



Seven Kingdoms

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Book Three of the Lost Books of Talislanta

PREFACE

ORIGINS



Early Political Origins

Each of the Kingdoms in the Seven Kingdoms have interesting stories that bring them up to where they are today, before the founding of the "Alliance of the Kingdoms." After the groups had moved into the land they now occupy:

Cymril

Cymril was founded by triplets. Three young wizards born during the night when Phandir was at its fullest grew more powerful than anyone before or even since. The triplets had great powers of sight, and saw a land where they and their people could live in relative peace. They were always touching, and if they thought that you needed to know something, their touch could bring you into their circle, their sight, until you had learned all that they thought you needed to know. The people feared them, but knew their power, so they never stood up to them.

The triplets brought their people to the viridian hills and told them to build a city that would make even the gods envy it. They began by building temporary places to live while they worked on getting the green crystal and glass that the triplets saw. As the buildings began growing around them, the people began to fear the triplets more and more. Soon, after the central spire was finishing completion the triplets went to the top of the tower and demanded a room to be built where they were standing. They built the room to the desires of the triplets and shortly after it was completed, they named one successor and went into the room.

It is rumored that they lie there still, watching over their people and sending messages to only the most worthy of wizards who rule over Cymril. To this day, triplets born in the month of Phandir are considered to be powerful and lucky for themselves and their families.

Kasmir

Kasmir was founded by a nomad tribe similar to the Djaffir. The stories say that they had wandered the desert after being freed from slavery; poor, starving, and dying of thirst. They had searched and searched for a land to call their own, but none could or would help them. As they wandered, their tribe grew smaller and smaller. First the eldest dying off, then the babies and nursing mothers. The people were panic stricken, knowing that they would all die if they could not find a place for them to settle and live.

Late one night in their wanderings they happened upon a ruined city in the desert. A few men went down into the deepest places searching for dried food stores and water. Hours passed, and there was talk of leaving them so that they would not bring upon them another curse. Just as they were beginning to pack their meager belongings, the scouts returned with their arms full of riches.

Soon the whole tribe gathered to hear of the wondrous things that they had found. A small group left with as much of the gold and silver that they could carry, and traveled to an outpost where water and food were being sold. With their riches, they bought enough for their people to live a few weeks, and a few pack animals to carry it back for them. The people rejoiced and celebrated their good fortune that night and went deep into the ruined city in search of more.

Each week, a different group took some money to the oasis outpost, and each week they came back with more animals, carts, and necessities. After a few months of rich and healthy living they felt ready to leave their blessed city, but only after searching for the name of it. The day that they had resigned to leave the city is when a child found a mosaic buried under some sand, and the mosaic spelt out Kasmir.

They found that the mosaic was easy to excavate and was relatively light, so they loaded it into the back of one of their wagons and traveled west in search of better land. They traveled for weeks, crossing the Dead River Chasm and finally ending in an area that reminded them of their sacred city. They had once again found a ruined city in the desert. This time however, they sealed the city closed, and built up on top of it.

Shortly after they began building, some Sindarans showed up and offered to assist them in reopening the dried wells, and in making stronger walls that what had existed here before. The Kasmirins were thrilled and paid well for the assistance. However, once the city was well underway, they decided that they were going to place the mosaic in the city, where any one walking could see it. They built a small town square and placed the mosaic in the center.

When the visiting Sindarans saw the ancient mosaic they sealed it down as they had been paid to do, then took their leave. The Kasmirans kept communication open with Sindar, and visited often to purchase more alchemicals, but not once for over 200 years did a Sindaran set foot in the new city of Kasmir.

Taz

As the Thralls found freedom, they also discovered that they needed a home. They wandered and wandered, fighting some of the fantastic beasts that roam the land in Tal and in every place they stopped, they saw people living, or the land was not something that they could live on long without assistance from other races. Fearing enslavement, they pushed on, deeper and deeper into the jungles.

They found a place that was fairly peaceful and not threatened by any other races of Man. They built cities in the flourishing jungles, using their camp skills; they created great homes and meeting lodges from the nature around them.

At first, they lived quietly. Not many knew of their existence due to the fact that not many survived a battle that was taken to them. Another reason was that they had dug themselves so deep in the thriving jungle land that no one could find them to talk to them. The land suited them perfectly, it, like them it had nothing to do with magic. The land was perfect and pure.

Slowly however, something began happening to the land they had chosen. Blight began creeping in from the North. The Thralls were helpless to stop it, but they had seen a mystical folk living in the forest land. A small platoon marched out the next dawn in search of the mystical forest dwellers to the east. They marched at a normal pace the first week, not knowing when they would meet those that they had been seeking. However the longer they looked, the longer and



harder they marched. Finally, after a long and hard march, they came upon a great sparkling lake with cold fresh water. The platoon was tired, hungry, and thirsty. They were allowed to stop and rest at the lake side, to drink, and eat fish and clean the mud and dust from their skin after the long march.

That night while they were sleeping the guard on duty saw a most interesting sight. The trees seemed to be watching him. By the time he woke his platoon up, there was a single small winged humanoid sitting on a rock just inside the clearing. She spoke to them with a commanding voice, demanding why they have visited the lake, why they were there.

The Captain stepped forward and began the story of the blight that was eating their new home away. She listened and then with a firm "Stay" she took flight and disappeared into the dark forest once more.

Two days passed, and the platoon began to get nervous sitting there with nothing to do. Finally on the third night since their arrival, she appeared to them again. The platoon sat quietly as she explained that she was sending something to help them, but they must not search for it, they just had to return to the blighted area, then leave it and go home.

The platoon marched hard to get home, never once searching, but always doubting that an invisible thing could help them. When they arrived to their land, they saw the land was even more destroyed than they expected, and one of the women in their platoon fell to her knees, and cried. Only one tear came to her cheek, and she wiped the tear off on her hand and clutched at the earth, begging for help from the forest. Her platoon mates were worried about her and they took her away to sleep it off.

The next day while another platoon was on its rounds, they noticed a small area of green land growing around a scuffed area of land. Every day the green land was larger, and the blight was smaller.

When they could no longer find any blight on the land, they sent the platoon back to thank the lady who sent the help, but she never showed up at their camp. They left gifts for her, and their kind, and returned home after a week. Since then, blight has never touched the swamps of Taz as roughly.



Vardune

The Aeriad believe that they came from a noble line of Avir long, long ago. However, there is no proof of that. They claim that the Great Disaster is the reason for their downfall. Yet, no one truly knows.

History does record that they were known as the Ardua back when they belonged to the Phaedran Empire. Life was rough for them when they were living there. They were hunted, mocked, and generally treated very poorly. Before they were as bad off as they have become, they left the Empire to find greener land and escape persecution.

Both the Blue and the Green fled together, but the infighting between the two classes was too great to hold them together much after reaching the lush forests of Vardune. The Blue took their leave and moved into the North of Vardune, while the Green began to cultivate the glades of the South. They formed Councils and chose nine elder Ministers to help guide and support them.

Every other month the Green and Blue Councils would meet somewhere in the middle to discuss what the best for the kingdom would be. They would argue and argue, never coming to grips that their working together would be needed. The Phaedran's wars became worse, and they would band together to push them away, out of their lands and back across the Axis River, but each time there were massive losses on both the Blue and Green sides. Yet, they still couldn't agree on anything.

Finally, they noticed the goings on outside of their forests and started watching the Cymrilians. They were a queer folk to the Aeriad, but they seemed to work together well, so they started communicating with them. They found that the dangerous magics that the Cymrilians preformed was of benefit to them, and decided to work with them to try and strengthen themselves against their foes to the west.

Durne

It was war. The warriors held the line so their people could flee. Injured, sick, old, and young ran. Into the dark cold mountains they fled. The line had broken. They were perused. They fled into the icy heights and bitterly cold nights to hide. After what seemed like months had passed they found shelter. A cave, dark and dank. They scrambled deep into the craggy crevice and hid.

After the first night, one of the youngest disappeared, off exploring. Some children that were near adulthood went off to rescue the lost one the next morning. Days passed with no sign of them. Then as if they knew they were missed, they returned, pockets full of glowing crystal. Fanciful tales were told about the caverns below, but most talk was of the crystal. It was magical, it helped them, it was better than anything they had seen before.

The adults scoffed, and begged to leave the cave, that there was magic, but it was wrong somehow and had tainted the children, but the elders listened to the voices of the children and they left to explore themselves. The longer they were gone, the stranger the children acted. Hiding away in darkness and talking to the crystals in hushed voices. Worry spread in the remaining few and they gathered the crystals and hid them from the children.

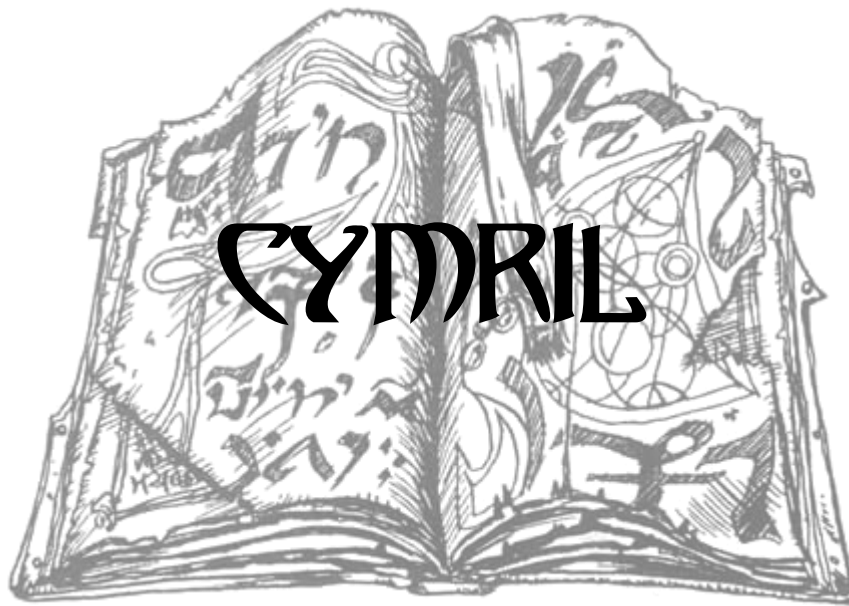
After a few weeks they discussed leaving. Mentioning that the elders would not return to them. That they were lost for good and that if they wanted to keep their lives, they should leave by noon of the next day. The plan was set, and they packed their meager belongings and went to sleep.

One child, the first to leave and the most clever decided to warn the elders that they were leaving. One fragment of crystal remained, the child spoke, the elders heard and sent one to bring their people to the light. As the sun was peaking to noon, the adults began shouldering their burdens, and ushering the children to the front of the caves.

Just as the first had stepped into the light, another sun shone behind them, illuminating the dark cave and making them stop to see what had happened. The eldest stood in the center of the light, holding a large jagged crystal. After speaking quietly, the children ran to her, and the adults shifted slowly around to watch as the eldest left with the youngest and healthiest. The light was fading as they left, and the adults turned and began to follow, trickling down into the dark, where they worked on opening up the caves to build the magnificent Underground City of Durne.■



CHAPTER I



History of Cymril

As I made it into the heart of the Seven Kingdoms, I entered the capital city of Cymril. After asking around about the origins of the city I was directed to the Library of the Lyceum Arcanum. There I found texts that stated that Cymril was founded by triplets. The stories of this great nation's origin are somewhat cloudy after that but this is what I could glean.

The Triplets, three young wizards born during the night when Phandir was at its fullest, grew more powerful than anyone before or even since. The Triplets had great powers of sight, and saw a land where they and their people could live in relative peace. The Triplets were greatly feared and respected by the people, and they had become leaders before they had reached the age of 12.

The notes are interesting here, stating a variety of miracles, and predictions that seem inconceivable at this point. One tale tells of them walking out of a meeting with the elders and surrounding the home of a small family. They sat around it meditating and chanting quietly on and off for three days without food and water. Then as abruptly as they decided on this undertaking, they left the area and returned to their own home. It was later discovered that an infant was on its deathbed, and the parents were sure that the child would die within the hour. The hour passed and became a day, on the second day there was much improvement, and by the end of the third day, the child was stronger in health than it had ever been in its short life. Interestingly enough, the child that the Triplets saved was the father of the first "King" of Cymril.

Another tale details the Triplets moving through an encampment, moving families around adjusting things, moving whole streets away from areas and relocating them to

different areas. A week after the ordered moves a terrible storm ravaged the camp, ripping up trees and cutting great swaths into the soil itself. The few people who did not heed the orders of the Triplets lost all their belongings, and even some of them lost their lives.

Most stories tell us that they were almost always seen touching. Also if they thought that you needed to know something, with a single touch they could bring you into their circle, sharing their sight. They then would break the circle when you had learned all that they thought you needed to know. It is an understatement to say that the people feared them, but the people also knew their power, so they never tried to stand up to them.

The Triplets brought their people to the viridian hills. The Triplets brought their people to safety. The Triplets also told them to build a city that would make the gods envious. At first the building began slowly, working only with temporary places to live. Meanwhile they worked on getting the green crystal and glass that the Triplets told them of. As the buildings began growing up around them, the people began to fear the Triplets even more.

The city was directed and erected piece by piece with guidance from the now middle aged Triplets. They never changed their minds about areas or heights, and as the towers were being built, the wind would blow over the open areas and sing in the night. Soon, after the central spire was erected, and they were nearing completion the Triplets went to the top of the tower. They sat there for a whole week, not speaking to anyone. When they finally accepted an audience they mapped out the city in green, and then demanded a room to be built where they were standing.

The room was built to the desires of the Triplets. Shortly before it was completed, they named one successor and went into the room. The final panels were put into place, locking them into the room. A living tomb, nothing and no one ever entering, the Triplets never leaving. It is rumored that they still lie up there, watching over their people.

Deep in the night stories are told of the Triplets sending messages to only the most worthy of wizards. Pushing them into ways to serve and rule over Cymril. To this day, any triplets born in the month of Phandir are considered to be powerful and lucky for themselves and their families.

The Capital of Cymril

Important Structures

Cymril, the Center Kingdom of the Seven Kingdoms. Its capital city is also under the same name. The city of Cymril is known as The Green City because of the large green crystal spires and green enameled buildings. Older buildings are made entirely of green crystal and glass. With the suspension of trade relations with the Farad in the year 621 due to theft, a new era of construction began.

Newer buildings in Cymril are still predominately crystal and glass creations, but now they are as myriad in color as Talislanta's moons. Gnomekin crystal-farmers from Durne have been employed in large numbers to help create crystals of surpassing strength, beauty, and color for new buildings. Not to be left behind socially, many older buildings that remain popular centers of entertainment, such as the famous tavern, the Emerald Pentacle, have had their walls and floors magically altered to bring out new color and new life to their old crystalline green walls.

Other examples of new coloration being added are the new vibrant colors of The Seven. Once solid green on the outside, The Seven now sport colors more like to their countries own colors. Some of The Seven have been so drastically changed that the wizards who worked on them have such vast workloads now they're taking in even more recruits from the Lyceum Arcanum than ever before. One aged wizard was overheard in the streets complaining about the new colors in the city, and was reportedly taken to a newer tavern by his friends.

Owing to the nature of construction in Cymril, there are laws preventing any kind of missile weapon or thrown object to be loosed in the city.

The crystal spires that are beautiful and fragile have created an elite group of Wizards that study the weather and cast magical charms to prevent any damage from coming to the towers. They are accompanied by another elite group who has studied tirelessly in the magics needed to repair the cracks from normal wear.

Lyceum Arcanum

The Lyceum Arcanum is the Seven Kingdoms most advanced magical institution. It consists of XX buildings. The central building is the Library, and around the base is a small strange building attached that is used for admissions. The other buildings are for each of the different magical studies areas. Each area hosts its own dorm levels and lab levels, including extra work and study areas in the library itself.

King's Spire

This is the spire that is in the center of Cymril where the remains of the triplets supposedly exist. It started out as the building where the King would hold court and the councils would hold their meetings and other political purposes. Its purpose has changed since the construction of The Seven. It now hosts the royal family and all highly important political figures, and the entire staff lives in the tower as well.

This one building employs the largest number of people in the whole of the Seven Kingdoms, and also is the busiest day and night. Containing 77 floors, the tower can be seen on the clearest of days from almost every capital city in the Seven Kingdoms. Of the 77 stories, only about 27 are in actual regular use. The usage pattern changes as to the needs of visiting dignitaries and the whims of the royal family.

Also, interestingly enough, each story is not uniform in size. Most floors have a ceiling height of about 8 feet, but some have ceilings 20 high and others with a miniscule height of about 5 feet. There does not seem to be any pattern to the size of each level, but the way the smaller floors are distributed it seems to make the tower itself more sturdy and steady than any other structure on the continent.

Oddly enough the tower itself has never been damaged by any type of weather or natural occurrence. Some say it is because of the Triplets still live there, but scholars believe that somehow the Triplets managed to cast powerful protection magics to help keep the building erect and damage free. There is the constant fear that the magics will one day wear off, so the royal family has the most advanced wizards in the repair and weather fields living in and monitoring the Spire daily.

In the base of the King's Spire is the Royal Garden of Cymril. The garden is a large area of beautifully shaped crystal plants and trees. The Seven is attached to the base of the Kings spire, with small covered walkways surrounding the buildings of The Seven, and the base of the King's Spire.

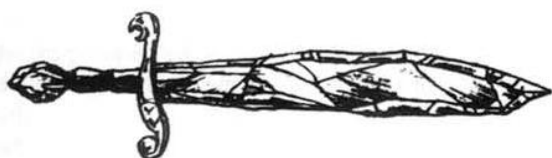
The Seven

The Seven is an interestingly shaped building. Each outside wing of the building is facing the Kingdom it represents, and is not only decorated in that kingdoms style, but seems to contain a piece of the kingdom itself. For example, the Northward wing is Durne's and upon entering, it seems as if you had entered the Subterranean City of Durne itself. Each wing of The Seven is also where each road to the kingdom to which it represents begins.

The Seven surrounds the King's Spire and the bottom floor of each building in The Seven is that Kingdom's Royal Garden. All Royal Gardens and Offices are open to the public, easily accessible to anyone at most hours of the day.

Each branch of The Seven is made of crystal colored so that it represents the Kingdom's color. For example, in the branch that represents Astar, the crystalline walls are cerulean and on the ground floor exists, the park, which has a small blue pond, and reaching trees. Each garden representing each respective Kingdom is enclosed to protect the natural temperature and general climate of it's home to provide the best growing conditions for the plants.

Above the Royal Gardens are the official offices of each Kingdom and where their permanent politicians and representatives work. Above that is the level where the before mentioned officials live. The rest of the tower is divided up into Royal apartments, conference halls, and various rooms dedicated to things each Kingdom values.



Political Ties In the Seven Kingdoms

Since the founding of the Seven Kingdoms, Cymril has been at the very heart of the politics between the other Kingdoms. When a moderator is needed, they meet in the neutral city of Cymril. When someone needs to petition the Seven Kingdoms council, they go to Cymril. The magical folk of the area are proud to be the center of attention. But not only are they the center of positive attention, they've built up some strange ideas about how things in the Seven Kingdoms should happen. Their normal attitude is made even haughtier when referencing to the ruling of conglomerate of nations. Even if the Cymrilians themselves think that they are the leaders of the Seven Kingdoms, they're tied down with bureaucracy and bound into the agreement made in the founding times of the Seven Kingdoms. Fortunately the Wizard King does hold much sway in the Council of Seven.

It has been rumored that he has even convinced them to pass things that have not gotten the mandatory 5 yes votes, settling only with a majority vote. The Wizard King has been slowly and methodically plotting to make Cymril more powerful in the grand scheme of things. On top of that he is working on making the vote to always be just a majority for any decision and also to have *minor sessions* where a vote can be called within the halls of the Co7 and after one week the vote will be taken with whoever has decided to show. The last idea is coming slow in the works but is popular with Taz and Kasmir because of the cost and difficulty the Seven Kingdoms Army has protecting dignitaries as they come in for their yearly summit.

Public Opinion

Sindar – *"The Cymrilians are an illogical people, obsessed with magic and political power. At the same time they are idealists, forward thinking, and good at managing. Sadly, they were not blessed with the power of being a dual echelon like we are. However, they are very skilled at magic and magical endeavors."*

Kasmir – *"The Cymrilians are good customers, interested in learning magic, and mostly reliable when paying back their loans. They're the number one race that participates in our yearly Windship Regatta. Beyond that, they're also very conscious of the things they sign, so they're decent business partners... almost good as another Kasmirin."*

Astar – *"Our neighbors in Cymril are somewhat nosy, and they tend to forget about us. Not that we mind it too terribly. It is annoying that they think they know what is best for the alliance, and act on some things without holding a conference first. Blessedly, most of the things they do have a hard time reaching us here in our Grove."*

Taz – *"The Cymrilians are knowledgeable enough to know when they need the help of the Thrall Nation, however they have some uppity ideas about how this Unit should be run. Some of their ideas work nicely, but other times they over step their bounds. It might be a good thing that they're competent with parley, but sometimes we think a war would be easier."*

Vardune – *"We appreciate the assistance that the C-Cymrilians give to us, and we are glad to be of assistance to them in any way possible. Sometimes however, we wish they would think of us in return."*

Durne – *"The Cymrilians are interested in the crafting of crystal, that fact is very pleasing. Much discussion and bargains have been made to allow students into the great halls of Durne under Tunnelrock so that knowledge can be passed. An exchange of the learned has also populated the Lyceum Arcanum to help expand the knowledge that the crystals can pass on. Also, it is fortunate that agreements have been stuck so that if assistance is needed from the Gnomekin, assistance will be given."*

Aaman – *"The Cymrilians of the Seven Kingdoms are a strong force to be reckoned with, and have the potential to be strong allies. It is sad that they can not see Aa's light like we do."*

Zandu – *"Cymrilians? Why are you asking about them? Hmm, well if I have to say something about them, I'll say this... they're good at what they do, but they have absolutely NO fashion sense."*

Cymril has close political ties to the Kingdoms of Taz, Kasmir, and Durne. The Sindarins stay relatively neutral politically, and it is rumored that their two brains make it hard for them to take a solid side on anything. The Muses in Astar respect their magical abilities but at the same time do not care much for the Cymrilians in general. The Blue Aeriad dislike the need for magical bracers that are made in Cymril, but the Green Aeriad think that the Cymrilians are very learned in the ways of magic, and almost admire their proficiency.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

The attitude of Cymrilians is a strange one. They consider themselves to be the most advanced magical nation in all of Talislanta and expect others to treat them with awe and reverence in deference to their abilities. Their University is the most advanced place of magical study in the whole Seven Kingdoms and it is rarely debated that there is a place of higher magical study that can outstrip it in all of Talislanta. Anyone, including non Citizens of Cymril, can attend the school, however if you aren't proficient and willing to bend over backwards to the whims of the professors there is a chance that you will miss out on the chance of a lifetime.

Every year, a contest is held, judged by The Board of Higher Magical Studies. Any student can compete for a small fee, and those who sign up also have their academic records inspected to assist in the elimination of any who can be deemed as unworthy. The contest is not just academic, but covers a broad spectrum of things from casting abilities, to on the fly alchemy identification, and occasionally the battle with magically altered creatures. The contest lasts until the judges narrow the list of applicants to 70. After that, the chosen students become interns to the most respected and powerful Wizards in the city. Typically there are as few as 10 and as many as 14 Wizards that take the interns in.

The competition does not end there however. Once placed in the program, an intense rivalry develops because one from each group interned with each Wizard has the opportunity to become an employee at the end of their internship. Only twice in the history of the event has a first year wizard been chosen to be an intern. Additionally, only once has that intern made it as an employee. That spectacular young Wizard was named the High Wizard a short five years after the contest was completed, and ruled Cymril with a strong yet generous hand. Those facts made her the most popular High Wizard to date, and the most cunning. She is the one who started the gradual build up of power in the High Council and has changed more of the laws, updating them for society.

Yet at the same time, she made it more prestigious to be a Cymrilian citizen. More rights are given to those who are natural born citizens, and with marriage one can become a citizen in far less time than it would normally take. Naturalizing marriages are however dangerous if it is not something you're willing to commit to for the long run. Within the first 5 years of that law being passed, over 300 people had been jailed for attempting to deceive the Cymrilian government. The current High Wizard is attempting to change the law concerning citizenship again, but it is being held up in parliament and there seems to be no end to the debates in sight.



