

# SPELLJAMMER<sup>®</sup>

Accessory

## THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER



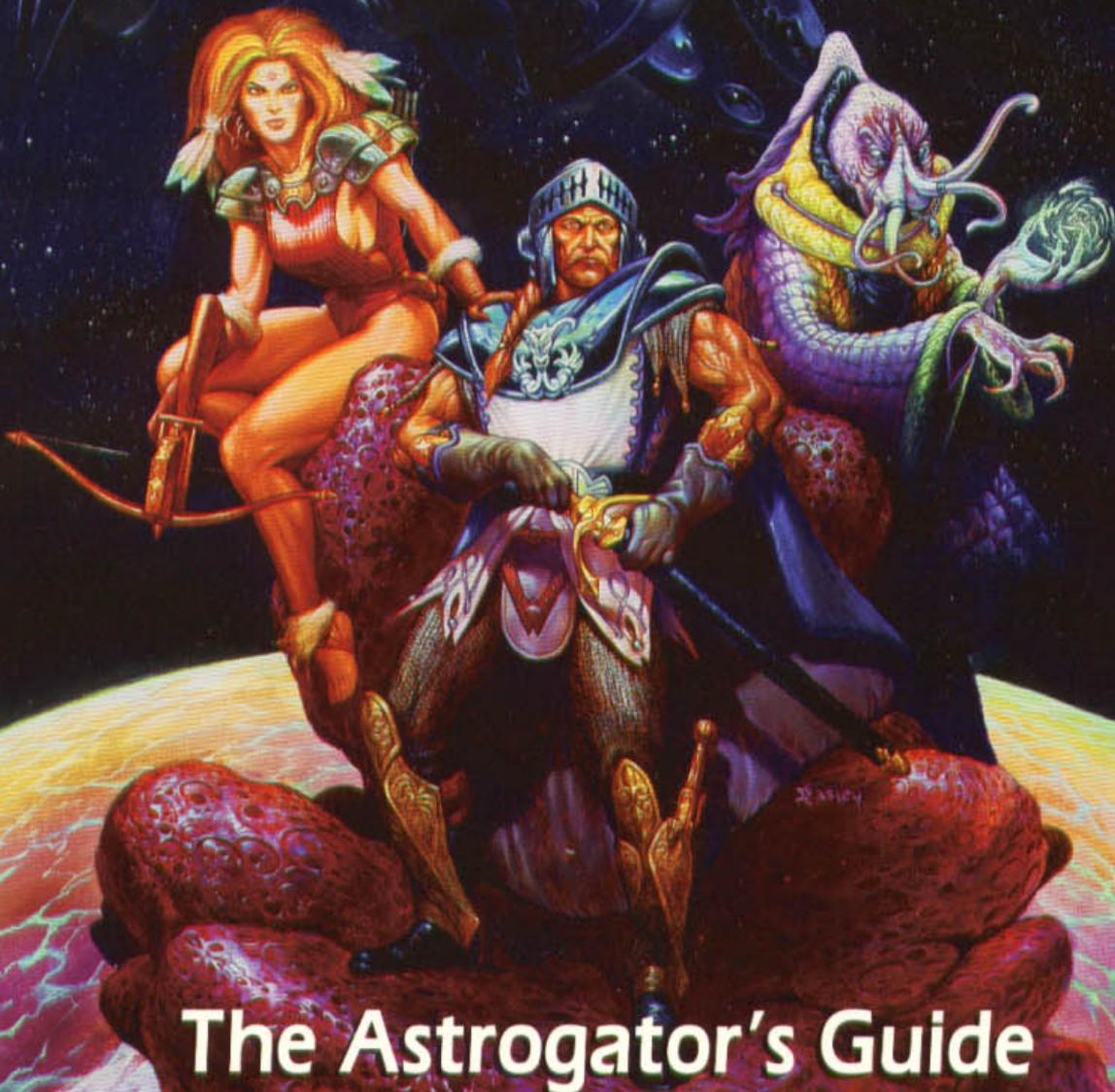
Miller

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons<sup>®</sup>  
2nd Edition

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## The Astromundi Cluster



## The Astrogator's Guide

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



Accessory

## The Astrogator's Guide

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# INTRODUCTION

You hold in your hands the keys to some of spelljamming's greatest mysteries. Are all neogi necessarily evil? What do the Arcane really want? Do the illithids have a home world?

The answers to all of these questions and many more lie within the bounds of the secluded Astromundi Cluster. Long-sought answers lie here to be uncovered by brave explorers, as well as treasures no groundling could imagine. But be forewarned: the Cluster is not a forgiving place. Ships that enter Clusterspace sometimes never leave, unable to escape from a crystal sphere that was more than willing to let them in. Travelers whisper tales of numerous undead and ever-present slave ships. Some speak of golden hell-Barges, great ships manned by tanar'ri warriors.

In this box you'll find the following books: *The Astrogator's Guide* (which you have in your hands), *Adventures in the Shattered Sphere*, and *The Celestial Almanac*. In addition to these books there are two posters: a Planetary Display of the Cluster, and a cut-away display of a crystal citadel and Highport. You'll also find 24 cards with pictures and descriptions of new ships, Lunar Displays, pictures of important races and other useful information. Some of the cards are intended to be used as visual aids for the players, so feel free to flash these around.

*The Astrogator's Guide* is the only part of this set that should be used by the players directly. Chapter One covers the basics of the Astromundi Cluster and its various races. A basic history of the sphere, and its politics, major powers, and overall physical characteristics are provided. All of this information is known to Clusterborn characters, but PCs from other spheres will have to learn it through experience. Information in this chapter is very broad and vague, allowing players to draw their own conclusions.

