters."

Beliefs: Caerwyn is regarded as the absolute leader of the town. Many of the "wives" willingly follow him and will willingly give their lives to protect him. Those few women (generally captured outsiders) who refuse to participate in the cult are kept in captivity in very harsh conditions until they relent.

Size: About 40 "wives" (women and girls); a handful of very young boys, sons of Caerwyn who have not yet been driven off or killed; and Caerwyn himself. See **Tactics** below for full descriptions of those who may become combatants.

Alignment: Chaotic (Evil). The cult is focused solely on the whims of Caerwyn, who is insane and focused only on building his own bizarre domain.

Rituals/Observances: Located in an isolated corner of the Old Caltan lands is the town of Gethin. Nestled in foothills said to contain the barrows of long-dead kings, it was for many centuries an unremarkable hamlet visited by few outsiders. Shortly before the Plague arrived in Gethin, a youth named Caerwyn began to display strange powers. Frightened, the townsfolk drove him from the town. Afraid to approach outsiders for help, he wandered the hills and forests around Gethin, alone, and what befell him during this time is unknown.

During his exile, the Plague arrived in Gethin and took a grievous toll on the villagers. When the Plague finally waned, the decimated survivors were startled to see Caerwyn return to the village. Having grown into a healthy and charismatic young man, he startled the townsfolk with demonstrations of his mighty powers. He claimed that he was "Beloved of the Five Gods," and that the town had suffered so badly in the Plague due of their treatment of him. Only if the remaining few worshipped and obeyed him would they be spared. Desperate for hope and in awe of his powers, they succumbed to his overpowering charm.

Gradually Caerwyn began to eliminate the remaining men, accusing them of "Heresies" and either driving them away or murdering them in displays of power. In time, only the women of Gethin remained, transformed into a slavish harem dedicated unquestioningly to his will. When Plague refugees from other areas arrived in Gethin seeking new homes, the men and boys would be killed and the women and girls forced to join Caerwyn's nightmarish cult. A couple of years ago, an adventurer who stumbled unknowingly into the town managed to return alive and tell this tale to the locals of nearby villages before leaving the area, never to return. Since that time, none have dared approach Gethin, and it is considered ill luck locally to even speak of it.

Symbols: Unknown, although rumor has it that the town is adorned with bizarre phallic banners and carvings created by the "wives."

Tactics: Caerwyn himself is a powerful (and insane) 13th-level sorcerer. If threatened, he will order his "wives" to attack en masse and has no compunctions about sacrificing them. While the opponents are engaged in melee with the "wives," Caerwyn will make full use of his sorcery to attempt to kill the intruders. There are also a few young girls (presumably his daughters) who seem to have inherited his natural talent for magic. They will attempt to kill any men in the party and capture any women so that they may be forced to join the cult.

Caerwyn:

- Male human Sor13: CR 13; Size M (6 ft., 0 in. tall); HD 13d4+39; hp 67; Init -1 (-1

Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Attack +7/+2 melee, or +5/+0 ranged; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +8; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 20.

- Languages: Feldarin, Caltan, Common
- Skill points: Sor 90
- Skills and feats: Craft - Alchemy +15, Craft - Traps +15, Knowledge (Arcana) +16, Profession - Courtesan +14, Scry +19, Spellcraft +17, Stealth -1; Combat Casting, Leadership, Scribe scroll, Skill focus (Alchemy), Skill focus (Knowledge (Arcana)).
- Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/7/4) 0th: Dancing Lights, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic. 1st: Chill Touch, Mage Armor, Shield, Silent Image, Spider Climb. 2nd: Bull's Strength, Invisibility, Mirror Image, See Invisibility, Web. 3rd: Fly, Lightning Bolt, Magic Circle vs. Good, Slow. 4th: Charm Monster, Improved Invisibility, Lesser Geas, Solid Fog. 5th: Hold Monster, Teleport, Wall of Iron. 6th: Acid Fog, Chain Lightning.

Daughters of Caerwyn (2d4):

- Female human Sor5: CR 5; Size M (4 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 5d4+10; hp 28; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +3 melee, or +3 ranged; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; AL CE; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 18.
- Languages: Caltan, Common
- Skill points: Sor 24
- Skills and feats: Craft - Alchemy +5, Perception +2, Profession - Cook +5, Scry +6, Spellcraft +5, Stealth +5; Great Fortitude, Improved Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus (Stealth).
- Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/5) 0th: Dancing Lights, Detect Magic, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Ray of Frost. 1st: Charm Person, Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Sleep. 2nd: Acid Arrow, Protection from Arrows.

Wives of Caerwyn (2d20):

- Female human Com2: CR 1; Size M (4 ft., 11 in. tall); HD 2d4+4; hp 10; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +2 melee, or +2 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL CE; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.
- Languages Spoken: Caltan, Common
- Skill points: Com 15
- Skills and feats: Handle animal +4, Perception +2, Stealth +5 Use rope +5, Survival +2; Simple weapon proficiency (staff), Skill Focus - Stealth

Possible Adventure Hooks:

- The party has heard about the ancient barrows in the hills around Gethin, and that there may be ancient treasure, including magical weapons, in them. They discover to their dismay that the barrows are guarded by Wights, and supposedly only Caerwyn knows how to placate them.
- Someone in a neighboring village hires the party to rescue a loved one (wife, daughter) who has been kidnapped by the Cult.



JOIN THE FELDARIN ARMY

First fifty get this swanky hat!