Aside from being the most magically advanced culture in the Seven Kingdoms and possibly in all of Talislanta, the Cymrilians are the forerunners in windship technology, products such as levitationals, and other valuable magical components. They like to rub everyone's faces in the fact that their magical ability and technological design far outstrips anything anyone else has developed in Talislanta. Some of the more modest and fledgling windship designers have gone to Kasmir to submit designs for the yearly windship regatta. The Regatta not only gives the newcomers to the profession a chance to find sponsors to build their designs, it helps with other crucial parts of the windship trade. Entrants can make some money selling their ships whether they win or lose, and gain some prestige from where their design places. Bigger Cymrilian designers and design companies scoff at the defectors, but also enter the contest in hopes of building their designs and reputations even more fame.

Each Kingdom has one interesting thing in common, and sometimes it is interesting to wonder if they themselves notice it. They all collect things. Cymrilians are particularly interested in anything magical. They pay top dollar for ancient and foreign magics. The more adventurous go out to explore some of the tombs from ages past, in hopes of running across some formidable new item or even better a great and ancient magic tome.

Religion

Cymrilians are somewhat of a religious people, mostly believing in the Creator. However, their borders are not closed to other religions and there seems to be an unspoken agreement to tolerate all religions not your own. Rarely are there arguments between the different sects, but when they do happen they can get bad.

Creationists

The Creator values all types of creation, and abhors any type of destruction. Some of the biggest sins to a creationist are murder, vandalism, and subjugation. To honor the creator, there are monthly festivals, all relating to a different aspect of creation. For example in the month of Ardan they have a festival called "The Festival of Life" one of the main happenings at the festival are the mass marriages. However, it is mostly the sales of lust potions, fertility potions, and romantic items that fuel the three day festival. The month of Zar is when they celebrate "The Festival of Lights". During this month, they release special rockets in to the sky and use pyromancy to light up the city to block some of the dark moons light. One day a week, they light the sky with glittering magical lights. Each week they rotate days, so as to make sure that no single day of the week is less bright and less lucky than the others.

The other religions in town celebrate differently, and on a smaller basis than the creationists. However, almost all of the religions have been able to incorporate the holidays into their own faiths and value systems. The Creationists have done their best to be tolerant of the other religions in town, and even on the holidays they make sure that no one religious group's ideals are being forced on anyone.

Role-playing Hints

Cymrilians are a complex people who are devoted to magic of all sorts. The knowledge gained from study is one of the things that fuels them. Most Cymrilians have a high innate magical ability and naturally have some respect for those who have magical ability as well. There are some types of magic that is frowned upon in Cymril. However, they are studied for the sake of knowledge to broaden their minds to the possibilities that magic offers their society. Now, you can understand that magic is core to a Cymrilian's being, but you must not forget that some do not have the need for or love of magic. There are elite groups of non-magic wielding fighters who use various weapons, and some who even fight bare handed. These people are rare, but not unheard of. In their way they gain almost as much respect as a Mage, because of their utter devotion to the art of combat and use of steel.

Hidden Treasures?

Some believe that Cymril has been picked clean of magical and even mundane booty. Due to that belief they do not venture out into the verdant lands in search of ruins or tombs to explore. However they're missing out on a lot of wondrous places yet to be plotted on widespread maps.

There are stories of a ruined castle at a valley called Ystrad Mynach in the Jaspur Mountains. One person returned from a group of explorers, telling tales of a ghostly lady in Green, a large castle, and abundant treasure. His story is doubted when heard, but he carried one thing out of the castle, a small green stone that is carved to look like a coin, that when pressed into wax or clay makes a strange and arcane symbol that looks like it might be a royal seal. Some have speculated that if the stone was pressed into sealing wax, and the right incantation was spoken it would create a type of warding spell that very few of the best would be able to break. They are unable to test that theory however. The explorer went insane shortly after returning to Cymril and broke the stone in half, sending it in two separate directions to dispel the curse that seemed to be placed on him.

In a place far from Ystrad Mynach in the Jaspur Mountains there is rumored to be an area that is so full of silver and gemstones that it glows in the light of Talislanta's Seven Moon's brighter than any other place in the kingdom, including the cities crystal spires themselves. People have claimed to see an area glowing in Jang's green light, and from following the light they saw the ground littered with precious metal and stones. They spend the night gathering as much as they can carry, and when they leave, the area disappears behind them, leaving behind only rocks and rubble. Many poor travelers who have seen this sight have come down from the mountains with their pockets full, and lots of good luck. Any of the gems or silver spent on helping others seems to benefit the spender.

There is also a small stone hut that some have claimed seeing in the Jade Plains just west of the capital city. It is said that if you're lucky or if you're very good at looking you can find a way to an underground structure that seems to have been used as a tournament ground or maze of some kind. Very few who do venture into this place find it filled with traps and spells that are triggered with passage, but the rewards from making it through are great. One group has stated that they have gone there and worked their way to the end, and had returned a few months later to gather the things that they had left, and the complex had reset itself. They could not find the things that they had left behind, but found a whole new set of items that seemed to have been created just for them. They have come to the decision that once yearly they will bring one group of new explorers to see what they can find in the tunnels below.

Character Classes

There are the three main classes that Cymrilians hold to, but there are always variations, and you can easily make something completely different than the three below. However, typically, other races might be more suited to the things you want.

Mage – Mages are straight spell casters. However, in the world of Talislanta, both Clerics and Mages are considered spell casters and therefore lumped together in most cases. With the Talislanta magic system, you can choose to practice Invocation and that would make you a Cleric. On the other hand, you could choose to study wizardry, and that would make you a normal mage. You are also given the option to at any time spend your experience to add another Order of your choice.

Warrior Mage – Warrior Mages are also known as fighter mages. They have the magical ability of a mage, but they also have the ability to use physical weapons. They normally are decent in both “CR” and “MR”, but their skills are not equal to a Pure Fighter or Pure Mage. The Warrior Mage is relatively versatile in a combat situation.

Rogue Mage – The term Rogue Mage can be refer to two different things. Either the Rogue Mage is an outcast from the Magical Society in Cymril or they have roguish abilities. The latter is normally the case, but it has not been unheard of for a Mage to step out of the normal bounds of Magical Inquiry and become something that not even the magic loving people of Cymril can call natural.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Cymrilian characters. The top three without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Cymrilian Magician

Cymrilian Rogue Magician

Cymrilian Swords Mage

The below classes are new archetypes, however if you want something different, you can create your own with help from your GM.

Cymrilian Sword Master

CR +5 MR +1 HP 25
STR +1 PER +1
DEX +2 CHA 0
CON +1 WIL 0
SPD 0 INT 0

Skills

Long Sword	+3
Dagger	+2
<Two Weapons of Choice>	+2
Mounted Combat	+3
Arcane Lore	+1
Etiquette	+4
Fashion	+4
Ride	+4

Languages

High Talislan – Native
Low Talislan – Native
Archaen – Basic

Equipment

High collared cloak; garments made of spangalor; leather boots; jewelry; long sword +1; dagger; weapons of choice; pouch; 2 magical trinkets; equs steed; 50 gold lumens

Appearance

Height: 6’-6’5”; Weight: 130-180 pounds; light green skin and hair; gold flecked eyes; slight build; striking features;
Appearance might have been altered with alchemical or magical enhancements

Quote: “A spell is a fearsome thing, but then again, so is my sword.”

Your siblings went the way of the wizard, but you chose the way of the blade. You’ve heard stores about an uncle who was a black drac too. Magic is interesting, and valuable, but you feel more secure with a blade in your hands than you do with a spell on your lips. Your siblings and cousins all think you’re crazy, but deep down inside, you know that this is what you were made for. You have trained with Thralls, and they see your skill with the blade. Your parents are proud of you and your achievements, and defend you from hecklers. You do not need their help, but it is nice to know that someone is on your side. Now, time to find that Uncle!



Cymrilian Scoundrel

CR +3 MR +1 HP 20
STR 0 PER +2
DEX +2 CHA +1
CON 0 WIL 0
SPD +1 INT 0

Skills

<Two Weapons of Choice> +2
Brawling +1
Stealth +4
<Three Thieving skills of choice> +3
Etiquette +5
Fashion +3
Ride +2
Appraise +2

Languages

High Talislan – Fluent
Low Talislan – Native
Archaen – Basic

Equipment

High collared cloak; variety of clothing from different professions; choice of weapon +1; pouch; assorted thieving tools*; 2 magical trinkets; equus steed; 50 gold lumens in assorted currencies and jewelry
* some examples are: dice, trap and lock picks, hand blade for purse strings, hidden pockets in clothes, etc...

Appearance

Height: 6'-6'5"; Weight: 130-180 pounds; light green skin and hair; gold flecked eyes; slight build; striking features;
Appearance might have been altered with alchemical or magical enhancements

Quote: *"Thief? Where? I'll grab that scoundrel for you and get you back your belongings!"*

You've made your living gambling, cheating, lying, and scamming. You know how to pass in polite society, when to throw away your gains to maintain face, and when to fold completely. You haven't been caught yet, and even if you are, those nice women who are your ex's will defend you and your honest nature. They just haven't figured out that their family coffers are a touch lighter than they were before they met you. You're not a bad person, not really. You just see the good life waiting, and have found an easier way to get to it.

Black Tanasian

CR +2 MR +4 HP 20
STR +1 PER +2
DEX 0 CHA -1
CON -1 WIL +1
SPD 0 INT +2

Magic Order: Pyromancy

Modes:

Attack +3
Conjure +3
<Three Modes of Choice> +3

Skills

Arcane Lore +2
Etiquette +2
Ride +3
Cultures +2
Assassinate +1
Deception +2
Sabotage +3
Stealth +2

Languages

High Talislan – Fluent
Low Talislan – Fluent
Archaen – Basic

Equipment

High collared cloak and robes in green; dyed green leather boots; black iron and leather bound spell book; pouch; green enameled black iron gauntlets; 200 gold lumens in assorted currencies

Appearance

Height: 6'-6'5"; Weight: 120-160 pounds; light green skin and hair; gold flecked eyes; slight build; striking features
Has a branded symbol on their body that is kept covered while out in public.

Quote: *"We will take back our country no matter what it takes. It will be ours again, even if we have to liberate it by force!"*

The Cymrilians stole your birthright, your land, your status, your everything. There are other Tanasians who think that political struggles and words will solve the problems. That a Tanasian king will make them listen and realize their grave error. Your new family however knows the truth. The day the sigil was burned into your flesh, and you joined the Order of Fire, you knew that to get back all that was taken you would have to take it back by force. You learned the art of controlling fire, and the where and how to use it to best effect. You can stop the careful mechanisms of the City from functioning, and when they're panicking you and your sect will step in and take over. ■



CHAPTER 2

KAS'MIR



Origins of Kasmir

I wandered east into the deserts of the Kasmir. After a long and dry journey I entered the great capital City of Kasmir. The locals rich with wealth, were also rich with knowledge, and after some coaxing, they shared the latter wealth with me. The tales of the founding of Kasmir were told to me with so little variances, it was almost eerie.

It is said that Kasmir was founded by a nomad tribe that was similar in many ways to the Djaffir, who now happen to be enemies of the Kasmirans. The stories say that they had wandered the desert after being freed from slavery. They were a poor people, a starving people, and they were on the verge of dying from thirst. They traveled for years in the waste, occasionally finding the random oasis, or sympathetic traveler. They lived off of hunting Aht-ra to help ease the burden on their people, and hunting anything else they could for food.

They had searched and searched for a land to call their own, but none could or would help them. Every time they would come across a place that would seem like it could be the perfect place to settle, some disaster would befall their people and they would be set to fleeing back into the burning wastes. As they wandered, their tribe grew smaller and smaller. First the eldest dying off, then the babies and nursing mothers. The people were panic stricken, knowing that they would all die if they could not find a place for them to settle and live.

Then one day, like many others, they came across an encampment that surrounded an oasis. As they approached, hoping that they could settle there for the night and refill their parched bodies, they were turned away. The camp surrounding the oasis told the Kasmirans that they could buy water and food from them, but if they couldn't pay, they

weren't welcome. Disheartened they traveled on, deeper into the desert, and later that night they happened upon a ruined city in the desert.

A few men went down into the deepest places searching for dried food stores and water. Hours passed, and there was talk of leaving them so that they would not bring upon them another curse. But before anything but talk could happen, the scouts returned with their arms full of riches. Soon the whole tribe gathered to hear of the wondrous things that they had found.

A small group left with as much of the gold and silver that they could carry, and traveled to an outpost where water and food were being sold. With their riches, they bought enough for their people to live a few weeks, and a few pack animals to carry it back for them. The people rejoiced and celebrated their good fortune that night and went deep into the ruined city in search of more.

Each week, a different group took some money to the oasis outpost, and each week they came back with more animals, carts, and necessities. After a few months of rich and healthy living they finally felt ready to leave their blessed city, but only after searching for the name of it. The day that they had resigned to leave the city is when a child found a mosaic buried under some sand, and the mosaic spelt out Kasmir.

They found that the mosaic was easy to excavate and was relatively light, so they loaded it into the back of one of their wagons and traveled west in search of better land. They traveled for weeks, crossing the Dead River Chasm and finally ending in an area that reminded them of their sacred city. They had once again found a ruined city in the desert. This time however, they sealed the city closed, and built up on top of it.

Shortly after they began building, some Sindarans showed up and offered to assist them in reopening the dried wells, and in making stronger walls that what had existed here before. The Kasmirans were thrilled and paid well for the assistance. However, once the city was well underway, they decided that they were going to place the mosaic in the city, where any one walking could see it. They built a small town square and placed the mosaic in the center.

When the visiting Sindarans saw the mosaic they sealed it down as they had been paid to do, then took their leave. Kasimir kept communication open with Sindar, and visited often to purchase more alchemicals, but not once for over 200 years had a Sindaran set foot in the new city of Kasmir.

The Capital of Kasmir

The capital of Kasmir happens to be the City of Kasmir. The City of Kasmir houses the main towers of all of the Families, even though some of the Families have towers in other cities. Kasmir was the first city founded by the Kasmiran. Outsiders might not understand the reverence of the Kasmiran to their Capital city, but it is noticeable. The city is well guarded, some towers are completely empty because the family is elsewhere, but still guards stand before the doors. Kasmirans are deeply traditional people, and their many private customs prove it to those who have seen them. The biggest tradition is the returning to Founder's Square on Founder's Day to have the moment of silence, or the dropping of pennies onto the mosaic when in need of extra luck. Either way, the Capital gets as much travel from Kasmirans as it does from foreigners.

Important Structures

Kasmir has a vast amount of important places in the Capital, but since they are rarely grand or showy most outsiders do not realize that they could be looking at something special. Due to the number of guards posted around the city, you can not count on that to be a telling point. Normally the guards are Thralls, but there are a good number of Danuvians as well. Some of the less common guards are Jaka and Arimites, but they are no less competent at their jobs.

Lenders Tower

Lender's Tower is the tallest of the towers in Kasmir, however so few have been up in it to know how many stories tall it truly is. There are no windows, and only one door to enter. Lender's Tower is the place where the families who are the major players in the "money game" hold main offices. They control who opens a new lending house, when it is opened, and where it is going to be. They grant permission for those not blessed to be of a Founding house to do things in the city that only the Founder's families normally have access to. It is also where the High Office exists. At one point in time, whoever was in control of the Kingdom of Kasmir would use their office, but due to paperwork problems, the office at the summit of Lenders Tower was opened, and remains where the current ruler of Kasmir reigns from.

Public Opinion

Cymril – *"The Kasmiran are smart and shrewd money lenders. They also have impressive skills with locks and traps, and their renown trap mages are not only impressive and expensive to hire, but admirably adept at magic. We've gotten one of their legendary trap mages to hold a few classes and do a few seminars, but the fees charged are too much for us to do more than once a year and we still have a waiting list a few years long."*

Sindar – *"Kasmir. We admire their ability with numbers. However they tend to take too much control when it comes to money. They are well suited to the task of managing money and the distribution of wealth. Since they are so skilled, they need to focus more on making it easier for those with less."*

Astar – *"The Kasmirans are an interesting people with an odd passion. They are obsessed with money and the movement of it. We think that their souls are sick and they need to get away from their unhealthy attitude. We were blessed by Aard that we do not need to rely on them for money, or on money at all for that matter."*

Taz – *"The Kasmirans are talented with money as we are with swords. We are grateful that they are normally on time with the payments to the outposts and army. They even hire us in vast numbers to protect their city, yet it is annoying that when they have a point to prove, we end up paying for it in lost wages."*

Vardune – *"K-Kasmirans? We do not much contact with them. They do not give us any trouble though."*

Durne – *"Abhh, yes. Kasmirans. Skill with locks, traps, and money; the combination is not unlikely. The skill they have is admirable and it is respected. There have been offers to trap some of the unused corridors that branch off of the underground highway, but at the moment that's all they are... offers."*

Arim – *"Oh? I knew someone who was working with them. They pay well, and their skills are nothing to be scoffed at."*

Danuvia – *"Hmmm, I'd never take one of them for a husband, but we do appreciate the jobs offered as guards. It is a bonus working there because we have found more than a few good recruits for the Conjugal Feast."*

Founder's Square

The home of the tile mosaic is in the Founder's Square. Most outsiders do not understand why it is called a square, due to the fact that everything but the mosaic itself is rounded or completely circular in that area. During the time of the Founding, all the heads and heirs of the Families stand around the circular lip that protects the mosaic and share a moment of silence, before a small festival starts that honors the Finders and Founders. Occasionally when passing through Founder's Square you can see young Kasmiran gathered around the lip, whispering and sometimes throwing in small coins to lay on the mosaic.

Founder's Quarter

The Founder's Quarter is where all the original towers of the Founding Families are. Only the family's Patriarch and his immediate family live in the tower. Yet each tower holds all of those families' records and the biggest deals that those particular families have made. The Founder's Quarter sees a massive amount of traffic, and it is not uncommon to see guards standing at each entrance to a family tower.

Political Ties In the Seven Kingdoms

Since the founding of the Seven Kingdoms Kasmir has been the monetary powerhouse. If there was a problem with funding of something, Kasmir would step in, and write up a repayment contract. The fact that they are always seemingly able to do this has concerned quite a few people in the other nations, but no questions have been raised. If Kasmir wasn't available to step in there would have been times that even Cymril would have collapsed. Kasmir's hold on the way money is spent is so tight that they manage to keep the Pentacle (Cymril's currency) artificially elevated. They also have adjusted the fate of many markets and their sale prices when they choose to lend money and when they do not, driving the prices up drastically or creating a surplus.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

The Kasmirans are respected for their wisdom in handling money by most. They are also feared by those who have borrowed and skipped out on their payments, and they are also hated by the Djaffir. Their history is fairly tightly held, but yet the Djaffir seem to know more than the Kasmiran are willing to admit. Other than that, the Kasmirans seem to have a good working relationship with many countries, but few are willing to admit wanting an alliance with them. The grip Kasmir hold over the Lumen and Pentacle sways not only the Seven Kingdoms, but the entire continent of Talislanta. Their tight control has some other nations disgruntled, and yet others try to keep a constant emissary in the City of Kasmir to keep an eye on the value of the Lumen so that their economy has a chance to survive some of the larger swings.

Kasmir holds yearly windship races called the Windship Regatta. The main families of the city fund it, and the designs all race. After that, all the ships go on to auction, the winners being sold last. Unsold ships go back to their makers, who then can look for buyers who were not allowed into the auctions. The best ship designs are also bought up so that they can be looked over, and added to the piles of possible military ships, where the less desirable designs are taken back to be reworked in hopes of becoming next years winner. Most of the entrants are Cymrilian, but other people, even those from outside the Seven Kingdoms, are encouraged to enter.

In the weeks before the Windship Regatta, there are many opportunities for those wanting to make a quick lumen guarding the finished ships from saboteurs. Every year there are a small number of ships that get damaged before the start of the race, and then can not compete due to the damage. Beyond that, a small handful of ships have less obvious

Hidden Treasures?

Kasmir seems like a desolate area, but there are lots of wide open spaces that seem to be forgotten about. Including the fact that the Capital itself is rumored to have some adventure capability. There are many things to be found in the dusty Kingdom of Kasmir, but are you ready and willing to go out and find them?

Most are afraid to try and poke around in the City of Kasmir, but those that do would be well rewarded. Rumors surface of an underground city that is chock full of treasure and money that even the Kasmiran's have yet to discover. However, some are suspicious about those claims, saying that the Kasmiran's wouldn't let something like that go undiscovered in their own city. Yet others believe that the rumors are just told to send adventurers to their deaths while the top Trap Mages test their new designs. No one knows the truth, or if they do, they're not saying.

Out in the desert a short but perilous journey away from the road is a series of small towers. The area that they are in makes it seem like the towers have been empty for a long time, but yet, no one has boasted on entering them either. Some people think that they might be similar to the Hadjin Ruins, but others think that they are magical towers left over from the age of the Archaen. All that's needed is a brave group to crack the towers and find the answers, but are there any that can be found?

Out near the border fort Karfan there have been stories of wandering spirits. None of the spirits have attacked anyone, but they also do not leave a small area. Searching the area when the spirits are gone reveals nothing, but some claim to have seen a shimmering wreckage in the moonlight on the night that the spirits were wandering. Since they were on a fixed patrol they couldn't go investigate at that moment, but when they returned hours later, the area was empty.

damages that make their racing perilous to their crews and other ships. It seems like no matter how many people are hired to keep an eye on ships, some of the ships get damaged. That simple fact has become a part of the challenge of the race itself. Those ships that were damaged do have the opportunity to make repairs and possibly sell their mended ships and designs after the auction, but since the ship had not flown, the value of the ship and designs are greatly reduced.

Religion

Kasmirans aren't outwardly religious, however they do worship. There are two gods that are held in high esteem by the inhabitants of Kasmir. They each have different qualities that deal with their daily lives. One is Kismet the Goddess of luck and fortune, the other is Beheer God of wealth and management. Oddly enough, the one National Holiday has nothing to do with either Kismet or Beheer. The holiday is called Founder's Day and is celebrated on Drome the 5th.

Kismetans

Kismetans are a more daring group than the worshippers of Beheer. They are more willing to take chances with less trustworthy people seeing a loan. They also tend to be more of the type that become trap mages. They are more free with their money, and more adventurous when seeking more out. They have a few small and organized festival days, but it is mostly only private or small group festivals than large organized ones. Kismetans are also unique in the fact that they celebrate tragedy as well as fortune. Kismet is not just a beneficial Goddess; she makes those who worship Her pay for their good fortune in a variety of ways. So to show appreciation all major events in a Kismetan's life are celebrated.

Beheerians

Beheerians are more of a cynical group, tending more towards a strict lifestyle. They celebrate rarely, but believe in structure and order strongly. Normally when a Beheerian celebrates, it is for a good reason. Some examples of Beheerian celebrations are a whole month of good business, or all employees being present and not ill for a month. Strangely, when a Beheerian celebrates, they can outdo even some of the more exuberant Kismetans. The celebrations are rich in content and last a long time. They, like the Kismetans, have no largely celebrated holidays; but they do consider a good work day to be a tribute to Beheer.

Role-playing Hints

Kasmirans are widely considered to be a stingy people. They love money, and have a great proficiency in being able to find, invest, and protect it. They have built their lives around gathering money. Some say that the reason they're so obsessed with money is because of their past. Kasmirans are shrewd negotiators, and somewhat abrasive when dealing with other races.

Character Classes

There are the two main classes that Kasmirans hold to, but there are always variations, and you can easily make something completely different than the two below. However, typically, other races might be more suited to the things you want.

Rogue/Mage—Trap mages are skilled in not only magic like a Wizard, but also with traps and locks like a standard Rogue. They combine the arts of magic use and trap creation for deadly effects and normally high rolls are needed to find and disarm one of their traps that are set. Trap Mages do not steal, but for a price, they can and will open anything you ask.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Kasmiran characters. The top two without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Kasmiran Trap Mage

Kasmiran Money Lender (NPC)

Kasmiran Procurer

CR +2 MR +1 HP 19
STR -1 PER +1
DEX +1 CHA -1
CON 0 WIL +2
SPD 0 INT +2

Skills

Spring-Knife	+4
Blade Staff	+4
<Two Weapons of Choice>	+3
Locks	+5
Traps	+8
Appraisal	+7

Languages

High Talislan – Native
Low Talislan – Native
Archaen – Basic

Equipment

Hooded cloak; loose robe; curl toed boots; concealed coin purses; heavy brass key ring attached to belt with chain; spring-knife with pouch of 10 blades; blade staff; assorted trap and locksmith tools; weapons of choice; 100 gold lumens in various forms

Appearance

Height: 4'6"-5'; Weight 70-110 pounds; rich mahogany skin; shriveled features; hunched posture

Quote: *"Of course I'll help you get into that vault, but you do understand that I get my fair share, and a 10% cut of all found."*

You do not have the skills to be a lender like your father, and the life as a trap mage doesn't appeal to you, but you do highly admire your mother's skills. No, you have decided that you would help your family gain more money. You go out and seek new wealth and resources for your family. You've trained both with the trap mages and the lenders, acquiring the best skills from both areas. You know that if you do not make it in this profession, then you'll go the way of your ex-childhood friend, disownment and banishment. You like living in Kasmir, and you like your station. So now it is your task to prove to your family that you're just as valuable to making money as the rest of them.■

CHAPTER 3

TAZ

Origins of Taz

As the Thralls found freedom, they also discovered that they needed a home. They wandered and wandered, fighting some of the fantastic beasts that roam the land in Talislanta. In every place they stopped, they saw that the land was already inhabited, or the land was not something that they could live on long without assistance from other races. Fearing even more enslavement, they pushed on, deeper and deeper into the jungles, away from the races of man.