Chapter Two of *The Astrogator's Guide* details the special rules that will be needed for play in the Astromundi. You'll find information on the different character races within the Cluster, and how their isolation from outside influences has made them different from "typical" individuals of their kind. This chapter also contains guidelines for generating Clusterborn

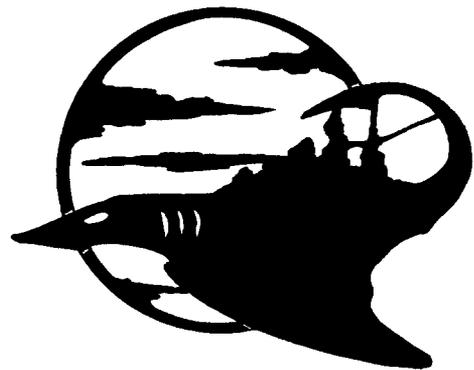
PCs and covers the deities worshiped in the Astromundi Cluster. This section details the basics of life in the Shattered Sphere, and should be read thoroughly to avoid confusion later on.

In Chapter Three, new equipment and ship types are presented. This section contains important new tools for the wandering adventurer, from line-casters to crystal ships.

The second book, *Adventures in the Shattered Sphere*, describes how to set up and maintain a campaign based in Clusterspace. Book Two covers all the details on integrating outside characters into the Astromundi Cluster. You'll also find interesting adventure themes and locales, and ideas for long- and short-term goals for your campaign. Most importantly, the secret goals of the many factions in the Shattered Sphere will be revealed.

The third book, *The Celestial Almanac*, examines the physical characteristics of the Astromundi Cluster, including the secrets of successful trade and piracy and an overview of the Cluster's economy. The heart of the *Almanac* is devoted to detailed descriptions of the many ports, cities, and asteroids that make up the Cluster.

Now, read the books, study the maps a bit and prepare to 'jam into adventures the likes of which you've never seen. For the intrepid explorer, the greatest adventures await!



Welcome to the Astromundi Cluster! I'm Scavran Fjornil, and I'll be yer guide. This here ship is your basic Thoric tradesman, finest cargo hauler in the Cluster. We'll be takin' ya all over on this trip.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

The Astromundi Cluster is an unimaginably old crystal sphere, predating all of the other known spheres by at least several millennia.

During its early existence, the Cluster possessed a single sun and three planets, each roughly classified as size G. These planets orbited the sun, carrying along several moons as they went. No one can say for certain how long this lasted, but the inhabitants of the sphere were spelljamming for more than a thousand years before the First Cataclysm.

Two of the planets collided, grinding their great civilizations away between their inestimable weight. The moons of the planets collided as well, shattering into hundreds of craggy chunks that eventually drifted into stable orbits and formed belts. The two planets that had collided fractured, and their pieces drifted out and away from their molten cores. Records held by Antilan historians speak of the First Cataclysm lasting several years, though it is difficult to say precisely how long it actually was. When it ended, the Astromundi sphere had one planet, several planetoids and several thousand asteroids floating about. The cores of the demolished planets were compacted into a single, fiery mass by the force of the Cataclysm, forming a second sun that fell into orbit around the primary.

The surviving planet was also the largest and is the origin of the sphere's name, Astromundi. Life on that planet thrived for eons more, and empires rose and fell as violent cultures met and warred. Spelljamming continued, and many societies grew to depend on their spelljammers to provide them with raw materials gleaned from the asteroids. Unfortunately, the people of Astromundi had also become used to relying on trade with the other two worlds, and their economies foundered when this trade was cut off.

With soaring populations, no other planetary masses to expand to, and without the interplanetary trade they had come to depend on, the people of Astromundi began having increasingly violent territorial disputes. Wars lasting decades erupted along borders, embroiling countries in bitter, and seemingly endless, disputes. The dominant human race began purges of their nonhuman neighbors. The nonhu-

mans lashed out in anger and confusion, calling upon the darker forces of the Cluster to inflict terrible curses upon the human aggressors. After that, many human children were born with horrid deformities. Marked by the sins of their parents, these mutants were shunned and cast out.

Eventually, many of the mutant pariahs found themselves hiding out in the planet's interior. There, in the dark, they were all equal. No one laughed at their deformities, no one pointed an accusing finger. Over time, these mutants stabilized into a single, new race. So long out of the sun they became fearful of it, they despaired of ever walking the surface again.

Ignorant of the new race literally beneath their feet, the warlike humans intensified their exploration of wildspace, desperately searching for suitable places to settle and claim as their own. Little is recorded of what happened to the human explorers. Hidden tomes found in the most ancient of ruins shed some light on the matter, however. These books tell of the Unbidden, who happened upon the spelljamming explorers. Promised conquest and delights beyond imagining, the desperate travelers forged an unholy alliance with the hideous Unbidden. The fruits of this union would affect the destiny of Astromundi forever.

While humanity flirted with forces best left alone, the dwarves, too, were back in the spelljamming game. Dwarven ingenuity and human spelljamming helms were combined and the dwarves set about mining the asteroid belts. Eventually, the dwarves departed Astromundi entirely. Needing permanent settlements, the dwarves built the first of their citadels among the asteroid belts. These immense structures survive to this day, though in many cases they have been abandoned or ruined over time.

The elves were also busy, though with much simpler plans. Enraged by humanity's ignorance and the self-absorbed attitude of the dwarves, the elves decided to depart Clusterspace altogether. Within the span of a generation, the elves had virtually disappeared from the Shattered Sphere.

Meanwhile, the hidden mutant children of the xenophobic humans plotted the rise of their empire. Ancient texts left by forgotten civilizations were found

Our little pleasure cruise'll start out at the Fringe.  
Lotsa meanness and nasty critters out that way, but ya won't find any better huntin' and trappin'.  
We Thoric got a way with the beasties of the Fringe.  
We take their furs, sell 'em to the neogi, and make a handy profit.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

in the planet's innards. Fascinated by the power of magic, the new race tried diligently to master this potent weapon. During long decades of isolation and intense study, some of them discovered how to unlock the psionic powers of their minds. As all races do, this group sought deities to call their own, and their prayers were answered. After generations of struggling to survive beneath the crust of their planet, the new race planned to become the conquerors of those who shunned them. Banding together under the banner of their new god, the deformed offspring erupted from their hiding places and use the power of their god to spread the darkness of their home to the surface world.

Much to their surprise, the mutants discovered that their homeworld was under siege. Great golden spelljamming craft floated above once fabulous cities that now lay in ruins. Entire nations had perished when the spelljamming explorers and their Unbidden allies returned to Astromundi as conquerors.

The mutants cried out in rage and confusion, desperate to destroy those who had deprived them of their vengeance. Their god listened, and the Second Cataclysm shattered Astromundi like bad crockery, scattering its pieces far and wide.

The Unbidden were cast out from this plane by the curse of the mutants' god, and only a handful of their human allies were able to flee the explosion.

The god of the mutants protected its people and gave them their own place to settle. There, on a cluster of moons orbiting a gas giant, they grew in power and were at last satisfied. Happy to have their own world, the mutants devoted themselves to their religion. To this day, they remain hidden.

The Astromundi Sphere now bore no resemblance to its previous existence. Rather than three large planets and their moons, the sphere now held hundreds of thousands of asteroids, two suns, and dozens of planetoids and lesser moons. The gases released by the two Cataclysms coalesced, forming nebulae and gas giants. And through it all, the hardy humans strove to survive.

This time was very hard on the human race, few of whom had survived the Cataclysms. They were

trapped in asteroid belts and planetoids because the secrets of spelljamming were lost in the Cataclysms. The dwarven race was loath to approach the human settlements, fearful of a race capable of destroying their homeworld. They conducted limited trade, but refused to give up the secrets of their ships.

And then someone found the Astromundi Cluster.

The elves who once called the sphere home returned, and so great were the changes to their homesphere they did not recognize it. The elves traded with the dwarves, and rested from the beatings they had taken during the Unhuman Wars.

The respite was short-lived for the elven race. The goblinoids had pursued the elves through the phlogiston, murderously intent on catching them. When they entered the Astromundi Cluster, the war resumed in earnest, and the elves were again in desperate straits.

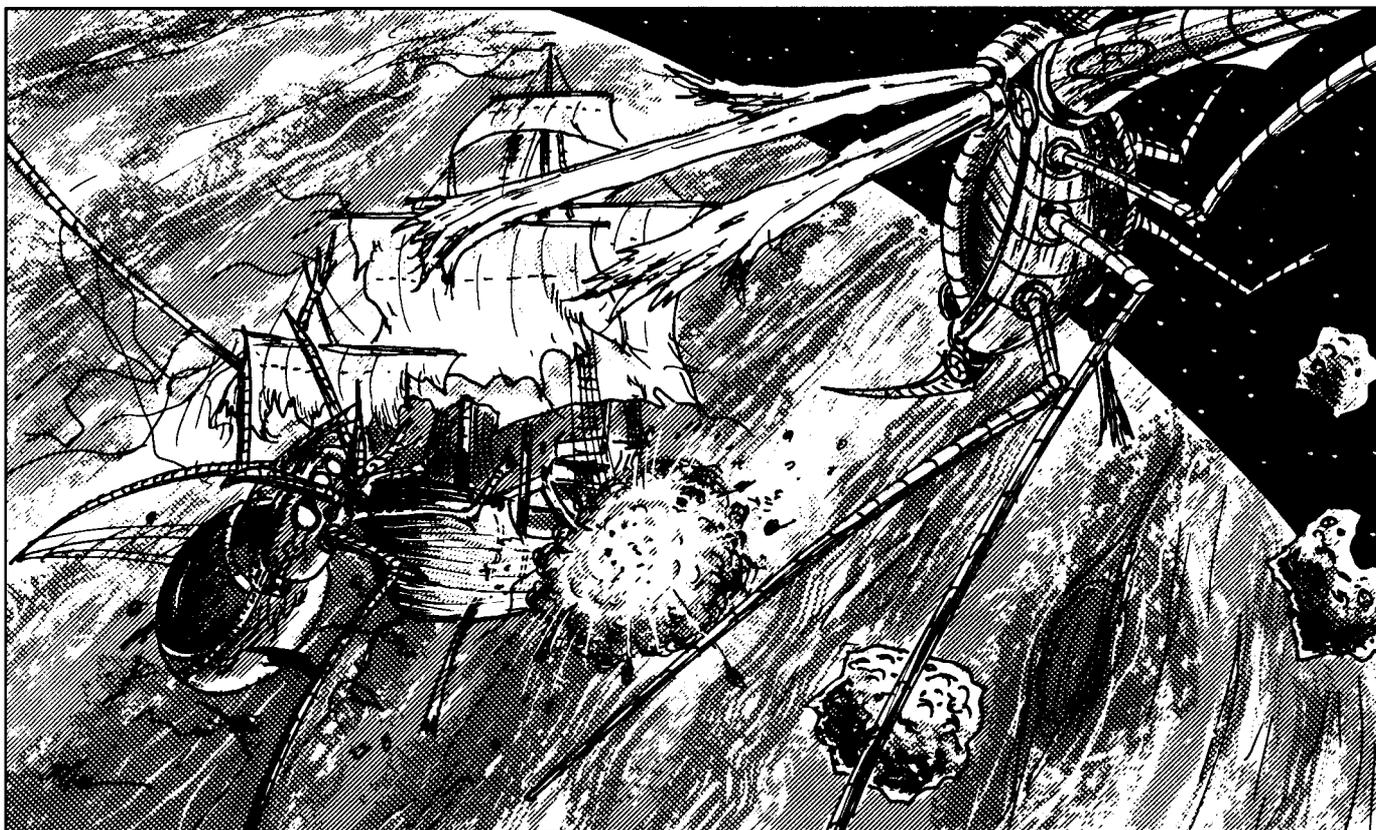
Neogi mindspiders were the next to stumble into the Shattered Sphere. They were few in number, however, and hid, plotting among the asteroid belts. They stole the occasional human from their rocky homes, but were powerless to do more.