They found a place that was fairly peaceful and they were not threatened by any other races of Man. They built cities in the flourishing jungles, using their camp skills; they created great homes and meeting lodges from the nature around them.

At first, they lived quietly. Not many knew of their existence due to the fact that not many survived a battle that was taken to them. Another reason was that they had dug themselves so deep in the thriving jungle land that no one could find them to talk to them. The land suited them perfectly, it, like them it had nothing to do with magic. The land was perfect and pure.

Slowly however, something began happening to the land they had chosen. Blight began creeping in from the north. The Thralls were helpless to stop it, but they had seen a mystical folk living in the forest land. A small platoon marched out the next dawn in search of the mystical forest dwellers to the east. They marched at a normal pace the first week, not knowing when they would meet those that they had been seeking. However the longer they looked, the longer and harder they marched. Finally, after a long and hard march, they came upon a great sparkling lake with cold fresh water. The platoon was tired, hungry, and thirsty. They were allowed to stop and rest at the lake side, to drink, and eat fish

and clean the mud and dust from their skin after the long march.

That night while they were sleeping the guard on duty saw a most interesting sight. The trees seemed to be watching him. By the time he woke his platoon up, there was a single small winged humanoid sitting on a rock just inside the clearing. She spoke to them with a commanding voice, demanding why they have visited the lake, why they were there.

The Captain stepped forward and began the story of the blight that was eating their new home away. She listened and then with a firm "Stay" she took flight and disappeared into the dark forest once more.

Two days passed, and the platoon began to get nervous sitting there with nothing to do. Finally on the third night since their arrival, she appeared to them again. The platoon sat quietly as she explained that she was sending something to help them, but they must not search for it, they just had to return to the blighted area, then leave it and go home.

The platoon marched hard to get home, never once searching, but always doubting that an invisible thing could help them. When they arrived to their land, they saw the land was even more destroyed than they expected, and one of the women in their platoon fell to her knees, and cried. Only one tear came to her cheek, and she wiped the tear off on her hand and clutched at the earth, begging for help from the forest. Her platoon mates were worried about her and they took her away to sleep it off.

The next day while another platoon was on its rounds, they noticed a small area of green land growing around a scuffed area of land. Every day that they returned the green land was larger, and the blight was smaller. When they could no longer

find any blight on the land, they sent the platoon back to thank the lady who sent the help, but she never showed up at their camp. They left gifts for her, and their kind, and returned home after a week. Since then, blight has never touched the swamps of Taz as roughly.

The Capital of Taz

Important Structures

The capital of the Kingdom of Taz is Tor. Tor is not like most cities, being that its structures are not tall and built for splendour. Tor is more of a fortress than a city; its edges are bordered not with open land, but with tall walls and towers. Since Taz is a Kingdom in the jungle, the cities are built to be easily defensible not only from outside sources, but from the wandering beasts that share the jungles with the Thralls. Some of the things that residents and travelers in the jungles of Taz have to contend with are mantrap, aramatus, and bog devils. The roads are the safe ways to travel, because the Thralls patrol them often and clear them of most dangers.

The Great Hall

The Great Hall of Tor is where all major decisions are made. When it is not being used for political purposes, it doubles as a large indoor classroom for studying tactics and the art of command. It is the largest building in Tor. The Great Hall is large enough for the pregnant females, and the young children who are not battle ready to be fortified in case of an invasion. Normally the Great Hall is a hive of activity, people coming and going, classes being held in and out, and visiting dignitaries being presented with honours and receiving tours. When Dignitaries come for a visit, the Great Hall is where the Welcoming Celebration and Farewell Feast are held. The building contains not only the main hall, but offices, classrooms, and a large kitchen. The smaller rooms surround the large hall so that it adds to the security of the central room. Overall, not only is this the largest building in Tor, but also the most used.

Battle Yard

The Battle Yard is outside of the Great Hall, and this is where the majority of combat training happens. There are areas set up just for training with Garde Armour; and around the Yard there are places for just about every weapon. Most of the training equipment in the yard is transportable. So the Battle Yard can be emptied, or adjusted to what ever the Thrall's need at that moment.

Communal Stables

The Communal Stables are where all the guard mounts, training mounts, and private mounts are kept. It is also at one of the things surrounding the massive Battle Yard. The stables are separated out so that those who are going on and off of guard duty can trade out mounts, keeping them fresh. The guard's mounts receive the most attention and care. If a private mount is used on guard duty, it is placed in a back area of the guard stables so that it can be checked over completely and given time to recuperate. The training mounts are normally older, calmer, and intensely trained for their job. The training part of the stables is cared for by the

instructors and the older students. When a guards mount ages, it is sent to the head trainer and it learns how to be a training mount. The private area of the stables has the citizens and visitors to Tor's mounts housed.

The Great Forge

The Great Forge also resides off of the Battle Yard. The training weapons are made here, along with all that is used for the city guards. The Great Forge is also where those seeking to learn the knowledge of blacksmithing go to learn. It is called the Great Forge because of not only its size, but its number of forge fires and anvils ringing. There is the Master Smith, his apprentices who are Great Smiths. Below the Great Smiths are Smiths, and after that the rest are called either Apprentice Smith or Novice Smith. Those who reach Great Smith status are normally sent to other settlements in Taz and sometimes other places in the 7k to become the Master Smith for that area or particular forge. Some times the Smiths decide to go seeking new designs to bring back to their home forges, and they go off to train in other Kingdoms and Countries.

Political Ties

In the Seven Kingdoms

Since the formation of the 7k, the Thralls contribution has barely changed. They are a race not only bred for war, but dedicated to it. So when they were needed to defend the new alliance, they stepped up and into place as the main defence force of the Seven Kingdoms. Their knowledge of tactics and ability to quickly assess the situation not only makes them formidable foes on the battle field, but also in politics. Every year there is a contest, something like a tournament. The winners of this contest become the "King" of Taz, and his ruling cabinet. The Thralls seem like they would only be interested in military gains, but they are deeply interested in the social and socio-political aspects of ruling as well.

Each year, the new king has not only Thrall advisors, but advisors from other realms as well to help them look at things outside of a war perspective. However, the Thrall "King" has been the same man for the last 10 years, rising to power early with an uncanny battle prowess and diligent training to keep him on top. He seems to be interested in keeping his station, but not for the normal reasons. When asked, he will tell you that his ambition is to keep the Thralls where they need to be so they are not using their resources frivolously. When he first became the leader of Taz, he did not realize the amount of energy needed to keep the country running smoothly. He has hired Kasmiran accountants to keep their books in a more orderly fashion, and has discovered that Taz is running in a surplus. He is making big plans every year, and hoping that he can keep winning the battles so as to keep Taz and the Thrall people best represented in the Seven Kingdoms Council.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

Thralls are the height of fashion to some, the ultimate guard to others, and the feared enemy to the rest. They encourage these views in the interest of National Security. Most of the time they are left alone, knowing that if someone bothers them or the 7k, the Thralls of Taz will march in and take nor prisoners. A few times challenges have been sent to Taz to try and bait the Thralls into foolish action, but their current leaders have enough good information to keep them out of trouble when it comes knocking. Taz's biggest export is manpower. The soldiers, guards, and blacksmiths are not only desired, but coveted amongst the wealthy. Thralls normally wear the colors of their employers so as to represent part of their life in the employ and the honour they receive while in that service. Most Thralls serve for an extended period of time when hired out into a household or manor. Since Thralls are so good at what they do, rarely are they dismissed from duty; even if something happened while they were on duty. There have been a few occasions where a Thrall let something slip through and they were discharged from their service in that place. When things like that happen, most Thralls return to Tor for extra training or offer their services to someone who normally can not afford a Thrall.

The Thrall Nation has another problem; Offerings of Alliances and Gifts for Services. Often there are letters and messengers waiting in Tor for weeks on end to see the King or Council to offer an Alliance or present them with a Gift to later be repaid with assistance from the Thralls in return.

Religion

Thralls are generally not very religious of a group. They respect those who are, but they themselves are fairly sceptical. There are a few who have broadened their minds, and have begun to believe in the things that the Ariane say about rebirth, but those who listen to them wonder if they themselves can be reborn because they were constructed for a purpose by a wizard. However, they do record a fallen Thrall's story from the tattoos that grace its skin.

Recorders

The group that records the tattoos of the fallen are called simply the Recorders. They read the tales and speak to those who knew them to get as much as they can. The tales are placed in a series of tomes that are kept in a secure building in the capital. The tomes are separated by village. If a body is destroyed beyond reading, or is unable to be returned, the ones accompanying them are bound to return to the capital; so the can tell what they do know of the Thralls life so it can be recorded. The Recorders are not just Thralls themselves; anyone desiring to become a Recorder is welcome. Some of the Recorders take on field work; searching out those who may have had contact with a Thrall before his death, and others seek out family and friends to pass on the news. There are very few requirements to become a Recorder. The main requirement is the ability to record the story. Beyond that, they just hope for passion for the duty and a commitment to history.

Public Opinion

Sindar – *"The Thralls possess massive war abilities. They are very good at what they were created to do. It is generally not a good idea to be so focused on one thing, because in doing so, you can miss other things."*

Kasmir – *"Thralls are quality guards. I know that many Families in the city have hired them to watch their towers. I would have to say that their ability to follow rules is one of the things that make them the most desirable guard to hire. However, their services are not exactly cheap, but you get what you pay for."*

Astar – *"The Thralls are an honourable people. We've had very few dealings with them, but when we do, we know that they are treating us fairly. It is nice to know such honest people exist."*

Cymril – *"The Thralls of Taz are an incredible people with vast strengths. Their skills are desired throughout the 7k, and the whole of Talislanta. We are honoured with their Alliance."*

Vardune – *"Abhh, the Th-Thralls! We respect them for their honourable ways. We know that they understand the code of honour we have, and they are also fierce predators."*

Durne – *"The Thralls. They are known to us, and occasionally a small force of them will visit. They are effective warriors and they take pleasure in clearing the underground highway so that it is safe for others to travel."*

Aaman – *"We have tried to gain an alliance with the Thralls of Taz, but they shun Aa's light. Some walk the wall between Aaman and Zandu, they make most effective guards."*

Zandu – *"Thralls are the height of guarding fashion. My cousin had a small group of them to guard his manor, and they tattooed his house colors on their arms in an intricate pattern. It was SO stylish."*

Role-playing Hints

Thralls were bred for combat and the arts surrounding combat. They love the feel of a weapon in their hands. They understand the need for teamwork, and no matter what the situation, they will not balk from an order given by a superior. They are great believers in personal honour and truth. They are the ultimate tactician, battle planner, and team player. Thralls do not like their platoon or team to argue or show subversion. The group is everything to a Thrall, and they will give their all to protect it. They respect mages for what they can do, but they simply do not understand magic. There is no love of magic, or even the entertainment of belief in it. If a Thrall was asked to trust a mage to cast a spell to make him fly over to a battle, he would complain that "you think that waving your hands around will make me sprout wings to fly over there" or some other apprehensive remark. They trust magical items, because the item has proven itself; some examples are enchanted weapons, windships, and alchemical potions.

Character Classes

There is only one main class that the Thralls of Taz favour. Thralls were bred for combat, and because of this, they will always be warriors in some way or shape.

Warrior – The warrior class is kin to the Fighter and Barbarian classes in the fact that their proficiency lays in weapons. With the time and effort Thralls put into the art of battle, there is little wonder that they are so good at what they choose to do. Due to their tight focus and the way they were created, they have no ability for magic. They do not trust spells or incantations, but do have some faith in magical items.

Hidden Treasures?

The Jungles of Taz are a maze of thick forest and swamp land to those who do not know the lay of it. The main road is generally safe barring the wandering beasts who watch for unwary travelers.

In the deeper parts of the jungle in the area near Targ Swamp is a large bog-like area. There are stories told of the crash of a massive and treasure laden windship near there, but no one has ever returned from looking for it. Many make drunken vows to undertake a journey into the area, to bring back a souvenir of proof. However, when the drinks are gone and the sun is up, the boasts of bravery melt away like ice in the sun. The few that have gone looking return telling of river kra, armoured leeches, bog devils, and swamp demons. Some groups have gotten close, with one person to return battered and near death to tell of the ship sticking out of the ground. Most that venture in, do not venture out, but if anyone could survive it, they would walk away wealthy.

There have been rumours spreading of a group of bandits operating on the roads around Tor. The Thralls that have been on guard and patrol have not seen anyone out there, but occasionally they find some kind of debris or marking that someone had been out there, or that some attack had happened. When the Thralls follow the trail left by the bandits, they are led around a large area eventually landing where they left off. The find the beginning of the trail again, but their tracks are the only ones there, and there are no signs of anyone else being there. The bandits seem to pick their targets carefully. The only people to have been attacked are those traveling by foot or with a heavily laden cart. If there are weapons visible, or people who look like they can use the weapons they normally do not attack. Once a group with a few guards was attacked, but it was in the night and they could not describe the attackers or where they came from. This lack of security, especially around Tor, is embarrassing to the Thrall Nation; and they are to the point of hiring mercenaries to try and track down and eliminate the threat.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Thrall characters. The top character class without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Thrall Warrior

The below classes are new archetypes, however if you want something different, you can create your own with help from your GM.

Thrall Scout

CR +6 MR -5 HP 28
STR +2 PER 2
DEX +3 CHA 0
CON +2 WIL +2
SPD +2 INT -2*

Skills

Tazian Combat	+4
<3 Weapons of Choice>	+2
Coerce	+2
Espionage	+5
Scout	+3
Streetwise	+1
Traps	+3
Ride	+3

Languages

Low Talislan – Native
Tattoos – Native
High Talislan – Fluent
<Language of Choice> - Basic

* When using skills listed above, INT modifier is +3

Quote: *"It is my Honour to serve."*

At a young age you chose to go into Scouting instead of normal Battle Training. The work was more tedious, and needed more concentration than that of your fellows. You learnt how to sit silent and still in a tree, how to tell if a trap was there, and how to remove it. You also learned how to get someone to tell you what you needed to know, and of course how to fight. You can hold your own against the enemy, but your real job is to get in and get out without the enemy knowing that you were ever there. It is an honour to serve with your platoon, because you know that sometimes they wouldn't have walked away from the battle if it wasn't for your knowledge of the situation before they got there.

Equipment

Loincloth; vest (females); sandals; garde armour; weapons of choice; camouflage and black out paints; flask of tanazian fire ale; graymane steed; 50 gold lumens in assorted currencies.

Appearance

Height: 6'8" (Males), 6'4" (Females); Weight: 300 pounds (Males), 200 pounds (Females); no hair or pigmentation; muscular build; all members of each gender are completely identical in physical appearance

Thrall Quartermaster

CR +6 MR -5 HP 30
STR +4 PER 0
DEX +2 CHA 0
CON +3 WIL +2
SPD +1 INT -2*

Skills

Tazian Combat +3
<5 Weapons of Choice> +1
<2 Weapons of Choice> +2
<1 Weapon of Choice> +4
Appraise (Weapons/ Armour) +2
Weaponer +4
Armourer +4
Artificer +5
<Choice of any 2 **> +1

**

Antiquarian (Weapons and Armour Only)

History (Famous Warriors and Gear)

Locks (Design and Install only)

Tactics

Engineer (Siege Weapons)

Command

* When using skills listed above, INT modifier is +3

Languages

Low Talislan – Native

Tattoos – Native

High Talislan – Fluent

Quote: *“What do you mean you didn’t know a Thrall could use a hammer and forge? Where did you think their weapons came from, the sky?”*

You love weapons. You were bred to love the art of warfare, and you love that too, but weapons are what drive you. You are always on the look out for a new way to make an old thing, or something that you’ve never seen before. Yes, you fix the armour and weapons that your Battle Brothers and Sisters use, but that doesn’t bring as much joy to you as crafting a fine blade, or finding an ancient weapon whose design you can use to improve some of the things you’re already making. Weapons help the art of war, and you love weapons.

Equipment

Loincloth; vest (females); sandals; garde armour; three weapons of choice; portable blacksmith tools, leather repair kit; mangonel lizard or graymane steed; 50 gold lumens in assorted currencies.

Appearance

Height: 6’8” (Males), 6’4” (Females); Weight: 300 pounds (Males), 200 pounds (Females); no hair or pigmentation; muscular build; all members of each gender are completely identical in physical appearance.■



CHAPTER 4

VARDUNE

Origins of Vardune

The capital city hosts a many strange sights for those who are not accustomed to finding a city above the heads of those whose feet normally remain on the ground. When up in the splendid city some of the first things that people notice are the leaves on the trees, and the massive amount of others enjoying the same thing. I endeavoured to seek out those who would tell me not only of these strange and wonderful people, but also of their history. After speaking to one, this is what I discovered.

The Aeriad believe that they came from a noble line of avir long, long ago. They say that before they were known as Aeriad, they were called the Ardua, and it is speculated that at one point in time, they were all the same color, not two separate colors. However, they also told me that is no proof of much of any of that.

From what they could gather, and the rumours passed down within their people's history, most of the stories claim that the Great Disaster is the reason for their downfall. Some think that they passed through a misty barrier, on their way to Talislanta, that was magic in nature and that disrupted their bodies; while others think that it might be something that they encountered while actually on the continent of Talislanta. Yet, no one truly knows what the truth is anymore.

The one thing that is agreed is that they are changing from those who lived in the sky to those whose feet belong on the ground. The biggest and most solid thing they can tell me about is the more recent past, when they were called Ardua. This was back when they belonged to the Phaedran Empire. The life that they lived in the Phaedran Empire was rough for them. They were hunted by those who sought to enslave them, mocked by those who thought they were inferior, and

generally they were treated very poorly by those who were indifferent.

Before they had 'devolved' to the extent that they are at now, they left the Empire to find greener land and escape persecution. Even at this point they were separated into the two colors, Blue and Green. Both the Blue and the Green fled together; but the sporadic infighting between the two classes was too great to hold them together much after reaching the lush forests of Vardune.

The Blue took their leave and moved into the North of Vardune, while the Green began to cultivate the glades of the South. Each of the two factions formed Councils and chose nine elder Ministers to help guide and support them. Every month the Green and Blue Councils would meet somewhere in the middle to discuss what the best for the kingdom would be; they would argue and argue, never coming to grips that their working together would be needed. When the Phaedran's wars became worse they would band together to push them away, out of their lands and back across the Axis River; but each time there were massive losses on both the Blue and Green sides. Yet, they still couldn't agree on anything.

Finally, they noticed the goings on outside of their forests and started watching the Cymrilians. They were a queer folk to the Aeriad, but they seemed to work together well, so they started communicating with them. They found that the dangerous magics that the Cymrilians preformed was of benefit to them, and decided to work with them to try and strengthen themselves against their foes to the west.

Even after the Phaedran Empire had dissolved the alliance between the Cymrilians and the Aeriad held tight, and knowledge begun to flow. The Blue became part of the army, and the green cultivated the foods needed to help with feeding those in the Alliance. Fortunately at the moment, the fighting between the Blue and Green has died down, and they are traversing a period of general peace.

The Capital of Vardune

The Capital of Vardune is Vashay. On either side of the main road leading to Vashay live the Blue and Green Aeriad, who are also called Ardua. Generally the Blue and Green Aeriad do not get along with one another and these quarrels make politics in Vardune difficult. However, in Vashay is where you will find the most diverse ways of thinking. There are families of Blue and Green living together in peace, or those who have decided that the other colors way of thought is more legitimate to them. There is a standing decree in Vashay that dictates that only peaceful relations between the two sects are allowed; if a fight breaks out both parties are jailed and counselled on the proper attitude to display in the city.

Important Structures

Main Council Tree

The Main Council Tree is located in the pure center of Vashay, where all Aeriad are welcome. Political debates, discussions of laws, and peaceful protests are held in this city center. The Council Tree is where the two Councils of Ministers meet and discuss the monthly concerns of the Kingdom and how to present their needs to the rest of the Alliance. Normally the Main Council Tree is a busy place, because of the petitioners and the protestors. Daily politics are usually one on one discussions and alliances. Normally the Council of Ministers meets only once a month. However, they only meet once a month as a group; the Ministers have private councils on nearly a daily basis.

The Great Viridia Grove

The trees within the grove are used for the burial practices of both the Green and Blue Ardua. The central tree that is a great Span Oak is used as the tree that the Green and Blue Aeriad come together to worship the Creator. This area is rarely empty, being that someone is almost always singing praises, or laying down one to rest. Most Aeriad from the Northwood and Southwood bring their loved ones to be laid to rest in the Great Viridia Grove.

Family Grove

The Family Grove is where those who live in the city of Vardune live. The trees in the Grove are massive in size, with numerous woven walkways and shelters fill the trees to near breaking, but the trees were grown to be strong and large so as to support an entire family of Aeriad. There are various Family Groves spread out around Vardune, but the largest grove is the one that surrounds Vashay. Since Aeriad mate for life, and they have a deep reverence for family, there are few splits in families, but when a disagreement happens, it is no small affair. There have incidents where a Blue crosses to

Public Opinion

Sindar – *“The Aeriad, otherwise known as the Ardua, are quite adept at herbal mixtures and remedies and their keen insights are stimulating. In counterpoint, they are eager students willing to take instruction and criticism for their own betterment.”*

Kasmir – *“The employ of Blue Aeriad guards is a practical one; however, they do not fare well in our native climate. Their positions are therefore short-lived. They are better employed as caravan guards and scouts than as tower guards. We enjoy seeing what new botanical solutions come from their Green kin as they frequently prove to be lucrative investments.”*

Astar – *“As much as we enjoy using our own resources for creating new artistic works, many quality substances are raised and nurtured by the Green Aeriad. We particularly fancy their dyes, vines, and tea leaves.”*

Taz – *“An honourable and willing folk, always volunteering to scout ahead or serve on watch duty. The Blue are proficient huntsmen, and at the same time the Green are skilled makers of the other things that a marching army needs.”*

Cymril – *“We appreciate their presence in the Council. Their input is almost always significant. They are, however, sometimes more aloof or abrasive than I think they realize. Their exports are highly valuable and they are a strong addition to the Borderlands Legions.”*

Durne – *“The Aeriad are good allies, and there is much to be proud about when thinking of them as such. The trades and discussions that are perused between our people are enjoyable and enlightening. Soon there should be a breakthrough in one of our desired endeavours. Especially knowing that our allies are those intelligent and hardworking Aeriad.”*

Aaman – *“We enjoy our trade pact with those called the Ardua, and we respect their skills not only in battle but in the pursuit of knowledge. We are saddened that they do not wish to pledge us more support, and that they are blind, it seems, to the light of Aa.”*

Arim – *“The Blue Aeriad are those whom we deal with more often, and they are a principled people and someone that even we would admit to being formidable foes.”*

the South for personal reasons. Usually, if a Blue does leave their family to study under the Green's, they are not welcome back into their tree. Likewise for a Green leaving to study with the Blue, but the Green are more tolerant, and will allow the runaway back to live not in the family tree, but in a neighbouring one.

Political Ties In the Seven Kingdoms

The Seven Kingdoms respect the Aeriad and their numerous contributions to the Alliance. Since both the Blue and Green have separate proficiencies, they discuss the offers of the unchosen side for the things that have the possibility of being discussed at the King's Council. Since only one Chief Minister is chosen to represent Vardune at a time, much time is spent on laying down what the other Ministers will accept on behalf of their services. For example, if it is assumed that a good bit of the King's Council will be spent on Trade, the Trade Minister and his Council would travel to Cymril, bearing scrolls in which the other Ministers' negotiations would be spelled out, so that if another topic came up, the Minister available would be able to handle the preliminary negotiations. Most the Aeriad have good relations with all the folk of the Seven Kingdoms. The Blue's get along well with the Thralls, the Kasmiran, and the Cymrilians to some extent. Their passion is in the hunt and battle. They have formed their own Navy that patrols the Axis River, and they also have a good number of their kin serving in the Borderlands Legion. Normally, the Blue Aeriad enjoy discussing the philosophy behind battle and the honour that both the Thralls of Taz and Kasmirans of Kasmir seem to possess. They tolerate the Cymrilians, and are somewhat fearful of the wizards of Cymril, due to the way they were raised to think of magic, and the proper ways to use and study it. However, they are indebted to their development of bracers that give them back their ability to fly.