All who entered the Astromundi Cluster soon discovered an unnerving fact: the Shattered Sphere was easy to enter, but impossible to leave. Only the elves seemed able to find their way out, and they refused to share their secret.

Other races came to the "pitcher-plant" sphere as well: illithids, lizard men, beholder-kin, some of the giant races, tinker gnomes, and even dragons. Trapped within the Cluster, the various races began to stake out their claims. Some humans hired dwarven smiths and engineers to create artificial worlds for them, constructed of materials gleaned from the asteroid belts. Other human factions delved ever deeper into the secrets of magic, using arcane powers to fashion settlements for themselves amid the dangerous asteroid belts.

The neogi, unable to snatch and grab as was their wont, settled into the uneasy role of traders. They established trade agreements with several human settlements, exchanging spelljamming technology and hard-to-get goods for human slaves. So it was

Ain't too many planets here, not like I hear tell they got other places.  
Nothin' much bigger than a good-sized asteroid, 'less you count those big thingies the  
Antilans went and built. Real secretive about one of 'em, too.  
Some say their god lives on Tan-Sharm . . .



that the most corrupt of humans were the first to take to the stars again.

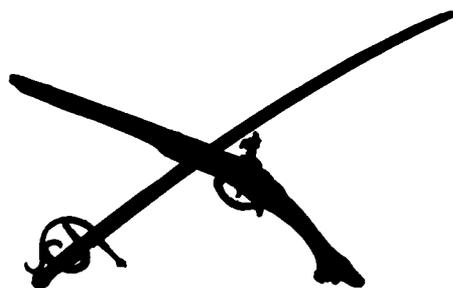
The Arcane appeared in Clusterspace during this time, doing what they could to even out the trade imbalance the neogi had created. It was through their efforts that the rest of the humans took to the stars, and they have since provided many items of power to all of the various races.

During the passage of another millennium, the Astromundi Cluster established a relatively stable pattern. The asteroid belts fell into fixed orbits, and the erratic paths of the various planetoids evened out at last. The human faction known as the Sun Mages (see below) rose as the premier power in the Cluster. Cruel and powerful, the Sun Mages compete with the newcomer illithids for supreme control of the sphere.

Now, the Cluster is in an almost constant state of tension. The Sun Mages drive for conquest in their sun-powered ships, using their great citadels to shade small settlements from the sun and bombard them into submission. The illithids are more subtle,

working deep intrigues and sinister plots with the aid of their human allies. The Arcane have remained neutral in their dealings with all factions, true to their vow of selling to the highest bidder.

The sphere is ripe for adventure. No one stays in any one place for long, and many settlements exist in the asteroid belts to escape the Sun Mages' predations. There are no groundlings here, since everyone knows and uses spelljamming in some form. Welcome to a realm of true Spelljamming.



Flyin's a way of life out here.

If it weren't for spelljammin', most of us'd just dry up and blow away. Folks live in real specialized areas. Some got water, some got land to grow food on. Everybody trades to survive, and spelljammin' lets us flit about and do it.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

## Factions of the Shattered Sphere

There are a number of different power groups within the Astromundi Cluster, each with its own goals and means of achieving its ends. The following section describes the major factions within Clusterspace and their known goals. All of this information is known to those who are natives of the Astromundi Cluster, but outsiders may learn of these things gradually, over a long period of time. In any event, the details provided here may or may not be complete, as many of the factions have agendas hidden from even the most diligent of prying eyes.

Each description will detail the general attitudes of the nation or race, and the known goals of that faction. Following that is a short description of the attitudes of individuals of that faction, which may be different from the general view of their nation.

### Antilan Empire (Sun Mages)

**The Nation (population: 3,000,000,000)**

Undeniably the most powerful group in the Cluster, the Sun Mages are located in the heart of the Shattered Sphere. Their rise to power was fueled primarily by their possession of the Cluster's prime real estate. The Antilans were also the first to rediscover their spelljamming and magical heritage, and realize its potential. Today, they are the foremost practitioners of magic in the Cluster, with the possible exception of the Arcane. They have also harnessed the inherent power of the sun to energize the incredibly swift and deadly crystal ships.

Of all the factions, the Antilans are the most openly bent on expanding their empire. Their crystal ships sweep the asteroid belts periodically for slaves, who are transported to the Antilan mines. Immense crystal fortresses glide through wildspace, powered by the energy of the sun and intent on conquest.

Naturally, the Antilans view themselves as superior to all other races. Few can equal their magic, and no other faction has as large an empire. But in several ways, the Antilans have simply been lucky.