The Green Aeriad has a good bit of contact with the Gnomekin, the Muses, and the Sindarans. The Gnomekin send and accept ambassadors to study with and share knowledge of those things that grow. There have been discussions of late to make some of the more hearty mushrooms surface growing. The task has been proven to be difficult at the least, yet neither side has shown much desire to give up the attempt. As well as moving mushrooms to above ground, they have been discussing moving or creating a plant similar to the Viridia Tree that will grow underground. The reason for these recent discussions is that the Gnomekin have desired of late the versatility of a Viridia Tree yet in plant form that can be grown under their care. The Muses of Astar are intrigued with the new ways of growing plants when they take the time to remember that something interesting is happening away from their groves. They do not have much contact with each other, but when they do, ideas are passed back and forth with such rapidity that those who do not realize why a Muse is meeting with an Aeriad, think it is some kind of one sided debate. Recently the Muses have decided that they want extra Viridia Pod Silk and some of the bolder dyes that the Aeriad grow sent. It seems as if they are plotting something big, yet they have yet to share with anyone what they are plotting, or how long it will be before it is shown to the rest of the Seven Kingdoms, and eventually all of Talislanta. The relationship with the Sindarans of Sindar is slightly different however, more similar to that of student and teacher than peer to peer. One reason for this is that the craft of making herbal elixirs is more thoroughly developed by Sindarans than it is by the Aeriad. However, there have been instances that an Aeriad creates something that is new to the Sindaran community, and from there, build new and fantastic

Hidden Treasures?

Vardune is a rich country, the land green and fertile. The area is peaceful and calm, and rarely is anything spoken about that would be out of the ordinary. However, there are times that things are found, or needed to be found.

A family of Green Aeriad claim that the eldest of their house has gone missing. They tell a tale of woe, explaining a note written to them from distant family stating that they remember hearing the name of the great Matriarch of their family being spoken in the Great Viridia Grove, but since they were laying one of their children to rest, they could not go see what was happening. The family claims that she was kidnapped along with one of her great nephews while most of the others were away from the Family Tree. A ransom was asked, but they neither had the money, nor could they contact the kidnappers to discuss different terms of return. When asked about a body being found in the Grove, they tell you that no one has actually seen her body, just heard her name being spoken. They beg of you to seek her out and return her home; for a healthy reward that is.

There are strange things happening on the Axis River just south of Valanis. The Blue Aeriad does not know how to deal with the odd movements in the water, and fear that it might be some large beast that is hunting the hunters. Late night patrols that have only a few warriors have been known to disappear, and there have been complaints from those living near the water of a strange gurgling and splashing noise. However the noise is not on every night, only on a few, and the days that there is noise are not predictable. The Aeriad are at their wits end with this fiend and are willing to accept some help in dispatching it.

concoctions that neither would have dreamed of without the aid of the other.

In general, in the eyes of the Aeriad, the Seven Kingdoms is a tightly knit and well working structure, and they plan on helping it remain just that by working on being productive and loyal members of the Alliance.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

The Aeriad are feared and revered for their keen eyes, sharp minds, and great skills. Most of their goods are exported and have gained much praise for the quality of the things they share with the whole of Talislanta. People from all over come seeking aid from the fierce Blues and the pragmatic Greens; and they usually leave with what they were seeking. If the Aeriad can not assist those who seek help from them, they are usually helpful in sending them in the proper direction for them to find the things that they need. They are admired for their fair prices, and for accepting many of the currencies that others in the Seven Kingdoms turn down, however, they also have a little more trade goods than the other members of the Alliances, and can usually spend their money just as easily. Some of the dealings that the Aeriad have in place are those that the rest of the Seven Kingdoms does not approve of, but when the subject is brought up, they

explain that contracts were written and they will not be seen as oath breakers.

Religion

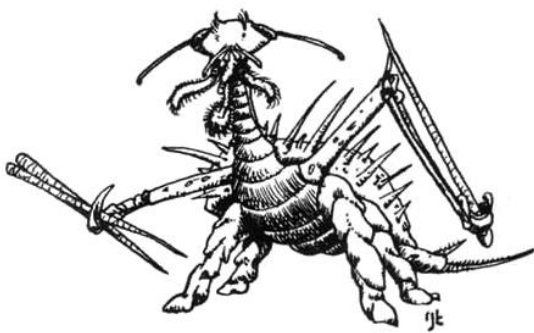
The Aeriad are of two minds about religion as they are with just about everything else, however they do both agree on worship of the Creator. Their worship ceremonies are grand and musical, they celebrate together putting aside those things that they disagree over. Their worship is sometimes spontaneous, and other times dictated by tradition or honour. Aside from the Creator, the Botanomancers consider themselves in a guild that was founded by a great wizard named Viridian. He is credited for the creation of the Viridian Tree, and many other exotic plants.

Creationists

Most Aeriad are worshippers of the Creator, thus their holidays are similar, but each faction celebrates some things differently, or for different reasons. There are no dictated holidays on the Aeriad Creationist calendar, but there are a few that are widely recognized. Mostly, when the days of worship and praise crop up, there is a larger and louder crowd in the Great Span Oak that lies in the center of all towns and small settlements. Occasionally a group of Aeriad will be seen in any tree singing worship to the Creator if they feel the need, but normally they hold their prayers to when they are back among their own kind.

Viridians

The Aeriad who revere the Great Viridian have a general goal and that is to cover the land with good, green, and growing things. They also share the deep desire of improving the plants that are already in existence. They are a goodly and kindly folk who do not necessarily see the need in worshipping Viridian but do enjoy quoting things that are attributed to this mythical wizard.



Role-playing Hints

Aeriad also known as Ardua, are a proud folk who are descended from great and powerful avians. Each faction however has a different idea on how things should be, or what their purpose is. There are normally peaceful relations between the two, but at times, tensions flare and arguments break out.

Blue - the Blue Aeriad are strong believers in their role as predators. They admire their background and history, while at the same time trying to achieve the glory that they feel that they lost. They speak of devolution and are bitter over their loss of the ability to fly. In general the Blue admire the Gryph and some have even gone as far as to try to breed with them in the attempt to re-evolve to where they were before.

Green - the Green Aeriad believe that they have lost flight to bring them closer to where they're supposed to be. They believe that the ground and the plants are what their attention is supposed to be pointed to. They are generally peaceful, but will defend their homes and their plants with great ardour. The Green Aeriad are generally polite and obliging to their Blue counterparts; thinking that out of patience, love, and example they can teach their brethren the way to live. They are rarely preachy, and will gladly admit someone into their midst if they profess the desire and passion for growing things.

Character Classes

These are the two main classes that Aeriad hold to, but there are always variations, and you can easily make something completely different than the two below. However, typically, other races might be more suited to the things you want.

Mage - Mages are straight spell casters. However, in the world of Talislanta, both Clerics and Mages are considered spell casters and therefore lumped together in most cases. With the Talislanta magic system, you can choose to practice Invocation and that would make you a Cleric. On the other hand, you could choose to study Botanomancy, and that would make you a normal mage. You are also given the option to at any time spend your experience to add another Order of your choice.

Warrior - The Aeriad warriors are airborne combat fighters, preferring to stay back, fly up on their foe and attack, and then fly away out of the foe's reach. Generally, these fighters use long range weapons. With their high dexterity they have the advantage of being able to avoid blows from their "prey" or foe.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Aeriad characters. The top two without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Green Aeriad Botanomancer Blue Aeriad Ranger

The below classes are new archetypes, however if you want something different, you can create your own with help from your GM.

Blue-green Botanomantic Ranger

CR +2 MR +2 HP 18
STR -2 PER +2
DEX +3 CHA 0
CON -1 WIL 0
SPD +1 INT +2

Skills

Botanomancy	+3
Alchemy (plant only)	+2
Tri Bow	+2
Crescent Knife	+2
Herb Lore	+3
Scout	+3
Aerial Combat	+4

Languages

Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Short tunic; loin cloth; cloak of plain viridian linen; bracers of levitation; sandals; two crescent knives; tri bow with three clips; belt pouches; three vials of plant based concoctions; stoppered gourd flask of vinesap; 75 gold lumens in pentacles and other assorted currencies.

Appearance

Height: 5'-6"; Weight: 75-105 pounds; blue-green skin; iridescent blue-green feathers and plumage; slight build; birdlike features; crest of feathers on head; vestigial wings.

Special Abilities

Glide up to 50', wind permitting. With bracers, can fly at a constant speed of +2 and have short bursts of speed up to +8.

Quote: "I fight for my people and my country; I am the perfect blend of both my parent's thoughts and ideals."

You are something completely new, neither Blue nor Green. You do not understand why they fight with each other so much. Your parents never really fought, but they paid and still do pay for being together and for having you. The Blues say that you are a disgrace, weak, and unnatural. The Greens say that you are a mistake, an accident, and unholy. Your parents say that you are the future. You tend to believe your parents, and their friends. You are learning both sets of skills, the awesome powers over plant life – Botanancy; and the great prowess of battle and love of the hunt – Ranger. You and those like you hope that someday all of the Aeriad will live in peace, but that goal seems so distant.

Blue Aeriad Botanomancer

CR +3 MR +1 HP 19
STR -1 PER +1
DEX +4 CHA 0
CON -2 WIL 0
SPD +2 INT +1

Skills

Botanomancy	+5
Alchemy (plant only)	+4
Agriculture	+4
Herb Lore	+5
Brewer/Vintner (Vinesap)	+4
Artificer	+4

Languages

Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Short tunic; loin cloth; cloak of plain viridian linen; sandals; wooden staff; scroll case (for writings and notes) belt pouches (containing things like: ink, reed pen, seeds, small plant samples, etc.) ; five vials of plant based concoctions; assorted tomes; stoppered gourd flask of vinesap; 100 gold lumens in pentacles and other assorted currencies.

Appearance

Height: 5'5"-6"; Weight: 80-120 pounds; blue skin; metallic blue feathers and plumage; slight build; birdlike features; crest of feathers on head; vestigial wings.

Special Abilities

Glide up to 50', wind permitting.

Quote: "No, I don't think that the way that the Blue Aeriad think is wrong completely, it's just wrong for me."

You never understood the way the rest of your family thought. 'Bird of Prey' never fit you like it fit the rest of your family. The delight of flying was not as great, the desire to kill not as important. You always felt like you were born into the wrong family. You would hear your parents talk about the Green Aeriad, and wonder what it would be like to live a life of peace and tranquility, one with nature and the plants and trees that bear your weight. Your passion lies in things green and growing, and those in your new family circle embrace you, even if your old family scorns you.



Green Aeriad Ranger

CR +1 MR +3 HP 18
STR -2 PER +2
DEX +2 CHA 0
CON -2 WIL 0
SPD +1 INT +2

Skills

Tri Bow	+3
Dart Thrower	+3
Crescent Knife	+3
Aerial Combat	+4
Scout	+5
Tactics	+5
Guard	+4
Weaponer	+2

Languages

Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Short tunic; loin cloth; cloak of plain viridian linen; Bracers of Levitation; sandals; two crescent knives; dart thrower with pouch of ten darts; tri bow with five clips; belt pouch; stoppered gourd flask of vinesap; 50 gold lumens in pentacles and other assorted currencies.

Appearance

Height: 4'10" - 5'2"; Weight: 70 - 90 pounds; green skin; metallic green feathers and plumage; slight build; birdlike features; crest of feathers on head; vestigial wings.

Special Abilities

Glide up to 50', wind permitting. With bracers, can fly at a constant speed of +2 and have short bursts of speed up to +8.

Quote: "I feel the need to fight, so I have learned the ways of the Ranger. I plan on protecting my people, in anyway possible."

You understand the goal of your family, to create those things to protect you. To have nature on your side; to have it keep you safe from your enemies. You disagree however, thinking that while it is nice to have the plants that you nurtured protecting you; it is not practical. You know that to honestly be safe from those who would seek to harm you, you must be willing to put your hands where your mouth is and actually defend yourself. Someday, you hope that you will feel that you are properly able to protect those that you love most; but until then you will study the ways of war.■

CHAPTER 5

DURNE

Origins of Durne

After traveling the long and perilous journey on the underground road to Durne, I reached the elegant and splendid Subterranean City of Durne. The Gnomekin were more than polite and gracious. They were willing and ready to speak to me about the careful craft of Crystallomancy, the rearing of the younglings as they called them, and even the history of this fair city.

It began with a war. A dreadful war that the Gnomekin were losing badly. The warriors had gone to hold the line so their people could flee. The injured, sick, elderly, and younglings fled. Day and night they ran, ahead of the massacre that was chasing them into the dark cold mountains. They knew that the line had broken. They wept bitter tears as they were perused. Day after day, they fled higher and higher into the icy peaks, and spent bitterly cold nights in hiding. Their flight was long, and slowly they lost more and more of the injured and sick. The elderly and younglings were not holding up too well either, but they still had fight in them.

After long weeks drug out into their minds as months upon no end, they found shelter. A cave that was dark, deep, and oddly dank. Afraid of pursuit they scrambled deep into the craggy crevice and lost themselves in the shade as best as they could. Not even one night into staying in their new hiding place, one of the youngest disappeared. She told her friends that she was off exploring. Some of the older children that were near adulthood went off to rescue her the next morning. After the first night the others began to wonder when they would return, but days passed with no sign of any of them.

Then as if the children knew they were missed, they returned. They opened their pockets to reveal them full of warmly glowing crystal. The children told fanciful tales about the

caverns below, of rooms where the ceiling looked like the sky, and where the stone was carved more beautifully than a flower in bloom. Yet, most talk was of crystal. The children said that it was magical, that it helped them, and that it was better than anything they had ever seen or heard of before. The adults scoffed, and begged the elders to listen to them and to leave the cave. They agreed that there was magic, but it was wrong somehow and had tainted the children.

The pleas had fallen on deaf ears, the elders listened to the voices of the children. By recommendation of the youngest and first to leave the caverns the first time, the elders left to explore the cavern themselves. The longer the eldest were gone, the stranger the children began to act. It started small, huddling in small groups and whispering. Soon however, they noticed that the children were hiding away in darkness and talking to the crystals that they had brought back with them in hushed voices.

This was the thing that finished spreading the fear in the remaining adults. Late one night they gathered all the crystals they could find and hid them from the children. Then the adults waited, finally, after a few weeks they discussed leaving the accursed cave. Whispering amongst themselves that the elders would never return to the rest of them. They spoke to each other that the elders had lost themselves, or fallen and perished away from those who could help them. They spoke, almost reassuringly, to each other saying that the elders were lost for good. They said that if they wanted to keep their lives the rest of them should leave by noon of the next day. It was agreed upon, the plan was set, and they packed their meagre belongings and went to sleep.

One child, the first to leave and the cleverest decided to warn the elders that they were leaving. One fragment of crystal remained, the child spoke, and the elders heard. The elders

sent one back up so that they could bring their people to the light. As the sun was peaking to noon, the adults began shouldering their burdens, and ushering the children in front of them, out of the caves.

Just as the first group of younglings had stepped into the light, another sun shone behind them. The vast light illuminated the dark cave and made the adults stop to see what was happening. There, at the back of the cave, the eldest stood. He was bathed in light, and yet seemed as if he was the center of the light. He raised his arms, and they noticed that he was holding a large jagged crystal. After speaking so quietly that not even the closest adult could hear, the children ran to him. Soon all the adults had finally shifted around to watch as the eldest left with the younglings and near adults.

The brilliant light was fading as they moved deeper into the cave. The bewildered adults turned and began to follow, a line of people trickling down into the dark. That is when the work began, when they worked on opening up the caves to build their magnificent Underground City known as The Subterranean City of Durne. There are separate claims from those living in Durne that the city and land were given to them from Terra herself on the day that their race was made. It is not known which of these stories were true, but the latter is the more popular of the two.

The Capital of Durne

The capital city of Durne is known as The Subterranean City of Durne. In fact, there is only one city in Durne and it is the before mentioned city. The ground above the city is rolling hills and thick forest lands, yet it is uninhabited. Most likely because of the things that lurk in the shadows. The people who have survived a tryst onto the surface of Durne report attacks from Malathrope, Shathane, and there are even rumours of Malavraxes.

Important Structures

There happen to be very few structures in The Subterranean City of Durne, due to the fact that most Gnomekin live in cave like rooms off of the Underground Highway. There are many back passageways and larger communal rooms, but most of the time, the Gnomekin travel from one abode to the next, with little thought of massive congregation. Part of the reason for this is that the Gnomekin live in family blocks, and most of the blocks share communal water and food sources. Another reason is that they do not normally recognize the difference from one place to the next being separate from the other; to them, the entire city is one large house, which all of their people can use, and all are expected maintain and defend.

The Great Hall

The Great Hall is what outsiders call the massive area that you enter when the Underground Highway ends. Its ceilings are so high that you couldn't even see them if there was enough light for an above ground dweller's eye. The crystals that scatter on the ceiling of this large area glitter making it almost seem as if it is the night sky devoid of the moons.

Hidden Treasures?

There are many whispers in the city of things above and below ground. Dangers plague the above and the below of Durne. However there are many riches to be found. The Gnomekin themselves are not too interested in seeking wealth, but they do keep the stories spreading in the hopes that brave adventurers will come and reduce the amount of wicked beasts that prey on their people.

Just before the main halls of The Subterranean City of Durne there are a series of corridors. The corridors lead down and around into the deeper, colder, and more perilous parts that had been freed by the seeking people. The regular patrols in the area have kept most of the monsters away, and the foolish travelers from making a long turn. However, no matter the amount of patrols, some do get lost, never to return. The Gnomekin do not speak much about what lies below, except that it is dangerous and something to leave be, unless you think you're strong enough to take on the worst of the worst.

Up in the forest of Iron Wood Trees lie the fallen branches from the tough trees, and the trees themselves. However it also holds a small but nagging mystery. The brave few who have taken to roaming the perilous land have mentioned spotting an eerie glow coming from deep within the forests boughs. There are rumours that it is a small camp or city that has hidden itself from prying eyes, but those rumours are normally discounted because of the numerous dangerous beasts wandering in the area. Others think that it is a store of new crystal that the Gnomekin have yet to see or work with, but there is no way of telling. Yet another rumour is that it is a portal to somewhere else, hiding in the trees where only those who need to know of its existence go to.

There is a strange myth of a "Hidden Mushroom" that all Gnomekin and visitors seek during Harvest festivals. The stories are normally of a King Mushroom growing in with the normal ones; that only the most worthy or needy can find. The size of the mushroom ranges from story to story, sometimes being as large as one of the Gnomekin, or just a few times larger than the rest of the mushrooms. It is said that eating some of this mushroom will make you lucky for the rest of the year. The super large mushrooms have been found before, the last documented one was found by a group from Zandu. However there were mixed reports of extra special luck being had after eating the massive fungus.

This is normally where those who do not have pressing business with a particular Gnomekin stay. The large lake and slight breezes are calming, and the locals who are out and about are free with their foods which are a delicacy on the surface. Most travelers or vacationers risk the dangerous Highway just to bask in the peacefulness of the Great Hall and the compassion of the Gnomekin. The Great Hall is also the where most of the outside markets exist, so not only can you swim in the Midnight Lake, but you can shop, dine, and enjoy theatre without ever going farther then the Great Hall itself. The Gnomekin think of the Great Hall as the

communal meeting ground, but they have their own water sources and “shops” deeper into the city, where it is rare to see a traveler wandering. Most of the Gnomekin use the Great Hall as a place to let the younglings learn Low Talislan from the foreign visitors. Also in the Great Hall is a small bit of land that juts deep into the lake. The place is known as Destiny Point. It got its name from a story of separated lovers. It is said that if you go to Destiny Point and entreat the grand crystal that juts towards the distant sky, that you will be united with your destined love and nothing will separate you. It is a story that not only Gnomekin honour, but most travelers seem to be fascinated with as well.

The Assembly House

The Assembly House is where the major decisions happen. Similar to the first duty of the King’s Spire in Cymril, it is where all the important discussions happen. The Queen and her family live off the Assembly House’s main hall, so that they are easily accessible to their people in times of need. This is especially important because of the role that the Queen and King play.

Political Ties In the Seven Kingdoms

Durne is close to many of the other kingdoms, because they have kept a careful neutrality. They do their best to make sure that they treat everyone fairly. The Queen is the main Matriarch; a job that entails a massive amount of seneschal work. The King is the Commander in Chief, and the master of battle. There are times that they share duties or help each other if there is much work to be done; but normally the jobs are kept separate. When meetings are held, normally the only one present is the one who’s domain the meeting falls under. While one is in meetings, the other is out taking care of their own responsibilities or serving the community in any way they can.

The King and Queen of Durne are all descended from one bloodline. When a Council of Seven meeting is called, both the King and Queen go, leaving Durne in the hands of their eldest daughter. She has all the power to deal with issues that her mother and father would normally deal with, and it gives her the opportunity to learn the duties of ruling before her parents are gone and she is left to manage without guidance. There have been a few occasions where the ruling Princess has had to call her people to arms; but no matter if it is the King and Queen or the crowned Princess sitting on the throne the people respond. When the King and Queen are in a Council of Seven meeting, they take turns speaking and inputting depending on what is being reviewed at the moment, instead of just the King or just the Queen talking. If challenged however, they will put up a unified front; and in previous years the King and Queen have been known to surprise the Council of Seven.

Once incidence of that is when they thought to intimidate the Queen into agreeing to send more troops out. The King had left the Council Hall because he had believed that his work was done for the day. Once he was gone, the Council changed back to military preparations and tried to force the

Public Opinion

Sindar – *“The Gnomekin. They are a talented folk with a strong streak of goodness and kindness. They have some faults, but all mono-encephalons do.”*

Kasmir – *“The Gnomekin are impractical, relying on good will and the kindness of others. It is difficult to see what they have added to the current year’s contributions considering the fact that they do not use much of any currency.”*

Astar – *“The Gnomekin are a calm and gentle people. They worship Terra, the compliment to Aard. We value their calming presence in the Seven Kingdoms and are glad to be aligned with them. We are pleased to share not only values, but resources as well. Now if they would just see the suns with the same favour as we do.”*

Taz – *“Gnomekin are honourable. They are fierce protectors and strong comrades to have despite their size. We would like to see what would be the result of a Gnomekin studying the way of the warrior that we have, but they seem not to be interested in it.”*

Vardune – *“We do not have much contact with the Gnomekin, but the little we do have leave us in favour of their peaceful ways.”*

Cymril – *“We are pleased that they are in our alliance and have remained our strong allies; especially for the Seven Kingdoms. They are trustworthy and always do what is asked of them if you ask in just the right way. We’ve had a good bargain between their people and ours to spread the knowledge of Crystallomancy.”*

Urag – *“The cowards who hide in their caves, they need to come out and face us with courage instead of hiding behind the Seven Kingdoms, and under the ground.”*

Zandu – *“Who? Oh, the little brown people who wear those strange glasses. No, I do not think I have anything really to say about them. Wait, I have thought of one thing! They need to export more of those mushrooms; I just can not get enough of them!”*

Queen into committing more troops by telling her that it was for the good of the Seven Kingdoms, and was Durne’s duty to assist them. When the Queen replied with the definitive answer of no, the Council of Seven was shocked. The beleaguered her by saying that she normally was not the one to make these crucial decisions, that if she was going to be obstinate they would have her removed, and the King returned. She smiled and sent her page after the King, with orders not to tell him of the situation. He arrived, and she stepped back for him to rejoin the council. They cajoled him and explained that an emergency supply of troops was needed from Durne, and his reply and reasons were the same as the Queen’s own reply and reasoning. Since the final attempt to coerce the King and Queen into actions they do not desire happened, the other members of the Council of Seven have vowed against the attempt again, citing that doing so was more trouble than it was worth.