The Antilans have always managed to get a better

deal than other races. During the First Cataclysm, their home planet escaped destruction. Even during the coming of the Unbidden they were relatively unaffected, protected by powerful magics. During these times, the Antilans were busy making great advances while their neighbors were fighting horrible wars with inhuman invaders. Even with the coming of the Second Cataclysm, the Antilans were far better off than their brethren. The asteroid belt where they had settled was nearly perfect for their needs, with ample resources. Also, their magical might was only stunted, not eradicated, helping them to rebuild more quickly than other civilizations.

They were also the first of the human races to relearn the secrets of spelljamming. Realizing just how much of an upper hand they had on the other inhabitants of the sphere, the Antilans set out for glory. The Thoric and Calidian peoples (see below) remember well the savage violence of those days. Their legends speak of the conquering legions of "sky people" and their horrible magic. To this day, Thoric and Calidian citizens are uncomfortable around Antilans.

The Antilan Empire spread like wildfire through Clusterspace, and settlement after settlement fell to its power. It seemed that the Antilans could not be stopped, and that they would eventually become the undisputed rulers of the entire sphere.

Illithid aggression put an end to that belief. Unused to defending their homes from assault, the Antilans were caught off guard by the mind flayer assault. One by one, the Antilans lost the territories they had gained. Furious, they prepared to counter-attack, but the illithids were like smoke before the wind. Fighting a guerilla war from the shadows was a mind flayer specialty, and it was some time before the Antilans were able to adjust their tactics to take this into account. By the time the Antilans were ready to fight on the mind flayers' terms, their opponents changed the rules.

The illithids began using human agents to infiltrate Antilan targets. Lines of supply collapsed and more than one crystal ship mysteriously disappeared with all hands lost. The illithids were winning the war.

Desperate and terrified of losing their empire, the

Watch as we lift off—see there! That weird lookin' contraption is a crystal ship.

The Antilans're the only ones what got 'em.

Stay clear of 'em in wildspace, 'less you want your ship taken and mates cast in chains!

Slavers, I say, one and all.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

Antilans sought new answers to their problems. While sorcerers studied the texts of the ancients, Antilan diplomats sought allies. The Arcane were willing to lend a hand, but only for a price.

The Arcane promised to deliver magical and technological aid to the Antilans in exchange for special considerations to be named later. Desperation drove the Antilan Emperor to agree, and the Arcane made their first delivery.

First came the secrets of sunmagic. These powerful spells (detailed in *The Celestial Almanac*) did much to turn the tide of the war. When the Arcane demonstrated how it could also power their crystal ships, the balance of power shifted back to the Antilans, but only marginally.

The war between the illithids and Sun Mages lasted for decades, and would have continued had the neogi not stepped in as arbitrators. Knowing that such fierce and widespread war was bad for trade, the neogi forced an agreement between the illithids and the Antilans. The pact was forged under threat of trade embargoes and veiled promises of wildspace piracy, and has lasted to this day. Espionage and treachery are the tools used by the Antilans now, rather than spells and crystal ships.

Today, the Sun Mages are the rulers of a Romanesque empire. Their society is based on their imperial ideals, and is extremely harsh. Crime in Antilan cities is rare, as even minor offenses carry extreme penalties, enforced by the ruthlessly efficient Judicants. Travel through Antilan space is very strictly controlled by the Judicants as well, limiting the opportunities of saboteurs to harm the empire from within. When in their area, it is wise to follow the commands of the Judicants if a traveler wishes to avoid prison terms. While the Sun Mages are liable to allow passage to legitimate traders (for a fee, of course), smugglers are destroyed on discovery. This does make the black market a highly profitable arena to work in, but such careers are short-lived in areas controlled by the Judicants.

Magic is power within the Empire, and the Sun Mages keep its secrets close to the chest. Use of common magic (in a nonviolent manner) is allowed

by outsiders, but it is illegal to teach the magical arts to a citizen of Antila unless that citizen also happens to be a noble. Likewise, the transportation of magical goods is allowed only by registered traders, who are escorted by at least two Judicants at all times.

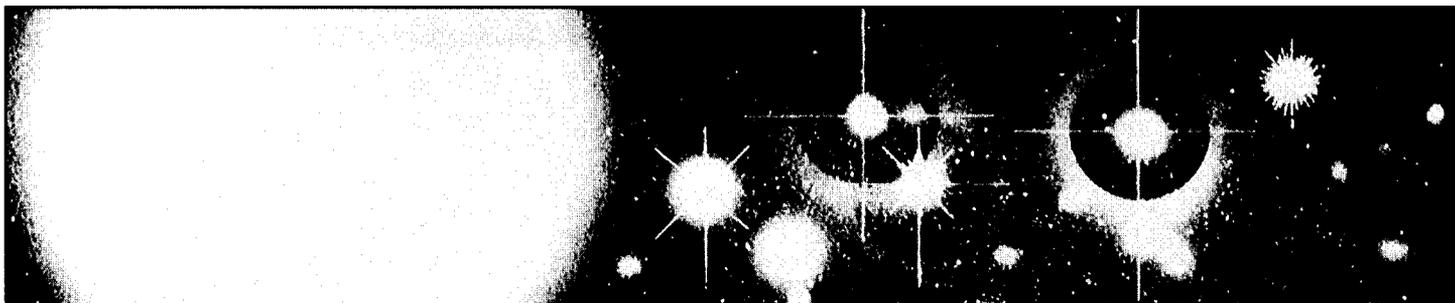
Technology is still quite primitive in the Antilan Empire. Confident in their magical superiority, the Sun Mages have engaged in little trade with the Cluster's newer occupants and so have missed out on several new inventions. In time, such things will seep in from the outer edges and be absorbed into the Empire, but that may take quite a few years.

Adventurers will find Antila a difficult place to work. With travel so tightly restricted, it is very difficult to get to and from the most interesting areas. On the other hand, there is plenty of opportunity for intrigue within the court. Literally hundreds of nobles exist within the complicated Antilan bureaucracy, and they all hatch plots as a hobby. Finding employ with these self-seeking individuals is not difficult, but not always safe. One never knows the sort of unhealthy business such work might entail . . .

Currently, the Antilans seem to be in a state of stasis. Their empire has not expanded appreciably in the past several months, and they seem to have let up their shadow war with the illithids. Rumors abound, of course. Apparently, crystal ships have been spied flying very near to Firefall, and sometimes it seems as if the pattern of the fires of that sun has shifted. Whatever is going on near the primary sun, if the Antilans are behind it, it will be good only for them.

## Individuals

The average Antilan is neither a Sun Mage nor a noble bent on conquest. Antilans are, for the most part, a reclusive people, preferring not to interact with other races if it can be helped. They are not shy, but racial biases make them hesitant to associate with the "lesser races." Even servants of the Antilans (and some slaves) share the arrogant bigotry of their masters. Citizens of Antila, and those who serve them, honestly believe that their race is the only one fit to rule the world.



# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

## Illithids

### The Nation (population 3,000,000,000)

Mysterious and relatively new to the Cluster, the illithids quickly established themselves as a power to be reckoned with during their war with the Sun Mages. Though they took something of a beating toward the end, they put up a good fight and would have won had the Arcane not interfered.

The history of the mind flayers is cloaked in shadow and fog. No one is sure where the first illithids came from, and no member of the race is very straightforward where this information is concerned. All that is known is that one day the Antilans met up with a foe that could fight back.

Though unsavory to look at, and definitely not to be trusted, the mind flayers are given a certain amount of respect. They are, after all, the only race not to lose a protracted war with the Antilans and they do have a significant fighting force still at hand. These two factors have caused the illithids to be tolerated by other races, and to be treated with a certain amount of civility. Though definitely not social creatures, illithids have managed to develop good trade relations with the other races of the Astromundi Cluster through the use of human allies. This has helped ease the friction with other races, as they now have human go-betweens (the Varan) that they use when dealing with non-illithids.

Magically, the mind flayers are very powerful, though not quite as potent sorcerers as the Sun Mages. Their sorcerers learn spells quickly, but they cannot rise in levels as high as their human counter-

parts. Making up for this is the advanced technology of the mind flayers and their potent psionic power. No other race in Clusterspace has as many, or as powerful, psionics.

The illithids have generally kept to themselves. They have conquered a few settlements, but none in the past few cycles. Most other races see them as necessary evils, an undesirable force that serves to keep the Sun Mages from beginning another flurry of conquest. Throughout the Cluster, illithids meet with grudging respect and tolerance, but little real trust.

It is impossible to say what the mind flayers are planning. Though not as conquest oriented as the Sun Mages, they undoubtedly have an agenda of their own. Only time will tell, and the other races of the Cluster may not like what it has to say.

## Individuals

Not all illithids conform to the stereotypical cold, alien, brain eater. A very few even dare to disagree with their relatives and act nearly human. These "traitors" (as other illithids view them) often retire to the darkest reaches of wildspace, where they take up the dangerous trade routes along the Fringe. Such illithids are very rare, however, and most conform to the views and attitudes of their nation.

## Varan

### The Nation (population: 1,000,000,000)

This human race comes quickly behind the illithids in terms of power and clout. Having formed an alliance with the illithids many cycles ago, the Varan



# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

have enjoyed their position as negotiators and scouts for the mind flayers. Unfortunately, this role has caused other human races to view the Varan as traitors and slavers. The Varan pay this little heed, as they know they can demand respect for themselves by calling on the might of their masters.

Aside from the trade barons of Boyarny, the Varan produce no goods and indulge in little trade. Their wealth comes from their employment with the illithids, who have set up their human servants as petty nobles. The Varan provide manpower for the illithids, who in turn provide creature comforts. A mutually profitable acquaintance, as the neogi say.

The Boyarny Varan are considerably different from the others of their race, preferring what they consider honest work. They have emerged as something of a mercantile power over the past few years, and are regarded as honorable throughout Clusterspace. Paradoxically, the illithids view these Varan as troublemakers and have done whatever they can to either bring them into line with the other Varan, or ruin. So far, open war between the two factions has been avoided by the diplomatic skill of the Boyarny consortium. The illithids are known for patience and cunning, however, and the Boyarny Varan must be on constant guard against mind flayer treachery.

## Individuals

The average Varan is predisposed toward activities of the less-than-legal sort. Over the centuries, they have come to view such activities as perfectly acceptable, though they realize that few other races share this outlook. Varan don't like to hear the nasty rumors about their illithid allies, but they don't go out of their way to defend them either. To the typical Varan in the spaceport, the illithids are a source of income and no more.

## Calidians

### The Nation (population: 1,000,000,000)

This human race is widespread and quite common throughout the sphere. Unlike the other human races, the Calidians have never coalesced under a single government, preferring an existence as

numerous self-ruling city-states. While this has done much to insure individual freedoms, it has also made the Calidians easy targets for illithid and Antilan conquerors. Many of the freedom loving Calidians now suffer beneath the rule of a distant tyrant.

Those Calidians who have remained free exist as traders and mercenaries, establishing small settlements from which they conduct business. Calidian traders are respected and their mercenaries valued in any army. Headstrong and willful, the Calidians are a friendly race, if a bit impetuous.