The Gnomekin strive to keep the Subterranean City of Durne a clean, safe, and peaceful place to live. The welcome visits from the others in the Seven Kingdoms, but never do they expect them. They maintain open trading with Cymril who then trades their goods to outside nations. Their money gotten from trading then goes into a fund that is used to help maintain the military out posts on the surface of Durne and the others that the Seven Kingdoms control. The remaining money is used for making sure that their people are properly taken care of. Most of the time however, it just gets stored in a Kasmiran bank account until it is needed.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

The Gnomekin of Durne are fairly unknown of outside of the Seven Kingdoms, their main fame comes from their exports of mushrooms and crystals. They of course have enemies but most have too hard of a time getting to them. On the rare occasion that they have dealings with an outside country, they make sure that they are as gracious of Hosts or Guests when parley is going on. The Darklings know of a few secret tunnels that reach The Subterranean City of Durne, yet they have been turned back after every insurrection. Most of the troubles that the Gnomekin face are the wanderings of Subterranooids and Drones from deeper in the ground; and the occasional appearance of Scarlet Sporozoids has been known to cause a few troubles. It is said that a long time ago, while the Gnomekin were searching for more information about their area, they dug too deep. Eventually they broke through to what they were seeking but at the same time they also seemed to let something else that was much worse loose.

Durne is unique in the fact that it is one of the most long lived and thriving underground community. They prefer to share their talents among one another, but do use something close to currency when dealing with the rest of the Seven Kingdoms and Talislanta. Their main exports are cultivated and wild crystals, mushrooms, dark blooming flowers, and other rare food items. Most Talislantans do not know much about the Gnomekin, and more than some citizens from the Seven Kingdoms have never even seen a Gnomekin. They enjoy their privacy, just as much as they enjoy company. No matter where a visitor is from, they are welcomed with open arms into the city. Visitors from hostile countries are even permitted, because the Gnomekin believe that not all people are bad. However, those from hostile countries are watched, and the guard is upped while they are visiting.

Religion

Gnomekin worship the Goddess Terra, whom they say gave them their talents with crystals and their splendid city. Terra is the Goddess of earth itself, and is known to help with the growing of things. She is a kind god, and the Gnomekin say she is always listening to those who need help with anything's growth, health or well being. She is a protector of the earth itself, and those who dwell in or on it.

Terrans

The worshippers of Terra, also known as Terrans worship in small and subtle ways, along with large religious festivals. They welcome all to their holiday celebrations, believing that

most people do worship Terra without knowing they are. Their festivals normally are stocked full with good, rich, and earthy foods. Most of the time, the celebrations are not marked as something just for the worship of Terra; but as festivals of life, growth, harvest, and fortune. For example, since there are five different weeks for harvesting mushrooms, the Terrans throw small festivals where the people go and gather mushrooms. Just outside the fields are groups waiting for those to return. Each group has a different duty. Some put aside mushrooms for storage, some do the same for trade, some keep out extra for "at home," and the rest prepare, cook, and serve so they can be eaten right then and there.

Role-playing Hints

Gnomekin are a peace loving people who sometimes decide that their calling is outside of the splendid caverns that their families inhabit. Some are called to the service of protecting the city from outside dangers; those are the ones that you mostly see outside the city. Gnomekin are not generally violent, but if spurred on they can be as fierce as a Thrall. They are a society who does not use currency to trade things between themselves; instead they give their talents freely between one another. Things that an above grounder would consider a "shop" they consider just part of life, those who have things to offer normally keep them in one place so that it is easily accessible to those who need it. They do not understand stealing or doing physical harm to another with no other reason but to take their possessions. However, if someone is caught stealing in The Subterranean City of Durne they are stripped of all their belongings, their name and likeness are spread around and they are thrown out of the city, never allowed to return.

Character Classes

There are the two main classes that Gnomekin hold to, but there are always variations, and you can easily make something completely different than the two below. However, typically, other races might be more suited to the things you want.

Mage – Mages are straight spell casters. However, in the world of Talislanta, both Clerics and Mages are considered spell casters and therefore lumped together in most cases. With the Talislanta magic system, you can choose to practice Invocation and that would make you a Cleric. On the other hand, you could choose to study crystalomancy, and that would make you a normal mage. You are also given the option to at any time spend your experience to add another Order of your choice.

Warrior – Warriors are straight fighters who know the value of the blade and how to wield it. They normally do not have a good Magic Rating (MR) because that is not how they are focused. A warrior is usually also skilled in important things like tactics as to make them better in combat situations.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Gnomekin characters. The top two without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Gnomekin Crystalomancer Gnomekin Protector

Gnomekin Stone Singer

CR +1 MR +3 HP 17

STR 0 PER +1

DEX +4 CHA +2

CON +6 WIL 0

SPD 0 INT +1

Skills

Invocation – Terra

<5 modes of choice> +4

(Reveal +2; Conjure +2; Influence -2; Summon -2)

Crystal Blade +2

Sling +2

Geography +3

Climbing +2

Artificer +3

Languages

Durnese – Native

Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Root Armour worn over linen tunic; Cloak; Crystal Blade, Sling with pouch of 20 stones, 4 vials of each stench root and orange fungus; Durnese eye cusps; Flask of mushroom ale; Pouch; 75 gold lumens in crystals and gold pentacles.

Appearance

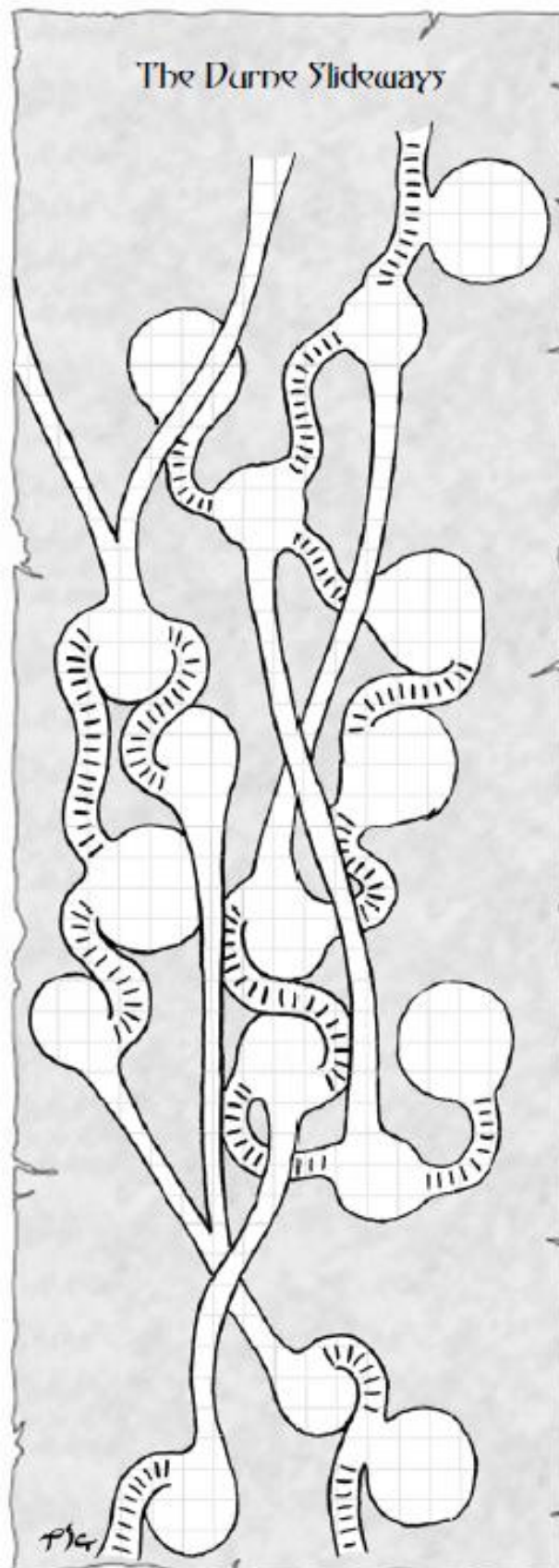
Height: 2'10"-3'6"; Weight: 60-100 pounds; nut brown skin; wide jade green eyes; muscular build; youthful features; crest of black fur starting at forehead and stopping at lower back.

Special Abilities

Night vision; natural climbing ability (+5); poor vision in sunlight (PER -3) without Durnese Cusps.

Quote: *"Guarding the people and working with Crystals are noble ways of life, but serving Terra is fulfilling."*

Some are called to work with the crystals, and some are called to protect. You were called to serve your Goddess – Terra. She gives you the power to fight in her name, and lends you her hand when you need to call upon her for aid. Terra is everything in your heart, and you will serve her faithfully until death. Some who come to Terra's tender embrace feel the need to spread Terra's word to the rest of Talislanta. When that calling comes, you will go with pleasure, traveling the surface, and doing Terra's will. ■



CHAPTER 6

ASTAR

Origins of Astar

Finding the people in this beautiful land was difficult, but worth the searching. When I finally found them however, I noticed that there were more questions to ask than the normal ones. They did not live in cities, but in groves. They rarely stayed in one place, constantly moving from grove to grove, not one solid place to dwell. Their small Wood Whisp friends setting their homes up, making sure they had food, and caring for their young. It was amazing to watch the way the whisps moved about on their duties. I had approached many different Muses to try and ask them about their peoples histories, and it took me a moment to realize that the Muses themselves do not speak, but speak through the whisps themselves.

Finally, I found a group of them sitting in something that looked like meditation. I decided that I would 'join' them and sat behind them, listening to the music that they picked out on delicate instruments and relaxing. Before long I felt something curious. It seemed as if they were asking me questions. Images swam in my mind and I did my best to reply, to explain. I painted pictures with words as I have been taught, and they seem pleased. Then, as it turns out, since they knew my questions they began painting images in my mind, accompanied by music. Explaining how they came to where they are now, the creation of the Muses. There were five of them there, and I will relate as best as I can the things I have seen and felt.

Blooms of light in darkness. I see something strange, it looks like a Muse, but it seems larger. It's floating above what appears to be Lake Zephyr. Its arms spread wide and colors hitting the shore from the suns light flowing through the impressive wings. A melody erupts and the wing light flashes. The motes of coloured light begin to move and dance,

blending and mixing, the light is getting brighter now, and the pale colors seem to be growing in size. The larger Muse seems to rise up in the air and slowly begin to fly over the new motes of light. As she does more light glitters from her, falling slowly like gemstones tumbling off a high place their facets being caught and lighting up in the sunlight. The motes fly up to catch these drops of sparkling light, and the large Muse continues flying up, and away from the smaller muses, now growing as the larger leaves. When she is no longer visible, and the sparkling bits of light disappear the Muses are left, watching the sky, and marvelling at the suns. A reverie in light.

It started over then, something was different. There was music now; a few of them were playing. My mind was filled with night; the sky overhead was shone to me to be glittering, but far removed and unimportant. The music started of pure chaos, an unearthly and unhealthy sound; but slowly it came together. In the dark, I could see one shape, moving its hands over a large instrument, as if this was the thing that the music was coming from.

As the last notes of the music seemed to harmonize I noticed something else. It seemed like the music had formed a new body of its own. A small shifting form in the darkness opened its arms and seemed to be writhing and dancing to the song I was hearing. The more I listened, the more figures seemed to be moving, growing from the ebb and flow of the music itself. They danced and grew and multiplied. The night began to fade, and the suns approached. The figures dancing became more frenzied, as did the music. Soon, the land was bathed with light, and when the dazzlement from the sudden light disappeared, I noticed hundreds of lithe bodies sleeping on the grassy shore of Lake Zephyr. Slowly, the music faded and stopped, and the muses awoke. And that is where they left me, stunned and waiting for the next story to visit.

Fading from nothing came the shores of Lake Zephyr once again. This time however, the brilliantly green grassy expanses were covered in flowers. Or I should say flower buds. From each bud I could see a bit of soft color poking, like when you know the flower will bloom. Light flooded the flower field, and rain poured down upon them and both were drunk up before reaching the ground it seemed. The closed blooms began to swell, and I could see as if it were not completely there a cosmic gardener; someone tending the ever growing buds. The more care given to the flowers, the larger the buds would grow. It felt like days had passed yet I was entranced, the gardener began to fade and the blooms began to open. Muses stretched high into the sunlight, their wings tight about their bodies. Rain fell from the sky once again, and the new Muses danced and played in the water, ever growing. As the rain passed, I noticed the small flowers where the Muses grew from fade into tiny white flowers. The vision faded slowly from my mind, the Muses seemed contented and then as if I had departed them, they went back to their business before I had arrived and joined them. Leaving me to enjoy the memories they had left in my mind, and the knowledge they had passed on to me.

The Capital of Astar

It is important to say that the closest thing to a Capital in Astar would be the lake itself. The Muses do not stay in one place for an extended period of time. They prefer to move around and see different things, sometimes moving to two or three different locations in one day. The whisps that constantly surround them are uncomplaining however, and follow their Muse companions without hesitation or complaint. The few times a muse remains in one place for an extended period of time is when they have a little one to care for. The Muse itself does not care for the child, but their whisp companions do, and the Muses do sometimes remember that caring for the little ones is difficult and try to make things a little easier by demanding less until the child itself is moving around some.

Important Places

Lake Zephyr

It is not only the place that the creation myths are housed, but also the place that most Muses return to. The pure color of the lake and the general tranquility on its shores is the place that most of the art is created. A good bit of their artwork is a representation of that place itself, but yet others create art from the things they have seen when wandering the fast forests of the Kingdom.

As well as being the place for most of the artists to gather, it is the place that all trade deals take place. When the Dracartans come to get water, they arrive at their designated place and wait for the King (or Queen) of the muses to appear and barter. The wait is rarely long, and the Dracartans normally feel as if they have gotten a good deal. The muses are pleased with this arrangement because then they can get the more exotic spices, sweets, and supplies. On the other side of the lake is where the emissaries from the Seven Kingdoms come to barter for the art that has been produced, and where visitors to the Kingdom stop before they are taken to an area of their interest.

The Great Glade

The Great Glade is the most commonly used area by the Muses. However, the Glade's borders and center seem to shift sometimes, it is normally in the same area. This is the Glade that most of the visitors to Astar wish to see and visit. If asking a visitor, they will tell you that the reason they enjoy this place is because of the beauty that surrounds it, the number of 'single' Muses who are looking for inspiration, and because this is where there is a good chance that you can barter an art piece from one for a good price if they are in a particularly good mood. Most other visitors enjoy seeing the Great Glade to have contact with some of the Telempathy that the Muses use for conversation. Occasionally a Muse will resort to a translator, but most of the time in the city, if you request it, and offer them some sweets, they will communicate with you mentally.

Dream Grove

The Dream Grove is aptly named because most Muses who spend a good amount of time there are the ones who tell stories. If you come into the Grove and look around, you would spot a large pavilion. Under the softly flowing fabric you would see a large gathering of Muses who seem to be almost asleep, when in reality they are enjoying the weavings of another. Sometimes a soft bit of music will chime out in the silence, but normally it is silent but for the breathing of the Muses and their whisps.

Creation Grove

Creation Grove is an interesting place; it encompasses not just artistic creation, but all kinds of creation. This place is also normally buzzing with activity. There is no large pavilion, but a series of the woven tents of the Muses. Sometimes you can hear the whispers of the whisp companions, or of a favoured foreigner who has made it deeper into the Muses lives than most others. There are Muses crafting instruments, painting pictures, weaving fabrics, and sculpting in just about every corner.

Political Ties

Before getting into the relations between Astar and the rest of the continent, you should know how a King (or Queen) is picked to hold that title, and how long they hold it. Since the Muses normally do not have people governing over them, the Ruler of Astar is picked by drawing lots. A gathering is held, and the current Ruler of Astar holds up a container containing straws. When all the straws have been picked, the one with the shortest straw is the current King or Queen. This office is held for only seven weeks.

In the Seven Kingdoms

The Muses are regarded with a mixture of respect, interest, and disdain by those who live in the Seven Kingdoms. They are on generally good relations with everyone in the Alliance, but some feel like they are not pulling their own weight. They do not rely on hard currency so they are not generally adding to the Seven Kingdoms treasury. They also find it difficult to keep up with who the current King or Queen is, concerning how often it changes. It is not unheard of to strike up a deal with one Muse in one month, and the next month the King

does not decide to honour it. There are also questions of military contribution. Most of the other Kingdoms in the Seven Kingdoms commit a certain amount of people to the Borderlands Legion or the Capital Guard. The Muses who do not normally carry or even use a weapon do not commit troops. However, they can and do protect themselves when need be using their telepathy. Generally, when votes come up in the Council, the side with the more creative argument will get the Muse's vote, unless the vote directly benefits or hinders them. They are not usually seen as strong partners in the Alliance, but their contributions when they do come through are more than enough to make the rest of the Seven Kingdoms remember why they allowed them into the Alliance to begin with.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

The Muses are seen as a strange and reclusive people. Most have only heard of their artwork, and disbelieve the stories of their beauty. Their art who reaches those in the outside world become enchanted and some even go as far as seeking the Muse who created it out. Rarely do those seekers find the Muse they are seeking, but they are found by a Muse, and are entertained for a while before being sent home. The Dracartans have good relations with the Muses, knowing their almost secret passion for sweets and tales of distant places. The Dracartans make a good bit of money transporting back the clear, clean, and pure water from Lake Zephyr. It took a long time for them to admit where they were getting their water from, and most who find out, do not understand why they are allowed such leniency. Occasionally a Muse and their whisp companion are seen outside of Astar, and indeed even the Seven Kingdoms. They normally are traveling with a larger group, and sometimes seem to be hanging on to one particular member of the group more than the others.

Astar has much to offer, but unless it is searched for, it is not given. The Muses normally possess the desire and skills to create not just objects of art, but just about anything needed. They craft their own instruments, and the few that do leave the glades of Astar are prized not just for their craftsmanship and beauty, but also the pure sounds that emanate from them. The images that are woven into fabric or placed upon it are delightful, but so are the careful hues of dye and paint that the Muses create for use in their work. Artists from all over the Seven Kingdoms and Talislanta pay top price for a small amount of color that the Muses have made.

Religion

The Muses themselves do not hold to any religion, but they do revere nature spirits of all sorts. Their great love for life had made them respect all life forms, and they will go out of their way to make sure they do not bring permanent physical harm on another. They rarely pray to anything and the closest they get to admitting much of anything being a higher life form than them is when they let the story of their Creation be known. To date, very few outside of the Muses and their closest confidants have experienced one of the many aspects of the Creation of the Muses. The Muses however are very conscious of death, after it happens, and they take much time for the Funeral Rites.

Public Opinion

Sindar – *"Their works are collectable, and yet they are so flighty and distant. It is good to see them becoming more adventurous. Yet, we wonder if that is the best thing for them."*

Kasmir – *"Cocky and aloof. Yes, they can create some remarkable things, and it's a smart investment every time; but they are so damned unpredictable and unreliable."*

Vardune – *"We enjoy seeing their free forms flitting from blossom to blossom when examining our wares. They remind us of nature and the reason we endeavour so hard to keep the Seven Kingdoms safe."*

Taz – *"They do not see the beauty in war, but they are not without defences. They can not keep the Thralls out, but they have sent others fleeing their forests and groves, directly into our hands."*

Cymril – *"Annoying and pleasant. They are a race that we are torn over. They make ridiculous demands, then shift their position in the end. Their people are pleasant overall and they are not as much of a burden as the others say they are."*

Durne – *"It is a pleasure knowing that there are still people in this world as pure and free as those from Astar. Only once in the history of our country has a Muse ever visited the Subterranean City of Durne. It is anxious pleasure that keeps the hope alive of another visit."*

Zandu – *"I've seen them around. Boy are they nice to look at. I've heard talk that one of the barkeepers has one staying with him, but I'd not believe it even if I saw it."*

Danuvia – *"We've had a few show up to the Conjugal Feast. They are not that good at fighting, but they are sure good in other ways!"*

Aaman – *"Heathens! Vile Tempters and Seductresses! They need to be shown the light of Aa so they can become upstanding people and restore honour to their community! May Aa bless them and forgive them their sins..."*

Laying to Rest

When a Muse or Whisp Companion passes from this world, the Funeral is long and drawn out. It continues long after the body itself is buried. They make music, reminisce, and create images or sculptures to replace or represent the one who is now missing from their lives. The Muses do not accept death well, but they are a fragile people and predators exist in their tranquil trees. Normally the whisks can keep most of the dangers away from their Muse companions, but that is not always true. When disaster falls, the loved ones of the Muse or whisp go out to seek vengeance upon the killer and retrieve the body before beginning the burial and Funeral.

Role-playing Hints

The Muses are a strange race, thinking not in the normal way of things. They are more concerned with beauty and their own passions. It is rare to see a Muse out of their home country but they do venture forth for reasons of their own. Sometimes the reason is because they are completely infatuated with another PC, and that bond will draw them away from their Glades and Groves.

Character Classes

This is the one main class that the Muses of Astar hold to, but there are always variations, and you can easily make something completely different than the one below. However, typically, other races might be more suited to the things you want.

Mage – Mages are straight spell casters. However, in the world of Talislanta, both Clerics and Mages are considered spell casters and therefore lumped together in most cases. With the Talislanta magic system, you can choose to practice Invocation and that would make you a Cleric. On the other hand, you could choose to study Natural Magic, and that would make you a normal mage or a druidic-style spellcaster. You are also given the option to at any time spend your experience to add another Order of your choice. Muses are generally Mages and not Clerics being that they do not worship any Gods.

Hidden Treasures?

Things are forever happening in the forests and glades of Astar, and sometimes the hand of an outsider is needed to remove them.

A hunting party from Trang in Taz has chased a fugitive into the forests of Astar, but they disappeared into the trees with an uncanny ability. The Muses have been able to frighten him off a few times, but he seems to be making his way to Lake Zephyr and freedom. The Thralls and Muses wish for him to be recaptured before he escapes on a Dracartan transport.

There have been stories of strange lights coming down from the Jaspur Mountains and congregating on the edge of Lake Zephyr and retreating back into the Mountains before the suns rise again. At first the Muses enjoyed the light show, but it has become a worry, because Water Whisps seem to have fallen ill and the water life has retreated to the Southern side of the lake.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Muse characters. The top character without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Muse Telempath

The below class is a new archetype, however if you want something different, you can create your own with help from your GM.

Muse Seeker

CR -4 MR +5 HP 16
STR -3 PER +3
DEX +3 CHA +2
CON -3 WIL -3
SPD -1 INT +2

Skills

Natural Magic	
<3 modes of choice>	+1
Telempathy	+2
Limited Flight	+4
Artificer	+4
Art	+3
Music	+3
Herb Lore	+1

Languages

High Talislan – Native
Sylvan – Native
Low Talislan – Fluent

Equipment

Translucent gossamer robe in pastel hues; one or more musical instruments; pouch (containing things like pigments; blossoms, nectar, etc.); whisp companion (whisp companion may have 25 in gold lumens).

Appearance

Height: 5'6"-6'; Weight: 80-140 pounds; skin, hair and large butterfly-like wings in numerous pastel hues (lavender, sky blue, pink, mint green); lithe body; delicate features.

Special Abilities

Natural Telempathy; Limited Flight – Muse can remain airborne for two minutes per level in 'Limited Flight' however, once done the Muse MUST rest for twice as long before flying again; Optional – infatuated with one specific being (chose during character creation)

Quote: "My people admire beauty; I am on the lookout for something they have not seen before." As translated by Whisp companion.

Your people think you are strange for wanting to leave the peaceful and safe Groves of your homeland; but you know that beauties that they can not even imagine lay out there. You would talk to the Dracartans who would come to trade for your perfect water, and you listened to their tales. You still think that the spoken language is below you, but it has its own beauty, and you want to see more beauty than is available where you are at. You ex-lovers and family have tried to dissuade you from your course, but nothing will stop you from searching out the perfect beauty. ■

CHAPTER 7

SINDAR

Origins of Sindar

As I wandered through the mesa tops, examining the land and its people, I noticed something strange. It was an Ariane leaving a small dwelling. I followed the fellow for a good way, and his precise movements led me to believe that he was leading me somewhere. He finally stopped in a market, before a stall that served food and drinks. He sat, and as I stood back to watch him, he looked me in the eye and gestured to the other seat near him. I sat and said nothing for a while, but he seemed to recognize me. Without any words passing our lips, we were brought meals, beverages, and when the server left the Ariane began to speak. His voice was a whisper, barely audible over the din of the market.

"I know why you are here," he said. "I have some answers to your questions. You seek the knowledge of ages past; your tale has preceded you. I also seek History to better understand the present and future. You seek History for the sheer pleasure of knowledge. Either way, I will tell you what I have discovered, and what I have deduced. Sindarans, also known as Neurians, have been here for longer than they think or talk about. I also believe that their past is circular, or even longer than that, they live in a circular path in time.