Overall, the Calidians are a goodly portion of the Cluster's population, but their disorganization and unwillingness to unite behind a strong leader prevents them from becoming a real power.

## Individuals

While their race as a whole abhors slavery and domination of any sort, the average Calidian is not a freedom fighter. Most are content to simply stay free, and to avoid the tyranny of other races. To this end, a good many Calidians are somewhat reserved around other races, especially Antilans. This changes if the Calidians outnumber other races in the area. When this happens, the Calidians relax and return to their normal, rowdy selves.

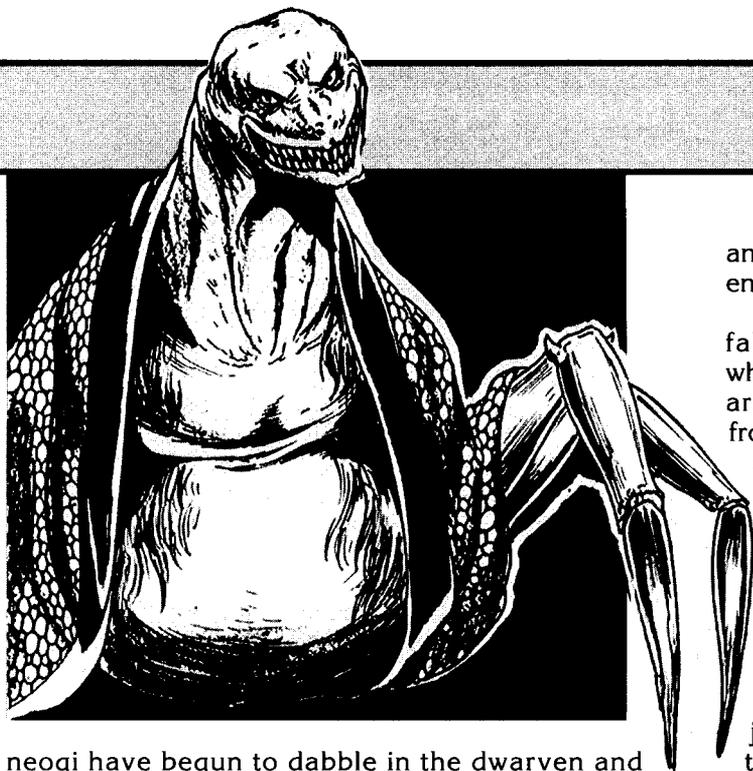
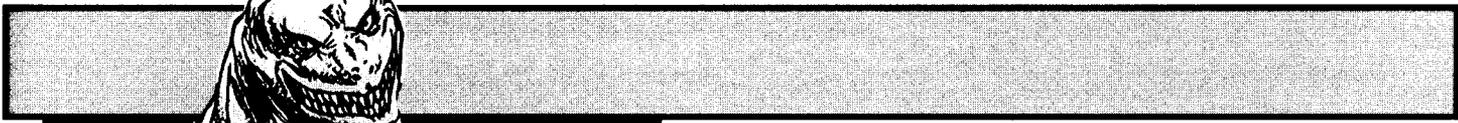
## Neogi

### The Nation (population: 1,000,000,000)

In the Astromundi Cluster, the neogi are not a military power. Knowing that they could not effectively compete with the Sun Mage and illithid forces, the neogi have adopted the role of neutral traders in the Cluster. They will sell anything, to anyone. Operating from various bases throughout the Cluster, and especially in the Inner Ring, the neogi have established themselves as the primary traders in Clusterspace.

This doesn't make them pleasant folk. They are a cruel and treacherous race, given to hard bargaining and the occasional misrepresentation of goods. Still, their services are necessary as they often have access to goods available nowhere else. This includes slaves, which are legal throughout most of Clusterspace. Human slaves are the most common, but the

Calidian trading posts're good places to lay over, and so're Thoric holds.  
If ya knows whats good, don't spend more time'n ya have to among the Arcane or neogi.  
Slithery little buggers, and shifty traders.  
They'll stick ya every time.



neogi have begun to dabble in the dwarven and elven slave trade as well. This has caused some friction, but none will stand against the neogi for fear the traders will invoke their embargoes. In a sphere as dependent on trade as the Astromundi Cluster, a trade embargo can destroy a colony in weeks.

The neogi are a reasonably trustworthy group of traders. Wise adventurers keep an eye on them, however, because they will attempt to get away with just about anything. Deceit is not their main stock in trade, but neither is it unknown to them.

**Individuals**

Individual neogi have a tendency to become obnoxiously accommodating. They will do whatever they can to make those they encounter feel comfortable and at ease. Of course, this does serve to put people into a bargaining frame of mind . . .

**Thoric**

**The Nation (population: 1,500,000,000)**

Traders and merchants of middling power, the Thoric have settled themselves in the outermost reaches of the Cluster. Because of the lack of earth upon which to build and farm, the Thoric are natural sailors, always on the lookout for new places to settle. They also enjoy the highest level of technology

anywhere in the Cluster, due to their access to ships entering the Cluster and the information they carry.

The Thoric garner most of their wealth from the fabulous furs and hides that they trade, most of which are taken from beasts found only in the remote areas the Thoric populate. Other rare items come from the icy worlds of the Thoric as well, and none can surpass the quality of their excellent cold weather clothing. Other races have tried to settle in the colder regions of Clusterspace specifically to challenge the Thoric trade in furs, but none have been successful.