"You see, Neurians are from some extra-dimensional plane, far from here in time and place. Or possible far from here in time, and near in place. Either way, the minor things like that do not matter. However, by the look on your face, I need to explain some other things before what else I have to say will make complete sense. The ones known as the Archæans gained their magical knowledge from a crashed ship. In this ship was an odd crystal that radiated a powerful aura. The then-primitive Archæans found it, and began to investigate it, gaining much knowledge and the use of magic. However there were no bodies or anything saying that anyone had survived the crash. I see that you do not understand what this has to do with the Neurians themselves. I will explain the Neurians.

"They are a highly advanced race of dual-encephalons like the Sindaran are. They possess great abilities, but never did they possess the ability to do magic, also like our Sindaran friends. They knew that they were from somewhere that was high above level ground, as well as our Sindaran friends, and they had a knack with three-sided pyramids, once again like our friends. One thing they could not do was to get home. They created viewing glasses so they could peer into other dimensions, seeking out the one they came from to no avail. They invented great technical devices that were awesome in power and great to behold, but they could not go home.

"Soon, they realized that something was happening to the Magic here on Archæaus. They had been researching a way to leave this dimension, and travel to the next. When they realized they were in great peril with the Great Disaster coming, they loaded all of their people from the island of Simbar onto two experimental ships that had just been finished. The ships took off and left, but when they were nearing the gates that would send them from here and the coming disaster, one of the ships experienced difficulties. It crashed into the land, leaving the people stranded and without a home. Their powerful and highly advanced levitationals were destroyed, as well as the people who could use and fix them.

"The Simbarans were distraught and afraid. They wandered the land looking for a new place to call home. They came across the high Mesas of Sindar and settled here, because the Neurians enjoyed heights. They worked on their alchemy, and tried their hand again at technomancy, but the art of technology was elusive, and those who had mastered it had left, or had perished. The Neurians now known as Sindarans settled here, to rebuild their power and to reach back out to their ancestral home, which has been lost for centuries now. Or has it?"

The Ariane raised a slender while eyebrow and stared at me while I tried to process all of the knowledge that was laid before me. He smiled as I began to write my notes in a frenzied attempt to capture all his words. He remained in his seat, watching me until he was satisfied that I had received all the information I needed and desired, and then without another word, he stood and left.

The Capital of Sindar

The Capital of Sindar is Nankar. Nankar is also known as the City of Tents. The reason it is called this is because all the structures in the city have gossamer curtains instead of walls. Some of the curtains are weighted so that they do not flutter in the breezes, while others flow freely, dancing out. The sight is slightly difficult to those who are not familiar with the way of things, but it quickly grows on those visiting, because of the way the rooms seem wide open, and the breezes keep the city from seeming hot and stuffy.

Important Places

The Breathing Market

The Breathing Market is aptly named. Since all the walls are fine gossamer curtains, they shift in the slightest breeze. There have been times that the wind is weak, not fluttering many curtains and yet the markets walls still breathe. Another reason the market is called the Breathing Market is because of the smells that fill it. When you walk in to wander around, you are confronted with so many different smells that most of the time you have to travel slowly if you want to enjoy them all.

Nadir House

This is the home of the “King” or “Queen” of Sindar, also referred to as the Nadir Absolute. This splendid palace of cloth and crystal was created specifically for the Nadir Absolute and has been altered and added upon over the years. Its gossamer curtains are changed monthly, to match the color of the moon instead of the normal colors that most other buildings sport. The very front wall that contains the main entrance to the front house is always the color of the Kingdom, Orange. On the front wall is stitched the history of previous Nadir Absolutes, along with the years they served as such and sometimes the ways the Trivarian matches were won. Inside the front room continues the details of past leadership. The current Nadir Absolute has been in charge of Sindar for a total of five Tournaments now, and is the favoured for the next Trivarian Tournament.

Trivarian Quarter

This Quarter is so called because it is the home of those who are competing in the Tournament, and where the tournament itself takes place. There are vast halls set about where people come to play year round. Some say that it is a place to get accustomed to playing, because there are always gawkers and new players watching those who have some experience. There are friendly tournaments held monthly to get the younger players more accustomed to playing in the halls, and to provide some sport for the citizens of Nankar and its visitors to enjoy. There are also a good number of single encephalons who come to watch in hopes of understanding the game, or to just enjoy the atmosphere.

Public Opinion

Astar – *“The talking brains in the north. We do enjoy listening to them at times because with words they can weave a tale akin to our own.”*

Kasmir – *“We enjoy our dealings with the Sindarans. However in our past, relations were strained. They are good business partners and good consultants; however they are not as good at lending or contracts as we are.”*

Vardune – *“We enjoy speaking to them about alc-chemicals and their uses. In the past we have traded ideas, and the uses for some of the plants we had sent to them c-came back in a most fascinating fashion.”*

Taz – *“Their intellect is useful, and their few tacticians are rivalled only by our own. With them on our side, we are unstoppable.”*

Cymril – *“The Sindarans are a great ally, crucial in decisions and policies that make the Alliance work. Beyond that they are very eager to work with us to develop new and better alchemicals that suit our needs.”*

Durne – *“The Sindarans are an interesting people with great knowledge at their fingertips, yet they keep reaching for more. It is believed that they are searching for something that they may never find. However, until the day they leave, the Sindarans will be valued allies to the Gnomekin.”*

Zandu – *“Such interesting fellows! You can offer them a recreational debate, and they debate not only their side, but your side as well. It takes a little fun out of a debate, but it is fun in its own strange way.”*

Danuvia – *“We do not really use their wares too often, but we have been discussing a petition to get them to develop an alchemical to be used when forging weapons in the hopes of making them stronger.”*

The Crystal Tower

Throughout the city there is a number of small crystal towers used for brief and important messages. However it is the Main Crystal Tower that sends messages to the other settlements. The Main tower is massive in size, a permanent structure in the city, and the largest communication tower in all of Sindar. It is normally seen flashing, because for a fee, any message can be sent to another city as long as an urgent message is not needed to go out. Some of the most common messages are those considering Trivarian scores, and occasionally games are played long distance.

Political Ties

In the Seven Kingdoms

The Sindarans are greatly respected and revered for their knowledge and thorough thinking. Their decisions may be slow in coming, but they can normally define both sides of the argument before stating a decision and why it was chosen. When mediators are needed, most often are Sindarans hired.

In the Council meetings, the Nadir Absolute usually sits silent listening to both sides of an argument; when the argument is over, they ask a few questions and then remain silent until their opinion is asked for. This has brought Sindar respect in the Council and also helps with some of the other issues that most have with Sindarans. There have been recent discussions of late on trying to connect the whole Seven Kingdoms with Crystal Towers, or something similar, that the Sindarans use to communicate across their own country.

They are valued for many other reasons as well, including their knowledge on many subjects. However, at the same time, quite a few people become easily frustrated with them because of their apparent smugness at having two brains. Most people have a hard time employing Sindarans because of their attitudes. It is to their advantage that they are the leaders in not only the Seven Kingdoms, but in all of Talislanta, when it comes to the creations of Alchemicals. They have been known to work on a new alchemical product at the request of a client or for the sheer love of experimenting and learning. They are currently working on new rocket powders for the Cymrilians to use in their "Festival of Lights", and stronger or more pleasant tasting 'love potions' for the "Festival of Life".

The Sindarans have regularly positive relations with the Green Aeriad of Vardune and the Gnomekin of Durne. They have been discussing many things back and forth with reference to not only growing things, but minerals and their uses in helping nurture things. Since the Sindarans only eat vegetables and tubers, they use powders to help complete their diets and keep themselves healthy. They have also begun researching nutritional powders and elixirs for the other races of Talislanta. Those products which are completed are available to anyone who wishes to buy them. There have been claims that the minerals, if used properly, can keep you alive while crossing the Wilderlands, even if you have no food; all you need is water and the minerals. However, it is suspected that a journey like that would be wretched, even if it was possible.

Outside the Seven Kingdoms

They are interested in the Yassan Technomancers, but since they rarely get much of any contact with them their fascination is placed aside. Many other races are fascinated with the things that the Sindarans produce and they also seek them out for their uncanny reasoning ability. Most people who use the alchemical potions that the Sindarans create buy them from markets in Cymril or traders that wander the continent selling wares. However, word is spreading that the most practical way to purchase these things is to go to Sindar itself and purchase what you want. The reputation of the Sindarans outside of the Seven Kingdoms is a mottled one, consisting of myths and rumours that are not true, and a variety of truths that are normally not believed.

Religion

Sindarans do not have a centralized religion; in fact they profess to worship no one. They do believe in something similar to the Creator, but they refer to it as "The Duality" and instead of heaven, they refer to the stars from whence they came. Even without worship to the Duality; they are a very meticulous people and thus they have a wide variety of ceremonies.

Hidden Treasures?

The Sindarans are often considered to be an odd people by those who do not know them well. Their country is large and has some interesting and valuable minerals, crystals, and other valuable things in it, but they do not seem interested too terribly in that.

An Alchemist in Nankar has been telling any who will listen of something that his son told him after he returned from a long trip to Nadir. He explains that his son who is a collector saw something glittering off the path in the distance. From what he could tell it was a good distance away, and since he was traveling alone, he dared not leave the road to investigate it. At first he suspected that it was a crystal tower that was a new addition to the countryside because of the flashing light that came from it, but then he realized that it was the wrong size, shape and even in the wrong place for such a tower to be placed. Yet of all the people he has told, no one has returned to tell him what was there.

A group of Satada has been harassing the road between Nankar and Sahar. While this in itself is not unusual, the part that is strange about the whole ordeal is that most of the people being captured are being sold into slavery. There have been attempts to find this rogue band of Satada Slavers, but the few Satada they do bring in do not know of them, and claim not to have been involved with them. The Sindarans have upped the patrols on the road, but they have yet to find anything from the attacks but signs of struggle. Thralls have been brought in to help with the tracking and patrols to no avail. The attacks need to stop, because the Nadir Absolute will be traveling to Sahar soon.

Marriage

The marriage ceremonies are small and usually very quick. In front of a group of respected Nadir the couple swears to be together and separate just as the brains are. They vow to share all responsibilities of the household and to respect each other and the wishes of the other. A marriage is not entered lightly and they will not allow the marriage of a couple who are new to another because even if they have discussed things for a few days, they do not know one another well enough to handle the needs of family life.

Pregnancy and Birth

When a Sindaran becomes pregnant, there are a series of small rituals over the time that they are with child to attempt to bring good health to both mother and child. Some of the things that are done consist of the supply of foods that a Sindaran would not normally consume; such as fruits, meats, and grains. Both the mother and father partake in eating the strange foods, and then they sit in their highest room together with the walls open so they can look upon the sky and

contemplate. Normally the loved ones of the couple sit in the next room, listening to make sure they are well, and they wait until the pregnant mother returns to them. The father stays in the room, and the men join him and discuss the needed things that the child will need; while the women discuss the things the child might want or that the parents might want. When the discussions are over, the man and woman bid their company farewell and begin setting up an area for the child itself. This normally happens long before the birth of the child, so that the rest of the pregnancy can go with little to no extra attention.

When the child is born, once again the parents eat the strange foods, and sit to contemplate. The loved ones that are present for the first ceremony are back and they watch the child and dote upon it. When both of the parents return to the room, they all discuss the things the child will need, and could want. Since these things had been discussed already, each person present gives the child one of the discussed objects and waits for the child to respond to the gift before presenting another one.

Laying to Rest

The funeral ceremonies are odd for those who have never seen one before. The Sindaran do not bury their dead, nor do they mourn in a normal fashion. When the deceased's family and friends have been informed, they are told where and when to be present. Once the guests have arrived, the body is dipped into an alchemical solution that reduces the body to nothing. When the body is gone, the guests leave and continue on their day.

Role-playing Hints

Sindarans are a race of two brained individuals who are very verbose and use multi-syllabic words when they speak. Also they take pleasure in discussing both sides of a situation before coming to a conclusion. They are not a race to make any hasty decisions nor do they make many foolish decisions unless a decision is needed and both situations are perilous. No matter how talented they are, they will normally not use their talents if it means that they will be breaking a law; Sindarans value law and order very highly. Sindarans also enjoy traveling and seeing new sights, but it is not unheard of for one of them to be reluctant to leave the Mesa lands of their home.

Character Classes

These are the two main classes that the Sindarans of Sendar hold to, but there are always variations, and you can easily make something completely different than the one below. However, typically, other races might be more suited to the things you want.

Fighter – Sindarans are “fighters” by nature more for their skill with alchemicals than any innate predisposition. They can use weapons yet they normally choose not to. However peaceful they seem in their Mesa Top Cities, they are not unprotected. Their intelligence is only one of the weapons that they yield.

Rogue– This is the more comfortable skill of the two for the Sindaran. Not because they are less of a fighter, but because they are more skill oriented like a 3rd Ed. Rogue is. They are not only intelligent but highly talented. They sometimes have skills that could actually be used for thieving, but remember that they are a very Lawful group, and they almost never go against the law.

Example Archetypes

Here are some examples of standard and not so standard Sindaran characters. The top characters without stats can be found in full in the fourth edition Talislanta main rule book.

Sindaran Collector

Sindaran Effectuator

Sindra Demented One (NPC)

Sindaran Sky Capitan

CR +2 MR -5 HP 18
STR -1 PER +2
DEX +2 CHA 0
CON 0 WIL +2
SPD 0 INT +8

Skills

Rod of Alchemy +4
Pilot (windship) +6
Scholar Skill
<2 of Choice> +4

Weapon

<1 of Choice> +3
Collector +3
Etiquette +3
Trivarian +1

Languages

High Talislan – Native
Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Cloak; loin cloth (males) or caftan (females); sandals; silver earrings and necklace; wrist and ankle bracers; bandoleer pouches with ten amberglass vials (containing various powders); rod of alchemy (projects vials of alchemical powder); choice of weapon; Trivarian game; flask of skoryx; assorted tomes; 1000 gold lumens in assorted collectables and currencies.

Appearance

Height: 7'-7'4"; Weight: 180-220 pounds; rough sandy coloured skin; row of horn like nodules starting at the crown of the head and ending at the nape of the neck; spur of cartilage protruding beneath chin (carved); emaciated body appearance.

Special Abilities

Dual Encephalon

Quote: “The Sindaran race belongs in the sky. We have discerned that at one point our race had developed great skill piloting other types of ships, so why should we not return to the sky?”

Your families research had turned up many strange things, things that you know will not be shared; especially with the single-encephalons. It seems that you were once great pilots of massive ships that took to the skies without current magic. That explains some of the natural aptitude that you and your family have shown in guiding the massive ships through the sky. You still have the normal passions of your people, but you have gained one extra; the passion of the wind on your face and nothing by sky beneath the ship you are guiding.

Sindaran Mesa Sentinel

CR +3 MR -5 HP 18
STR +1 PER 0
DEX +2 CHA 0
CON 0 WIL +4
SPD 0 INT +8

Skills

Rod of Alchemy +5

Weapons

<2 of Choice> +4
Guard +2
Tactics +2
Collector +2
Scholar Skill
<1 of choice> +2
Trivarian +1

Languages

High Talislan – Native
Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Cloak; loin cloth (males) or caftan (females); sandals; treated cloth armour; silver earrings and necklace; wrist and ankle bracers; bandoleer pouches with fifteen amberglass vials (containing various powders); rod of alchemy (projects vials of alchemical powder); choice of weapons; flask of skoryx; assorted tomes; 1000 gold lumens in assorted collectables and currencies.

Appearance

Height: 7'-7'4"; Weight: 180-220 pounds; rough sandy coloured skin; row of horn like nodules starting at the crown of the head and ending at the nape of the neck; spur of cartilage protruding beneath chin (carved); emaciated body appearance.

Special Abilities

Dual Encephalon

Quote: "It is my duty to protect the people of Sindar."

You have been taught the art of war. You are just as smart as the rest of your brethren, but you understand that you can not just rely on others to protect you. You have studied the Thralls and their ways, and have come to the decision that it is a wise way to think and act. You have modeled yourself after them, with one exception. You are smarter, more forward thinking, and require no sleep.

Sindaran Inventor

CR +2 MR -5 HP 18
STR -1 PER +3
DEX 0 CHA 0
CON 0 WIL +4
SPD 0 INT +8

Skills

Rod of Alchemy +4
Artificer +6
Trade Skill
<2 of Choice> +3
Collector +3
Alchemy +5
Scholar Skill
<3 of choice> +3
Trivarian +2

Languages

High Talislan – Native
Low Talislan – Native

Equipment

Cloak; loin cloth (males) or caftan (females); sandals; silver earrings and necklace; wrist and ankle bracers; bandoleer pouches with ten amberglass vials (containing various powders); rod of alchemy (projects vials of alchemical powder); artificers tools; Trivarian game; flask of skoryx; assorted tomes; 1000 gold lumens in assorted collectables and currencies.

Appearance

Height: 7'-7'4"; Weight: 180-220 pounds; rough sandy coloured skin; row of horn like nodules starting at the crown of the head and ending at the nape of the neck; spur of cartilage protruding beneath chin (carved); emaciated body appearance.

Special Abilities

Dual Encephalon

Quote: "Collecting? Yes I collect, but I collect more than mere objects. I collect ideas and the secret ways of building and creating."

You have found that as pleasant as it is to look upon things that you have found or bought; it is more pleasant to create something with your own power. You build for the sake of building, you create for creations sake. You hear of people talking about achieving what your people once had, but you know that you will never reach that point unless you actually try to reach it. Speaking of something is not going to bring it closer. You see and realize this, so you endeavour to reach as far as you can.■



CHAPTER 8



OTHER INFORMATION

Other Cities

Cymril

Cymril only has its Capital city, Cymril. However over the years, the city itself has grown, and the inner buildings and wall have become what is sometimes called “Old Cymril”, where as the new construction outside the wall is referred to as “New Cymril” by some.

There are many small communities dotting Cymril’s rolling and fertile countryside. Many of these are extended families living in one area and farming the surrounding lands, while others are simply small farming communities. While not sizable enough to be considered a city or town, some of these small villages can cater to travelers or roaming peddlers.

Kasmir

Kasmir has one other city in its bounds, and also a Border Fort. The city is named Kasir, and it is along the Kasmir Road, west of Kasmir.

Kasir is known for its wealthy citizens and an unusual number of highly skilled Artificers. It is also a regular stopping point for caravans and travelers who are traveling on the Seven Roads. The city is a essentially a smaller version of the Capital with the noted exception of some ornate facades on the buildings of noted artificers who wish to advertise their wares.

Taz

Taz has three other cities besides the Fortress of Tor. Their names are Trang, Targ, and Tath. All Thrall settlements are fortresses in their own right, being built for easy defence and minimal vulnerability.

Trang is located in the eastern jungles near the border with Astar. The city is built on a hilltop overlooking the eastern border of Taz and the forests of Astar. The city itself is accessible by a branch of the Seven Roads and the Underground Highway. Trang is typically noted for its garrison of foot soldiers and cavalry-riders. In order to provide rapid redeployment to the rest of the Seven Kingdoms, patrols and engineers maintain a constant vigil on the Taz Road to keep it repaired and free from dangers.

Targ lays on the western edges of the swamp. It is constructed like most other Thrall settlements, consisting of short thick stone buildings. It is mostly used to make sure that the Thralls have their Country well covered, and so that it is easier for the patrols to cover more space and rest in relative safety.

Tath is in the very corner of the Seven Kingdoms, and the least populated. It is located on the Axis River and is a port fort whose main purpose is to assist the Aeriad with River Patrol Duty and to also facilitate the transportation of goods into and out of the Seven Kingdoms from the southern cities of Aaman. Many outsiders assume that Thralls trained in Tath are expert boatmen and sailors in addition to their martial skill. While this is accurate in some sense, it is more precise to state that the tactical training employed in Tath enables its citizens to handle combat on board vessels of many different natures. Because of this fact, it is from Tath that many of the Thralls who serve on Seven Kingdom windships originate.

Vardune

Vardune has three large settlements: the Capital Vashay, the northern city Valanis, and the southern city Vahana. Only the Capital City has a large group of both Green and Blue Aeriad, the other cities populations are almost strictly monochromatic.

Valanis lays in the northern part of the Northwood where the Blue Aeriad dwell. The edge of the city is on the Axis River, and a large port is set up there where the patrol boats enter and leave from. There are also a large number of commercial boats stopping there for trade and caravan drop-off. The Rangers of Valanis take great pride in protecting river traffic up and down the Axis River, and while many of them distrust the Aamanians, they do appreciate the diligence with which Aaman patrols the opposite shore.

Vahana is in the south of Vardune in a place called Southwood, where the Green Aeriad dwell. Vahana has a small school of Botanomancy available to any Aeriad, and select outsiders have been accepted into the school. One would expect an extraordinary variety of plant life around Vahana, and to the untrained eye this is true. However, Vahana's Botanomancers actively discourage the widespread planting of any new creations near the city in order to preserve the delicate balance of the plants that provide for the city and its nation.

Durne

Durne contains no other cities than the Subterranean City of Durne. The city itself is fairly spread out, and it lies over the Underground Highway, so it is possible that some families could move farther away from the main city and form small colonies, but highly unlikely.

While the Gnomekin do not see it so, many surface dwellers consider the settlement both in and outside of Tunnelrock to be a separate community from the Subterranean City. Much of the settlement outside Tunnelrock does tend to be non-Gnomekin who have traveled there to trade, but who also find the enclosed places either too confining or too dark. While some merchants do perennially petition the Durnese government for more security on the surface – fortress walls and increased guard patrols are common requests – the Gnomekin typically claim that the winding burrows of Tunnelrock itself are more than suitable defence against predators both natural and fantastic.

Astar

Astar contains no cities, so there are no other cities to note. However, there are designated camping grounds for visitors along the shores of Lake Zephyr. Most often these grounds are home to Dracartan Thaumaturges, Danuvian Viragos, Cymrilian nature-lovers, and all of their respective and attendant guards. When first-time visitors see the sprawling assembly of tents and blankets, many wonder why someone doesn't just build a town and be done with it. Even infrequent visitors dissuade such talk; not only would the Muses dislike it, but it would also take away from the pastoral beauty of the lakeside.

Sindar

There are two other cities in Sindar besides the capital, Nankar; their names are Nadir and Sahar. The cities in Sindar all exist on tall mesas. Each city has its own set of windship docks and moving platforms that raise and lower up to one wagon with its team. Their construction is of imported hardwood, rock, crystal, and gossamer curtains. The construction of the buildings is interesting, for the walls are open and covered only by dyed gossamer curtains.

Nadir is on the western side of Sindar towering above the ground, soaring an incredible 200 feet in the air; and it gets its name from the great number of Trivarian players of high status. Its water supply is a large natural geyser-spring. The city is rarely visited by outsiders because it is not on any caravan routes, but a branch of the Underground Highway does exit near the city.

Sahar is also fairly isolated, and is well known for its fine moonstones and other gemstones. It is plagued by various dangerous animals and is difficult to reach. Some of the creatures that harass the small settlement are chasm vipers, satada, and opteryx. Despite these dangers, caravans still make the journey to Sahar in order to procure gemstones and consult with the many noted gemologists and naturalists that make the city their home.

The Border Forts Ikarthis

The border fort Ikarthis is called "The Last Line of Defence Against Invasion from the East." It lays on the very edge of Kasmir and the Wilderlands, and is the only thing besides the Dead River Chasm to separate the nation of Kasmir and the rest of the Seven Kingdoms from the arid wastes of the Wilderlands. A sizeable contingent of Thralls, Blue Aeriad, and Cymrilian troops are stationed at this fort at all times and are occasionally supplemented with mercenaries from Arim, Zandu, Danuvia, and Dracarta. Of the three border forts, Ikarthis is the largest and best manned as well as being the best maintained and outfitted.

Since it is situated on a small road connecting the Bridge at Nankar and the Bridge at Kasmir, Ikarthis itself has a small marketplace where goods from all over the Seven Kingdoms are available to foreign merchants and travelers. Other services offered here are a Kasmiran money lender and money-changer, public stables, and a large inn of decent quality. In the way of military facilities there are separate barracks for the Seven Kingdoms soldiers and foreign mercenaries; there are also windship docks available that normally host either a windship-of-war or two smaller windships.

Akmir

The border fort Akmir stands at a crossroads between the city-states of Maruk, Hadj, Danuvia and the desert nations of Dracarta and Djaffa. It serves as a way station and trade point for travelers going to and from the Desert Kingdoms, the Seven Kingdoms, and beyond. It is frequented by Orgovian traders, Bodor musicians, Aamanian pilgrims, Rahastran cartomancers, Danalek salt miners, Marukan dung merchants and the rare Xambrian wizard hunter. There are also visits from Djaffir merchant caravans, but they normally prefer more wealthy markets to present their goods.

Akmir is manned by the Borderlands Legion, a group of toughened mercenaries that are enlisted from all across the continent. Most of the people posted here were career soldiers, ex-convicts, exiles, renegades, and ex-patriots. This ragtag band of miscreants is managed by a relatively small contingent of Thrall Warriors and even fewer Cymrilians and Aeriads. Most of the citizens of the Seven Kingdoms think of those serving in this fort as the dregs of society.

The fortress contains most of the makings of a small town; including public stables, barracks for the defenders, and a decently sized inn with a large common room that serves meals. The prices are fairly expensive, but most are willing to pay the price because it beats the alternative; staying outside of the fort unprotected in the wilds. While the Borderlands Legion does patrol the surrounding areas, there is such a high volume of traffic here that much is often missed. Take into account that from a distance a gang of bandits can look much like a company of merchants, and it is easy to understand why legitimate merchants often pass through the area as quickly as they can.

Karfan

Another of the small fortresses maintained by the Seven Kingdoms, Karfan is located near the terminus of a bridge that spans the Dead River Chasm. It is manned by the Borderlands Legions, with support troops of Thralls, Cymrilians, and Blue Aeriad. Its mercenary population is, for the most part, people with shady histories like those in Akmir, but here there are better supplies and support from the Kingdoms. Djaffir merchant caravans usually do not stop here, being that it is out of the way for them, but the Orgovian traders make up for the slack, carrying in goods on the backs of their lopers.

Karfan has stables, barracks, a trading post, and an ancient inn dating back to the Phaedran-era construction. The inn is of disreputable quality. Visitors to the Inn and Fortress include Sindarans, Rahastran cartomancers, and bounty hunters of all sorts. At times, bands of hostile Satada emerge from the hidden tunnels to prey upon travelers that are going to and coming from the fortress. Additionally, Karfan serves to watch the borders of Urag so that its armies do not attempt to circumvent the Sapphire Mountains unobserved.

The Dead River Bridges

Nankar

The Sindaran bridge over the Dead River Chasm is large and ornate, its towers carved to resemble natural rock spires. Supported by alchemically treated wood and ropes to make the structure more durable, the bridge still sways slightly in the winds blowing across the area. This swaying is typically not so great as to be dangerous, but is often disconcerting to the first time visitor. Other alchemical products are used to repair the occasional cracks in the bridges surface as well as preserve the ropes used to suspend the span high above the chasm floor. On the Sindar side of the bridge is a large set of windship docks designed to support a large number of various sized craft. The bridge also supports a large set of lifts that can raise a cart and team from the chasm floor to the surface of Sindar.

Kasmir

The bridge at Kasmir is a large, practical, and solid stone structure that is completely unadorned. It consists of four simple towers – one on each side of the chasm and two in the middle. The bridge is well taken care of with regular inspection and repair. It is also regularly patrolled by both the Legions of the Seven Kingdoms and various Kasmir House guard units. In the deepest hours of the night, the outside towers close their gates, reopening again at dawn. The two middle towers are manned all night long. One supports a small inn and tavern on its bridge-level floor, and both are equipped with catapults on their summits.

Astar

This bridge was ordered to be built by the Queen of Danuvia. A particularly wide site was chosen for the difficulty it would pose her engineers and force greatness into the construction. The bridge is a massive stone and black iron construction that consists of two black iron suspension bridges. Each bridge is connected to the outer bank of the chasm and in the center, a large carved rock spire. A carved stone ramp connects the bridge to the river bed below, and higher up in the stone spire are the barracks for the Viragos who are stationed there. The fee for crossing the bridge is 3 gold lumens, but the usage of the ramp is free.

The site that was chosen happened to be on Astar's border, and part of the other reason it was chosen was because of the connection to the Seven Roads. It was built in hopes of moving some of the trade routes down from Kasmir and Sindar. Even though the idea had promise, most of the trade routes were already well-established, and there was little desire to go to Astar for trade goods. The main users for the road these days are the Dracartan Thaumaturges.

Seven Kingdoms Politics

Ideals

The Seven Kingdoms was founded by a group who not only needed safety in numbers, but that also had similar ideals. Slavery is banned throughout the Seven Kingdoms, and while they may have trade relations with a country that supports slavery, they will not politically ally themselves with one.

All of the kingdoms in the Seven Kingdoms can agree completely on a few things. They all agree that slavery should be banned, and it is not welcome in their Alliance. Necromancy, while not banned outright, is highly frowned upon and necromancers are generally mistrusted as are those who truck with devils or demons.

The members of the Seven Kingdoms have learned to get along and work together after the long years that their alliance has been in place. They have come to understand how to compromise for the betterment of the whole. While each Kingdom does have its own needs and policies, they function together as a cohesive group when dealing with foreign nations.

Allies

The closest things that the Seven Kingdoms have to allies are the nations of Phantas, Carantheum, and L'Haan.

The Phantasians of Cabal Magicus share much in common with the Cymrilians. However, while the Phantasians are widely regarded as being a people on the decline, the Seven Kingdoms have made great use of the knowledge and lessons of these people to ensure their rise and success. Many Phantasians serve in the Seven Kingdoms' Navy as windship pilots and navigators. In return, the city-state of Cabal Magicus often sends to Cymril for magical tutors, food, and luxury items.

The Dracartans are frequent trade partners, particularly with Astar and Sindar, and its people share many ideals with those of the Cymrilians. Both Cymril and Carantheum have a healthy respect and fascination with magic, though each nation applies that knowledge in different ways. Both the Seven Kingdoms and Carantheum view the growing power of Rajanistan and the Sub-Men tribes with great concern; however, many in the Seven Kingdoms think such problems are far away, while some Dracartans feel that the Seven Kingdoms do not contribute enough to keep their foes in check.

The Mirin of L'Haan share many qualities and ideals with Cymril and the Seven Kingdoms. However, since these nations exist at such a far distance from one another and trade routes between the two pass across some of the most dangerous territories of Talislanta, there is often little interaction between their two governments.

Good Relations

The Seven Kingdoms are largely hold good relationships with most of the other nations of the West, primarily Aaman, Arim, and Zandu. Arim sends both raw materials and migrants looking for work, while the Seven Kingdoms sends various foodstuffs and finished goods back. Many of the inhabitants share a past history with the now defunct Phaedran Empire, and so the nations of Aaman and Zandu are often treated with caution. Still, these two nations are lucrative markets for goods from the Seven Kingdoms and the peoples of the Seven Kingdoms likewise find uses for imports from the powers of the West.

To the east of the Seven Kingdoms, the nation-states of Danuvia, Hadj, and Maruk are frequent trade partners. Mercenaries are as frequently exchanged with Danuvia as trade goods are. The citizens of the City-State of Hadj are frequent purchasers of many of the luxury goods from the Seven Kingdoms, including dyed cloth from Sindar, complex locks from Kasmir, enchanted wares from Cymril, and so forth. While the Marukans have little themselves for trade, they do provide a near constant supply of cheap labour as its citizens travel abroad seeking a living and an escape from the curse that haunts their City-State.

The island nations of Thaecia and Gao-Din are occasional trading partners with the Seven Kingdoms. Many wealthy citizens of Cymril and Kasmir often journey to Caprica, while their less sophisticated counterparts journey to the Rogue City of Gao-Din. Unfortunately, the Seven Kingdoms has little to offer in the way of ports. While craft can sail up the Axis River from Jhangkin Bay or with much greater difficulty up the Gulf of Mog to Lake Zephyr in Astar, most trade coming into the Seven Kingdoms from these nations arrives via windship or overland caravan from another nation.

Bad Relations

The Necromancer-Kings of Rajanistan are largely distrusted and feared by the populace of the Seven Kingdoms. Similarly, though for different reasons, the Kang Empire is viewed with a healthy sense of suspicion. While merchants from the Seven Kingdoms can, and do, trade with the Kang Empire, the political entity of the Seven Kingdoms has little to do with the Eastern empires. The Farad were avid trading partners with the Seven Kingdoms up until very recently. However, in 619 the Farad allegedly stole numerable documents pertaining to the construction of windships. These secrets were then sold to the Rajanistan resulting in the expulsion and banning of all Farad from the Seven Kingdoms. Since that time it is thought that the Farad have turned to selling various goods and weapons, not only to Rajanistan and the Kang Empire, but various groups of Sub-Men as well.

The various bands of Sub-Men across the continent are looked down upon by the nations of the Seven Kingdoms, if not outright despised by its citizens. Many people can recall legends and histories of the past when the Sub-Men warred with the Archaens, the Phaedrans, and even modern Men. Perhaps fewer think that there is a possibility of the Sub-Men uniting once more and posing a greater threat than simple caravan raids and border harrying.

Public Opinion

Dracarta – *“We enjoy trading with the Seven Kingdoms and are glad that they are our Allies in magical study. We hope to someday open a school that can compete with the Lyceum Arcanum, but if not that, it would be nice to have a branch of the Lyceum Arcanum located within our city, to attract those with magical abilities who can not make it to Cymril to study.”*

Danuvia – *“Sometimes we regret investing so much in the bridge on the border of Astar, but we enjoy our trade status with the Seven Kingdoms, and appreciate the assistance that we have received from the Seven Kingdoms in the past.”*

Maruk – *“They are horrible neighbours and never do anything to assist us. They also try to sell us things at overly high prices. Their military is useless, their goods are shoddy, and they spend too much money on Akmir.”*

Zandu – *“The Seven Kingdoms is the leading supplier in just about everything, and it's more convenient and less expensive to purchase alchemical supplies and alchemical products from the Sindarans instead of making them on our own.”*

Aaman – *“Our neighbours to the East are very idealistic, but do not acknowledge the glory that is the Might of Aa. We have good trade agreements with them, but they seem to be disinterested in our offers to show them the light of Aa. We will however keep our hopes up that they will one day decide to embrace of Aa's love.”*

Hadj – *“We enjoy the luxurious goods and services that come from the Seven Kingdoms, and they seem to have a steady supply of people wanting to visit the Tombs. However, sometimes they get a little too arrogant, thinking themselves our equals.”*

Kang – *“They have an amazing supply of exportable goods, however we do not trade with them often, nor do we have much contact with our 'neighbours' in the far west.”*

Djaffa – *“Other than the Kasmirans, we enjoy our dealings with the Seven Kingdoms. They are good at keeping a constant supply of merchandise available, and their food goods normally go for a pretty penny in Hadj and the Kang Empire.”*

Arim – *“We enjoy the benefits of a healthy trade agreement, including the export of silver. We also enjoy the jobs that have been made available to us by the Sindarans and the Kasmirans. Hopefully we will be able to strike up a new and more beneficial trade agreement soon.”*

Urag – *“They try to hold us out, saying that the land is theirs. One day, they will slip, and we will achieve victory. The land will once again be ours.”*

The Ur of Urag along with their servitor races are considered to be on a par with the Sub-Men with the exception that they are both organized and possess devastating martial apparatus. Fortunately, the Ur spend more time struggling amongst themselves than posing an active threat to the kingdoms of Durne and Sindar.

Similarly, the Imrians are viewed as despicable creatures and are perhaps loathed more than the Sub-Men are. However, the Imrians pose little threat to the Seven Kingdoms in any military sense. While the slavers are abhorrent in the eyes of the Seven Kingdoms populace, the Imrians lack the numbers to lead any kind of serious assault on the Seven Kingdoms.

Threats

The biggest threats to the Seven Kingdoms are largely considered to be the Rajani, the Ur, and the various Sub-Men tribes, particularly the Beastmen, the Araq, and the Za. However, these foes are either too far distant, too numerous, or too spread out for the Seven Kingdoms to decisively eliminate the threats posed by them. By and large, the Seven Kingdoms trust to both the Borderlands Legion, the Border Forts, and advance warning from its neighbours to the east to provide for the security of its threatened eastern boundaries.

Bestiary

Except as noted, the following listed creatures appear in the Talislanta 4th Edition Rulebook.

Cymril

Durge / Erd / Batranc / Equs, Greymane / Erx / Monitor Imp / Sorcerer Tree

Kasmir

Desert Palm / Land Lizard / Land Kra / Caravan Bug

Taz

Tazian Fly / Stranglevine / Serpentine / Alatus / Aramatus / Mangonel Lizard / Omnivrax / Skalanx / Swamp Lurker

River Kra

Smaller cousins to the Land Kra, River Kra inhabit various bogs, marshes, and rivers throughout southern Talislanta. Possessed of the same abilities and voracious appetite as their larger relations, a nest of River Kra can wreak havoc on the local fauna where ever they are found. Thus, at the merest hint of a brood hatching, most peoples organize hunts to hopefully eradicate, or at the least expel, any River Kra in the area.

Size: 15'-20' in length, 1000-2000 lbs

Int -9 Wil +3 Str +6 Con +7 Per +2 Dex -2

Spd +5 in water, +1 on land

Ability Level: 3-12+

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 15, tail DR 10

Special Abilities: Aquatic, Burrowing (mud and silt only)

Armour: Scaly hide, PR 2

Hit Points: 35-40

Swamp Demon

Often confused with the more common Swamp Lurker, Swamp Demons do share a certain similar outward appearance. However, Swamp Demons are much more cunning and have a somewhat more humanoid appearance.[?] Size: 6'-7", 250-500 lbs.

Int +1 Per +3 Str +8 Dex +3 Spd +3 in water/-3 on land
Ability Level: 1-15+

Attacks/Damage: Tentacles DR 12, up to eight attacks

Special Abilities: as per all Demons

Armour: bloated slime covered skin, PR 2

Hit Points: 24-64; tentacles 3-8pts each

Bog Devil

A strange species of amphibious humanoids native to the various swamps along the Dark Coast of Southern Talislanta, the Bog Devil is largely in decline. After experiencing many years of growth and expansion, the Bog Devil population has begun to rapidly thin. Naturalists are unsure as to the cause of this decline, citing everything from a decrease in their natural prey to a too rapid increase over territory resulting in too few Devils to hold onto any given area. Marsh dwellers, Bog Devils typically lair in underwater caves. They are excellent swimmers and cunning enough to set primitive traps and snares. Typically, Bog Devils are covered in various algae and swamp grasses. Because of this, they are sometimes called the "old men of the swamps" because the long grasses resemble matted hair and beards.

Size: 6'6"-7", 160-200 lbs.

Int +2 Per +4 Str +3 Dex +2 Spd +8 in water/+2 on land
Ability Level: 1-10+

Attacks/Damage: Bite DR 4, Claws DR 4, or by weapon – typically spears, nets, and clubs

Special Abilities: superior swimmers (+5 to Swim Rolls), Stealth, Snare, and Tracking abilities

Armour: slimy hide, PR 2

Hit Points: 18-22

Vardune

Span Oak / Viridia / Root Grub / Plant Demon
(Grue) / Flit / Avir / Needleleaf

Tanglewood

An animate variety of deciduous tree, Tanglewood is often noted for its seemingly violent and malevolent tendencies. In a fashion similar to Stranglevine, to which it may be related, a Tanglewood tree will lash out at anything that comes within its reach, attempting to ensnare, seize, and lift its prey far from the ground. Creatures so captured by a Tanglewood tree often die from hunger, thirst, and exposure.

Botanomancers disagree on whether or not the tree actually receives any nutritional value from the decomposing bodies hung in its branches or if instead this species is just generally malevolently violent. Viridian himself supposedly warned against the cultivation of this plant, which he said possessed "an alarming degree of animation, and perhaps even sentience." Indeed, many Botanomancers have to their dismay discovered that Tanglewood cuttings often sprout roots and tendrils that seemingly attempt to shatter, break, or burst any container into which they are placed, whether through simple application of pressure, sprouting through keyholes and hinges, or even burrowing penetratingly through

wood and cloth.

Violet Creeper

A strange and rare species of mobile plant that inhabits the temperate forests and jungles of Talislanta, the Violet Creeper is easily recognized by its thick and vibrant purple foliage. Inactive during the daylight hours, this shrub becomes ambulatory at night and goes about seeking warm-blooded prey. Its elongated creepers and roots exude an anethetising poison that is used to immobilize sleeping prey long enough for the trunk of the plant to root itself in the body of its prey from where it feeds on its victim's bodily fluids. Most often a creeper leaves behind its grisly, emaciated victim before daylight and secrets itself somewhere nearby. If interrupted during feeding, the creeper will move away as rapidly as it can. Possessed of extremely limited intelligence, the creeper knows enough to fear fire. Botanomancers have been known to uproot young creepers during daylight hours, keep them captive, and utilize them as nighttime guards against predators. However, caution must be exercised since violet creepers have been known to exhibit violent tendencies when placed in large groups.

Durne

Malathrope / Shathane / Malavraxes / Subterranoïd / Drone / Behemoth / Scarlet Sporozoid



Astar

Avir / Whisps (Wood / Water / Night) / Dryad Bush / Emperor Plant

Sindar

Opteryx / Vasp / Rock Urchins / Satada / Chasm Viper / Exomorph

Magical Skills

Alchemy

Alchemy is equivalent to chemistry. Though it is based on metaphysical principals, it is not a magical field of study like spell casting or enchanting would be. To be more precise, while alchemical potions often have magical effects, they are not enchanted and they do not count as magical items that take away from the seven item limit. An important principle of Talislantan Alchemy is that the characteristics of living creatures, inanimate substances, and plants can, in some sense, be distilled from their physical components.

Basic knowledge of alchemical lore and practices includes the ability to read ciphers, prepare ingredients, and preserve ingredients. Another skill is the ability to identify mixtures by testing, and utilize alchemical apparatuses. Alchemists can also concoct, forge, or create the categories of substances listed below; certain characters are limited to specific categories, but the Sindarans are adept at all forms of Alchemy, but not all alchemical creations are able to be made by Sindarans; for example a Sindaran can not make Adamant of any form, because the secret of adamant is closely guarded by the Mirin and Black Savants. Samples of each type of substance follow each example.

Alchemical Materials – these are materials created through the use of Alchemy that are further utilized in either other alchemical procedures or on non-living items.

- **Amberglass** – Amberglass is an interesting material; it has the ability to contain alchemical and magical mixtures, spell energies, essences, and even certain magical creatures as well. This substance radiates a faint magical aura, but carrying Amberglass will not count against the seven magic item maximum. Using the skill Alchemy, you can create five ounces of raw Amberglass; however shaping it requires extra time, work, and a skill such as Artificer.
- **Amberglow** – Amberglow is an alchemical liquid that most large cities use for lighting. Amberglow can be created to radiate in a variety of colors and patterns. The reason that Amberglow is so popular is because it does not radiate heat, and eight ounces will light a twenty foot area for 3-5 months.

Elixirs – liquid substances meant to be ingested by living creatures; effects tend to be immediate and long lasting.

- **Aphrodisiac Elixir** – This elixir promotes feelings of desire unless a successful WIL roll is made, each dose lasts one hour. One dose is one ounce.
- **Healing Elixir** – This elixir heals 10 hit points of damage per dose. One dose is one ounce.

Medicinal Mixtures - mixtures in this category include tonics, serums, ointments, and various other medicants. Such mixtures are created to treat only one specified malady like fever, rash, minor wounds (3 hit points), burns, and so forth. Sadly, Talislantan medicine is burdened with superstition, ignorance, and more than a little quackery. Due to that, medicinal mixtures carry a -5 penalty with regard to effectiveness.

- **Cooling Salve** – This medicinal mixture is used to provide relief for those suffering from burns.
- **Morning Tonic** – This mixture is commonly used to alleviate headaches in those who suffer from having imbibed to many alcoholic beverages the night before.

Narcotics – a variety of drugs, typically in a particulate form, meant to be ingested, inhaled, or smoked.

- **Euphorica** – Euphorica is a narcotic created from the pollen of the mantrap plant. It is extremely popular in Cymril. It reportedly affords the user a synthesis of pure pleasure; with a one-dram dose lasting around two hours.

Poison – an array of substances meant to cause harm or injury to another living creature; many of these toxins are either suspicious or outright illegal in many civilized lands.

- **Paralytic Poison** – This poison causes paralysis lasting up to one hour. If it is resisted, the victim is rendered sluggish (-3 on all actions) for ten rounds. One dose is one ounce.

- **Venomwood Resin** – This toxin yields a sufficient amount to coat one edged weapon (Adding DR 25), two arrows or crossbow bolts (Adding DR 16) or four darts (Adding DR 8). Note that the larger the area coated with the resin yields a higher Damage Rating due to the fact that more of the poison is entering the system at one time. The poison is good for only one successful strike and it causes half its damage on a successful save.

Potions – liquids that most commonly have effects that seem to mirror magical effects.

- **Flying Potion** – This potion bestows upon the drinker the power of flight at speeds up to a maximum of 25 mph (SPD +6; 220' per round). Each dose lasts one hour; and one dose is one ounce.
- **Rejuvenating Potion** – This potion restores strength, vitality and all lost hit points. One dose is one ounce.

Powders – powders are commonly used to spread an alchemical effect across a larger area than can be commonly treated with other solutions; they are ingested, applied to the skin or surface of an object, or cast into the air.

- **Sparkle Powder** – This powder is a cosmetic powder that is popular in Cymril, Thaecia, and Hadj. It is normally sold in small silver pillboxes and applied with a small feather duster. This powder gives whatever it is applied to a metallic sheen, including but not limited to hair, skin, and clothing. Some other uses for this powder are to give a non-metallic item a false metallic look, and it is used often to that effect by trapmages. A one-dram dose is sufficient to cover about ten square feet or an average sized person, with the coating lasting around four hours.
- **Neutralizing Powder** – This powder neutralizes any effect of any type of poison, alchemical waists, and toxins. Whether ingested, inhaled, or dispersed into the air or soil. Maximum area of effect per ounce is a 10-foot diameter circle. One dose is one ounce.

When using the alchemy skill to make an Alchemical Substance, a failure means that the ingredients are lost and the Alchemist must start again from scratch; a partial success is still a failure, but the ingredients have not been used or destroyed and can still be used; a success or critical success means that the process works as planned. An Alchemist can work on more than one project at a time, but if they try to they take a -5 on each roll for each extra project. The -5 is a standard multiple action penalty.

With additional work, an alchemist can alter the standard form of one of the substances that they have already created into another form; for example, a Sindaran alchemist could create a portion of Venomwood Resin and then alter it into the form of a powder that could be cast airborne using a Rod of Alchemy.

It is recommended to look in the fourth edition main Talislanta rule book to see more Alchemical items, and the ingredients. With the help and consent from your GM, you can create your own Alchemical Mixtures. All the ingredients with their properties can be found on pages 480 and 481.

Botanomancy

This skill is in part the equivalent to botany mixed with a comprehension of certain metaphysical and sorcerous values. It has been perfected by the Green Aeriad of Vardune. Due to new agreements between the Cymrilians and Aeriad, some of the knowledge is now being taught at the Lyceum Arcanum. Also, there are a group of highly skilled Botanomancers living in the King's Spire and The Seven to care for the various environments and gardens contained within.

Botanomancy consists of four main talents that have been derived from Botanomancy training, study of the plant kingdom, and natural intuition. You can also spend experience to raise your ability in one of these abilities below; doing so would give you bonuses when using said skill. These abilities are described below.

1) Locate Plant

Locate plant helps a Botanomancer determine a general location (normally within 100 yards) where a particular plant will most likely be growing. This skill is partially based upon a wide-spread knowledge of various floras and partially on the principles of certain obscure metaphysical beliefs. In some respects it seems to mimic a preternatural sense – the Botanomancer can conceivably locate a single, specific plant within an area. This ability only works on plants in their natural state. For example, a Botanomancer can not locate any form of Sea Kelp in the Desert.

The GM may assign modifiers for things like area knowledge, or if the Botanomancer has spent experience on a certain plant. Penalties for Degree of Difficulty are also given, especially if a Botanomancer is unfamiliar with the plant, region, or if the plant is rare.

2) Identify Plant

Identify plant helps a Botanomancer determine a specific specimen's properties and characteristics. Short term scrutiny is mostly based on metaphysical principles and prior knowledge, while the additional time to examine and study a plant provides a further bonus at classification.

Plants from foreign areas and environments, or those with strange properties may impose a penalty for Degree of Difficulty at the GM's discretion. In order for a Botanomancer to identify the plant, they must study it for a minimum of one round. The longer spent studying the plant the more of a bonus the Botanomancer receives on the roll; for example one minute of study yields a +1 modifier, one hour brings the bonus up to +3, and a whole day of study brings the bonus up to +5. Botanomancers can attempt to study a plant that they previously failed to identify, but doing so has a -2 modifier for each previous failed attempt. In all cases a single roll, made using the Action Table, works for the entire identification process.

3) Nurture Plant

Just as it says it is, this enables the Botanomancer to grow any type of seeds or cuttings. It also gives the Botanomancer the ability to diagnose injuries or illnesses of any sort, and the ability to "heal" or "rejuvenate" a plant that has suffered things like drought damage, cold damage, neglect, and even damage caused by herbivores and weapons. This skill is also useful for protecting plants from threats like extreme weather, insects, parasites, molds, and other magical and natural phenomena.

When using these skills, the GM decides how long and how difficult it will take to heal a plant or protect a plant. Modifiers are assigned by conditions such as soil conditions, normal plant growth, available resources, how damaged a plant is. Other things that will cause modifiers are how long the Botanomancer plans on protecting a plant from dangers, and/or the level of the threat that will be endangering the plant's well-being.

4) Botanomantic Hybridization

This skill allows the Botanomancer to create a hybrid from any two living types of plants. To do so, the Botanomancer must use living specimens (such as roots, cuttings, seeds, etc.) from each plant being used. The Botanomancer also needs access to the proper growing medium (such as soil, humus, loam, etc.) including necessary substances for growth like light and water.

If successful, the attempt will yield a hybrid seedling, but only a Critical Success will yield a fertile plant that is capable of reproduction. A Partial Success will yield a poor and unhealthy specimen. A Full Success yields a healthy plant that is sterile. The GM will determine the properties of the plant when it reaches maturity; however, the Player can set a specific goal or end result, but will most likely require plants with some prior inclination towards the desired end result. Note that young hybrid plants are extremely susceptible to disease, adverse environments, parasites, and other problems. Sometimes, even creating a successfully fertile plant, the Botanomancer may still need to create another successful breeding partner.

The GM will set the modifiers for the hybridization by taking into account the difference between the plants, their hardiness, fertility, magical resistance (if any), and other characteristics of the samples. For example, two types of fertile and hearty weeds might have no negative modifiers, but crossing a subterranean fungus and a fruit tree could have a severe modifier of -30.

Although most plants are benign and thus possess no real Attributes, the GM should still ascertain which plant is the primary donor and which is the secondary - only two plants can be hybridized at a time. Some examples of Talislanta fauna do have attributes, however. In such cases, the species with the highest total average of attributes is the primary donor. Each characteristic can be rolled for separately if the GM so desires on the table below. When using the chart, GMs are encouraged to elaborate on the results based upon what the Botanomancer was trying to achieve. It is not unheard of for Botanomancers to suffer an attack, whether intentional or not, from their newly created charge.

(Continued with Table 1)

Table 1: Botanomancy Modifiers

For every positive modifier that the final result has	+1 difficulty
For every two negative modifiers that the final result has	-1 difficulty
Different species of plants (Vines, trees, flowers, fungi)	+5-25 or higher difficulty
Different breeds of plants (blue lotus and red lotus)	+1-5 or higher difficulty
Each special ability (poison, distance attack, etc)	+3 difficulty
Each special ability not possessed by either donor	+5 difficulty

Die Roll

Mishap

Failure

Partial Success

Full Success

Critical Success

Result

Major setback such as both donor plants dying or hybridized plant possessing nothing favourable of its donors

Minor setback such as primary donor plant dying or hybridized plant having most of the characteristics of its secondary donor

Plant possesses most of the characteristics of the primary donor or few of the desired abilities and attributes

Plant possesses the desired attributes but is not fertile, plant is fertile but possesses few of the desired attributes

Botanomancer creates a new breed or species of plant that is fertile or capable of bearing seeds, fruit, etc.

Crystalomancy

Crystalomancy is itself a Magical Order. The Gnomekin themselves make little distinction between the Orders of Crystalomancy and the Invocation of Terra. To them both of these Orders deal with the caster's respect for the natural powers of the earth. The Orders of Natural Magic and Earth Elementalism are similar in the eyes of the Gnomekin, but, in their opinion, do not do justice to Terra, but rather to her children and servants: elementals and spirits of the earth.

Gnomekin men who practice magic are called either Crystalomancers or Custodians, whereas Gnomekin females are called either Crystalomancers or Daughters of Terra. Only the Daughters of Terra officiate in Gnomekin religious ceremonies, while Custodians are frequently Terra's spokesmen above ground.

All Gnomekin consider Crystalomancy a gift from Terra to their people. In accordance to the Gnomekin's modest nature, their magicians regard the use of their magic as working in accordance with Terra's will. They do not beseech her directly for aid or seek to burden her with requests for assistance; instead, they work to care for and protect one another and those around them. As such, Crystalomancy is seen as being a great responsibility and duty to be performed. All Crystalomancers develop an acute respect for life, a caring and compassionate nature, and a strong sense of the balance and harmony of the natural world surrounding them. Unclouded judgment and beliefs are compulsory in Crystalomancy students. Since the Gnomekin do not find many outsiders that they feel have the proper deep and abiding respect for Terra, there are few, if any, non-Gnomekin Crystalomancers. While all that walks under and above the earth may be Terra's children, not all of Her children understand and respect her. Those that do not revere the Earth Mother should not be trusted with Her gifts or allowed to learn Her secrets.

Crystalomancy requires the use of specially prepared crystals in order to produce magical effects. As a result, all Crystalomancers also possess the skill of Agriculture (Crystals) which is further detailed below. Additionally, many Crystalomancers are skilled with Appraisal, specifically of crystals and gemstones. Outside of the Seven Kingdoms, many perceive the subterranean Gnomekin simply as "crystal merchants and appraisers." Crystalomancy does not use books or other written works; instead, young Gnomekin are initiated in the mysteries of Terra and spend a great deal of time in Durne's crystal gardens meditating and helping older Crystalomancers to tend the growing crystals.

The Gnomekin claim that the "seeds" for magical crystals begin deep within the grasp of Terra. They are then passed to the Crystalomancers in underground streams of running water or geysers. On occasion, these raw, untended crystals can be found along the Underground Highway or in uninhabited caves and caverns beneath the surface. These "seeds" are cultivated in Durne's underground gardens and the homes of Crystalomancers. Here they are grown and cultured into the crystals used by Crystalomancers. While tending the growing crystals and meditating in the gardens, aspiring Gnomekin learn what each type of crystal is capable of doing. Older Crystalomancers nurture this deeper understanding of Terra's will. Often this deeper connection results in a bond with the crystals and as a result many Crystalomancers prefer to use crystals that they themselves have nurtured.

Properly prepared crystals are capable of storing the magical energy focused by Crystalomancers. Crystals storing magical energy in this way should be considered enchanted items and thus count against a character's seven item limit. A variety of magical crystals are distinguished by the Gnomekin; some place this number at thirteen and others at eleven. In either case, a particular type of crystal corresponds roughly with spells of a specific Mode. Players are encouraged to take into account the color of each crystal when describing their spells.

The skill of Crystal Growing (Agriculture – crystals) is necessary for the maintenance and growth of Crystalomantic crystals and as such all Crystalomancers have the skill Agriculture. However, not all Crystal Growers are Crystalomancers. There are many Gnomekin who tend the Groves of Terra, but not all of them study the deeper mysteries of Her heart.

In desperate situations, Gnomekin Crystalomancers can also use gemstones in place of crystals, but doing so incurs a penalty of +1 to +10 to a spell's difficulty. Refer to the gemstone chart on page 481 of the 4th Edition Talislanta book for the qualities of gemstones; these qualities should be adhered to when Players construct spells using gemstones.



Telempathy

The Muses of Astar are perhaps the only practitioners of Natural Telempathy, although some practitioners of the Order of Mysticism say that their own skills come close. Nevertheless, it is through Telempathy that Muses communicate with others around them, both sensing emotions as well as projecting them and other higher forms of communication.

As Muses become more adept at Telempathy, they can communicate at greater and greater distances. Foregoing communication, Muses can also use their skill to detect the presence of living creatures from a distance. Telempaths can not only convey emotions, but can also project sensory information of any kind. Although full sensory projections are the realm of the more skilled Telempaths, many Muses can convey one or two senses with great acumen.

As a means of defence and offense, Telempathy can be a frightening tool; especially when wielded by a Muse of great skill. Not only can a Telempath sway a target's emotional state in manner similar to spells of the Influence Mode, but a Muse can also project a hallucination into a victim causing varying degrees of disorientation and confusion. A great number of Muses acting in concert could conceivably keep an army at bay, a theory that could attest to the relative peacefulness of Astar.

In general, Telempathy can not be resisted or stopped. Subjects do get a WIL roll to resist a specific application of Telempathy, but since the ability is different from a Magical Order it is not bound by the same limitations as spell casters, meaning it can be used often and rapidly. Typically, the minds of animals are easier to effect since they are unsuspecting. Non-humanoids and extra-dimensional beings may receive a bonus on their resistance roll at the GM's discretion. Additionally, Sindarans could either receive a bonus to their roll or two attempts to resist based upon their Dual Encephalon brains.

Other Items

Cloth Armour

Any of a variety of garments altered through the application of Sindaran alchemical agents to make them resistant to puncturing, ripping, or tearing. Treat as Leather Armour, but halve the weight and double the cost.

Root Armour

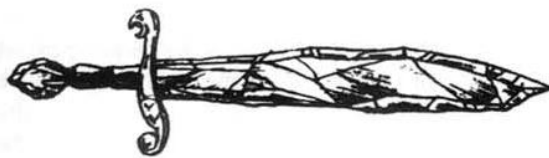
A suit of protective gear consisting of specially grown and cultivated roots and tubers augmented with the scales of aquatic predators in vital areas. Created by Gnomekin artificers, Root armour is the equivalent of Cymrilian spanglor, but at half the cost. As these are typically developed for Gnomekin scouts and warriors, a suit of these created for a larger wearer would cost considerably more.

Scale Armour

An outfit of armour crafted from the scales of aquatic predators from Durnese underground lakes and rivers. Exclusively worn by Gnomekin warriors, it is as durable as chain mail but lighter and less restrictive.

Crystalblade

The time-honoured weapon wielded by Gnomekin warriors and scouts, crystalblades are short swords that have been crafted out of solid crystal by Gnomekin farmers. A crystalblade is the equivalent of an adamant blade of the same size and weight due to its diamond-hard crystalline edges. While it is conceivable that Gnomekin farmers and artificers could create other weapons using this same technique, no such creations have been seen outside of Durne. ■



CHAPTER 9

GM'S SECRETS

Background Info

This section will give ideas on how to handle the adventure ideas left in each of the Seven Kingdoms' chapters. Feel free to take the adventure ideas and create different possibilities, these are only suggestions.

Cymril

The stories of a ruined castle at a valley called Ystrad Mynach in the Jasper Mountains.

This can be approached in a few ways, the party can go in search of the Castle; or you can have a windship accident that causes delay and the party goes exploring and finds the Castle. In the Castle are a large number of precious objects. There is no detailed list because the objects that are found should fit the party or your own ideas of treasure-like items. One thing that I will list as being in the Castle is a group of coin sized and shaped multi-colored stones. In each stone is carved a different rune/image. There should be no more than nine of the carved stones there. Each stone is a different color, and the only color not found is green. The castle should not be easy to navigate; filled with rooms that seem to go nowhere, hidden passages and stairways, and even some odd "traps" that aren't dangerous.

When dealing with the lady in green. She is as you choose to make her, an actual Spirit or a Cymrilian woman living in the castle alone, flitting from room to room. Her purpose is not for combat but for information. She will be able to tell the players how to leave the castle, how to find all of the coins (including the broken one), and other small details about the treasure. In reference to the small coins she will say that they are important, one must possess all of them, they have a use, and that she can not remember how to make them work. She can not and will not leave the castle proper, she never steps out the front door, and she is imprisoned there. If a party

member tries to drag her out to bring her with them, she will scream in pain, and then fade out and appear back in the castle.

The coins themselves are magical, and used together can be pressed into a medium that will hold the imprint. When using the coins, the imprints need to be around something to work. When used, the coins lock an item the way it is. The castle was locked using the coins; all treasure that leaves the castle disappears and reappears back in the castle until the seals are broken. When the seals break, the lady will die or will fade away, finally able to rest, and the treasure that was in the castle will be able to leave it as well. All the coins together count as one magic item towards the limit; and identifying them is extremely difficult even for skilled mages at the Lyceum Arcanum.

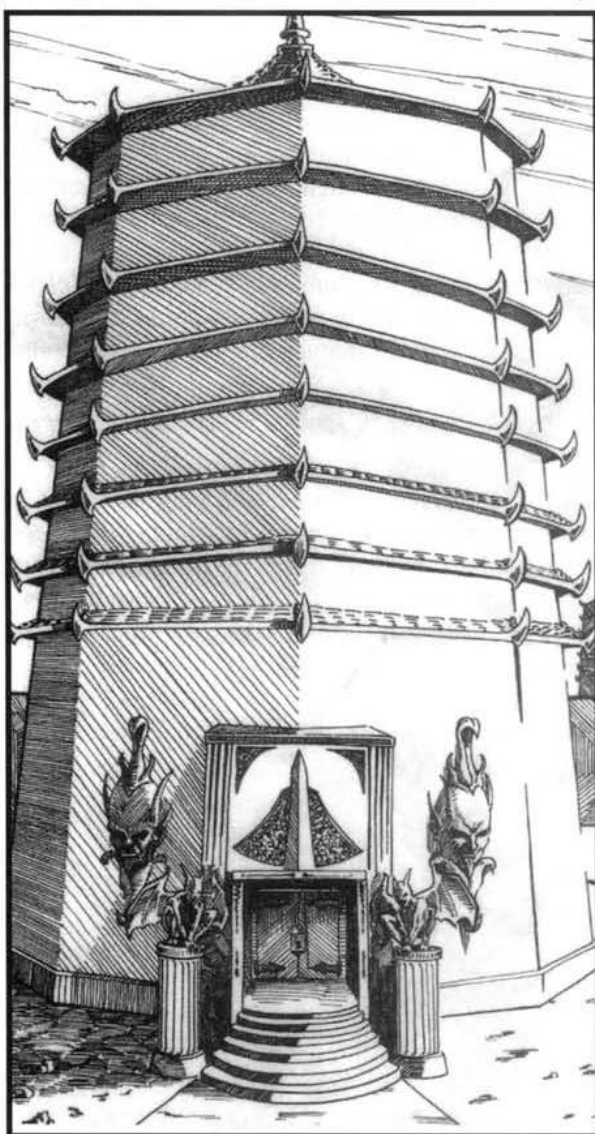
In a place far from Ystrad Mynach in the Jasper Mountains there is rumoured to be an area that is so full of silver and gemstones that it glows in the light of Talislanta's Seven Moon's brighter than any other place in the kingdom, including the cities crystal spires themselves.

This is something of a treasure hunt, where the thinking of the party influences the find. Just about every party will go after this with greed in the beginning. When they near it however a series of five successive WIL rolls starting at -1 and ending at -5 will determine if they are able to keep their greed in check. Those who can not keep their greed in check for all five rounds will not see the treasure, even if their friends are holding some of for them to view it. If the treasure is spent wholly on the party with none of it going to assist any others, the items bought do not seem to have as much value; for example, a potion lasts for less time or takes more to make one dose, a weapon seems to do less damage than it should, armour does not take as much of the shock as it could. If some of the money is used to assist others, that

amount is returned to them by way of 'happenstance' and luck, or the items they did buy for themselves are normal items, or the GM can choose to award the giver with extra rolls if one goes bad.

A small stone hut that some have claimed seeing in the Jade Plains just west of the capital city.

This adventure is a standard Dungeon crawl. The group taking new adventurers can do it many different ways, a lottery and the party members are chosen, or a group of more seasoned adventurers can head off to find the hut. There is no standard way to handle this, just pull out a map or make something up in your head. Make sure the monsters are a challenge, but not enough to kill the party. The treasure should be usable to the party, but not overly powerful, and the riches that they walk away with should be reasonable. Once everyone who survives the dungeon leaves it, it resets. This adventure can be something fun to do on a slow night, or between larger quests in an epic campaign.



Kasmir

Rumours surface of an underground city that is chock full of treasure and money that even the Kasmiran's have yet to discover.

There is a massive system of tunnels and rooms under the city of Kasmir, and there is wealth to be found. Some of the tunnels and rooms are however those belonging to certain families in Kasmir. Those places are well trapped by trapmages, but there are also some rooms that have not been claimed (physically) by a certain Kasmiran or Family. This stuff is free to liberate and suffers the liberator no consequences if taken. However it is difficult to find and there are other things guarding the riches hidden below. Some of the creatures wandering the underground city are things that were placed by the Kasmirans, where as other things started out there. The party can choose however to also go after family gold, and that can lead to great and vast pursuits over the continent of Talislanta by bounty hunters.

The bounty hunters that are hired should be a little more powerful than the party, so that the party can not outright destroy them and needs to continue running from them. They would become a reoccurring villain in the game and have the potential to bring the party in for justice. If the party is captured, there is also chance for escape while being transported or held before trial. If held on trial, the plaintiff might be persuaded to take back the money that was stolen plus a fee as if they had borrowed the money from the Kasmiran in the first place, but that is completely up to you.

Out in the desert a short but perilous journey away from the road is a series of small towers.

These towers can be a few things, I'll detail a few ideas here, you can make your own, or you can use all of the ideas that I suggest with other towers in different places.

A small group of rogue wizards using conceal spells or illusions of some sort to keep the place looking old and unused. They are very interested in keeping their secret hidden because they are in the process of summoning something very large. They won't tell the party of what they are summoning, but the party can take a guess if they spend enough time around the wizards. The wizards will try a few things to get the party to leave them including but not limited to bribes, using a high level influence spell, more conceal and illusion spells, and threats of altering the PCs. The party can choose to attack the wizards, but they are going to be tough opponents. They can stick around to see what the wizards are summoning (a spirit of a powerful Archaen wizard), try and defeat the wizards, take the bribe/threats and leave. The choice is theirs as to what they do. If you do go with this idea, the treasure from defeating these fellows should be pretty nice, and should fit the party fairly well.

Another option is that they are tricky and trapped burial chambers with Archaen artifacts hidden inside, along with a spell book, and other miscellaneous goods. Monster wise there should be Demons, large insects, and similar things. They should be well sealed and trapped thoroughly. Upon entering, there should be some sort of magical "warning" that is triggered by touching something in the tomb.

Some claim to have seen a shimmering wreckage in the moonlight on the night that the spirits were wandering. *This "history" that is presented is not necessarily the whole truth.*

This wreckage is not around during the day light, nor is it around when none of the moons are full. This wreckage is more of a mystery than a treasure seeking adventure. If the party figures out that the wreckage only appears at the full moon and they go in search of it, they will find a wrecked windship of a design that has never been seen by anyone living on Talislanta. The ship is actually the old wreckage from the crash of the Neurians. If a Sindaran is present and asks about the crash they will learn the below information; and if no Sindaran is present, but the party asks the correct questions they will find out about the history of Sindarans.

The party will learn that the Sindarans can't leave the world. They have been stuck in a cycle, bringing them to crashing in the distant past and on current Talislanta, their two ships that have crashed in the past (the one bringing magic to the Archaen and the one here on Talislanta) are the first ships that the Neurians have built. The second ship that crashes on Sinbar, the one that brings the Neurians to Archaen, is actually a ship built by Sindarans from the future of Talislanta. The ship was built to return them home, and home it sent them. The ghosts are saddened with the knowledge that they had been reaching for home, and all this time this was their home.

Taz

There are stories told of the crash of a massive and treasure laden windship near Targ Swamp, but no one has ever returned from looking for it.

The biggest problem with getting to the treasure is the large amount of beasts prowling the area. Once the beasts are beaten back or scared away, the party is free to take what they can carry, but if they wait too long to return to the wreck, some of the beasts will have returned to the wreckage, and will have begun to eat the now dead beasts. That might distract some of the monsters, but not all will ignore the party.

The ship was a Seven Kingdoms merchant ship carrying alcohols like Skoryx, potions and other alchemicals, crystals, a few art pieces by the Muses, weapons, and other goods that would be exported. If the ships log is found there will be notations about passengers traveling on the ship, and a few of the names look like Kasmiran names, others look like Cymrilians. From the bones on the boat it seems that no one survived the crash, and there seems to be no reason that the boat should have crashed. The levitationals look like they are still intact, and might be able to move the damaged ship; but until the reason of the crash is found, moving the ship seems like a bad idea.

There have been rumours spreading of a group of bandits operating on the roads around Tor.

The Thralls are being harassed by normal, but highly cunning bandits. The tricks they're pulling are simple misdirection and the ability to hide their own tracks. They approach caravans or travelers in small numbers, and when they're traveling they seem like a group of normal travelers. They offer or request to join the party that is traveling on the road and when the caravan or travelers are resting or have let their guards down the bandits attack. They do not leave survivors, nor do they normally let people realize that they've actually taken over the caravan and have moved the goods to be sold.

Vardune

A family of Green Aeriad claim that the eldest of their house has gone missing.

The elder has been kidnapped along with her great nephew by the nephew's parents. Their motivation is not greed but power. If the elder is out of the family, their Father becomes the eldest and they have the opportunity to become the most powerful family in the small grove that they live in. The eldest and her great nephew are being held in a small orchard controlled by the young boy's parents a few leagues away from the family tree. They do not plan on killing her, but expect her to die of old age soon, and if she is not there to name her successor the title will be passed to the next eldest, and that is what they are hoping for. If the party finds the Eldest and her nephew, and return them, the eldest will reward them well.

The Blue Aeriad do not know how to deal with the odd movements in the water, and fear that it might be some large beast that is hunting the hunters.

The beast is a River Kra. It is an older and larger beast, and is cunning for its kind, normally attacking smaller crafts, and rarely being seen in the day. When the River Kra is dispatched the attacks will end, and the party will be heartily rewarded for their assistance.

Durne

The corridors lead down and around into the deeper, colder, and more perilous parts that had been freed by the seeking people.

Most of the things that attack the city, like subterranooids and drones are in abundance down in the caves. The deeper that you go, the harder it will be to return, because most of the time the subterranooids will watch people enter their area, but prevent them from leaving.

Up in the forest of Iron Wood holds a small but nagging mystery.

Of the three options, any can be used. The portal could send the party anywhere in Talislanta, and to get home, they have to return to the spot they arrived in with a piece of iron wood. If it was a small camp or city, it could be a settlement of the Sarista who have had good luck in holding off the natural predators living in the area, and they are gathering the wood for sale and trade. It could be an injured muse trying to find her way home. If you decide to make it a new crystal look in the fourth edition main Talislanta rule book to create the new crystal and determine its properties. Depending on the party's composition you will want to make the glow to their advantage.

Astar

A hunting party from Trang in Taz has chased a fugitive into the forests of Astar.

Create an NPC that is a little more powerful than the party and have them with minimal items. If you make a wizard, he carries no spell book. If it is a rogue, then he has only the clothes on his back. Either way, he is fleeing for his life. The prisoner should have a high charisma so that when the party meets him he can try to sway them to his side. If the party decides to stop him they should have a difficult time doing so, and the prisoner should have the opportunity to escape. Depending on if you want to make the convict a reoccurring character, you can have him escape once back in Thrall custody and away from the party. If you do that, the Thralls might approach the party and ask them to hunt him down to bring him back to justice.

There have been stories of strange lights coming down from the Jasper Mountains and congregating on the edge of Lake Zephyr and retreating back into the Mountains before the suns rise again.

There is a small group of Orgovians living in the Jasper Mountains. The Orgovians are polluting the water, although not on purpose. They do not realize where they are or that they are doing any harm. If asked to stop, they will request aid. They will need help finding a new home with a source of water. The party can direct them to the Green Lagoon up in Werewood, the Yellow Marshes in Mog, or anywhere you choose. If asked to leave politely and given directions they will leave without any argument and will probably ask the party to guide them in exchange for money.

Sindar

The Alchemist who explains that his son saw something glittering off the path in the distance.

The party can take up this wild goose chase, and it can be the beginning of a great adventure, or you can place something there for the party to find like a great crystal spire jutting up from the earth, a group of Sindra demented ones trying to disrupt the crystals, or even a camp of Sarista passing and mirrors on the sides of their wagons reflecting light.

A group of Satada has been harassing the road between Nankar and Sahar.

The Satada are in the employ of a Zandir swordmage who has decided that the slower way of buying people into slavery is to kidnap them into it. The Zandir already had some Satada in their employ, and liked the efficiency that they could capture more, so he sent out a troop of Satada to gain the assistance of their brethren to bolster the supply of the swordmage. The threat can be stopped temporarily by killing the Satada, but to stop the threat completely the swordmage will need to be hunted down and arrested. ■