A prolific people, the Thoric are present almost everywhere there is civilization in addition to their secluded settlements. Traveling as they do among the various peoples of the Cluster, spell-jamming Thoric are great fonts of information. Still, they can keep a secret, and gaining information from them can be very difficult and very costly.

Most other races hold the Thoric in high regard. As traders they are fair and even-handed in their dealings, and as a people they are generally open and honest. They have no dreams of conquest and are happy with their simple life, which has allowed them to steer clear of Clusterspace's many conflicts.

**Individuals**

The Thoric are a hardy race, but that doesn't mean they like living in the harshest environment in the Cluster. Thoric often grumble about where they live, but secretly pride themselves on having survived in such a harsh environment. Unlike the Calidians who "tone-down" around other races, the Thoric are usually rowdier around non-Thoric!

**Dwarves**

**The Nation (population: 800,000,000)**

The dwarves of the Astromundi Cluster could not be happier. Here they have been able to create their great citadels, as well as hundreds of asteroid mining colonies. Their habit of tunneling within asteroids and planetoids has made it very difficult to harm a dwarven settlement and has also given them access to fabulous mineral wealth.

Dwarves're aw'right, if ya can keep 'em out of fights.  
 Had two of 'em on crew last year and I had to bail 'em out of every clink this side of the Inner Ring!  
 They likes the fightin', which's why the Antilans hire so many of 'em.  
 That and can't nobody take a dwarven citadel.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

Relatively few in number, the dwarves have still managed to become quite a famed military power. This is based mainly on the strength and skill of dwarven mercenaries, who can be found fighting on both sides of a given conflict. True to the mercenary code, dwarves will fight for the highest bidder.

Other than their forays into the mercenary side of war, the dwarves have pretty much been left alone. Their impregnable fortresses are valuable, but not worth the massive effort it would take to conquer them. Thus, the dwarves enjoy a peaceful existence, with the exception of those who choose warfare as a way of life; only those willing to fight do so. A seemingly ideal existence indeed, among the war-torn Astromundi Cluster.

## Individuals

The average dwarf is happy just to do what he or she does best. Be it fighting, mining, or jewel-cutting, dwarves are happiest when performing in their chosen profession. Few dwarves have any desire to be great heroes or warlords; they simply want to work at their job and make a good living doing it.

## Elves

### The Nation (population: 300,000)

Astromundi elves are a beaten and battered race. They fled to the sphere from the Unhuman Wars but were pursued by the goblinoid races. With better armaments and greater numbers, the goblinoids harried the elves almost to extinction before being forced to retreat by dwarven mercenaries. The elves were deeply scarred by their early defeats, and to this day live a hermit-like existence.

Little is known about the elves of Astromundi, as they have little contact with other races. It is known that they grew their settlements themselves, and that their ships are grown from similar plants. Other than that, their goals and dreams are a mystery.

The elves' chief source of economic gain is their virtual stranglehold on egress to the phlogiston. No other race has discovered a means to escape the Cluster, and the elves are very secretive about their solution. Those buying passage on an outbound

elven spelljammer are typically blindfolded or kept in windowless rooms below deck until the ship has left the sphere. Merchants tolerate the outrageously expensive fare and uncomfortable conditions in order to trade with outsiders. Only the Thoric do not deal with the elves, trading instead with new arrivals to the sphere.

Among the other races, the elves are viewed as haughty and purposefully obscure. They are something of an oddity and rarely travel within the more civilized sections of the Cluster. They prefer to be left alone, and indulge in trade more for their own reasons than any need for coin. The neogi desperately want the secret of travel out of the sphere for themselves, but their past attempts to coerce the elves ended in disaster. Attacking an elven settlement has proven to be a bad idea, and it will be some time before anyone else tries it.

## Individuals

The elves are not a happy people as a rule. They often withdraw from groups of non-elves, preferring to be left alone. While they may appear aloof, in reality they are simply paranoid. Some few do overcome their aversion to other races, and even associate with non-elves on occasion. Such elves are viewed as adventurous or foolish among others of their kind, who simply do not trust the other races.

## Lizard Men

### The Nation (population: 400,000)

Like the elves, the lizard men want to be left alone. Their watery worlds are well protected and off the well-traveled trade paths, so they typically get their wish. Some among them, however, wish for a more active role in the Cluster, and have begun to trade with outsiders.

In the past, the lizard men were treated with distrust and hatred, and their once prosperous race now teeters on the brink of extinction. A limited gene pool and their dislike of travel has led to stagnation in their settlements. Births are few and old age is slowly killing off the adults. The lizard men are a study of a race in decline.

Here, jes' a minute. This fella comin' our way, he's Husses.  
Lizard man, but a damn fine navigator.  
Don' lissen to what gets said about the lizards, they're right enough in their way.  
Honest, trustworthy, and good in a fight.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

At least one of the settlements is doing what it can to remedy the situation. Of late, some lizard men have engaged in active trade and are actually having spelljamming craft built. These lizard men wish to escape their dying asteroid homes and seek out others of their kind. If successful, they may be able to revitalize their race and perhaps become something of a power in the sphere.

Other races view the lizard men as backward primitives, and simple creatures not to be overly feared. This has helped the lizard men greatly by gaining them acceptance, albeit condescendingly, in many areas of the Cluster.

Though still not a common sight, lizard men are becoming more and more known in the Cluster, and it is only a matter of time before the sight of their ships becomes known as well. Perhaps their goal of a new lizard empire is not as far-fetched as it seems.

## Individuals

Individual lizard men can be either uncomfortably sullen and withdrawn or boisterous and outgoing. Of course, the bulk of lizard men fall in between the two extremes and have as wide a range of emotions and attitudes as do humans. Lizard men are hopelessly naive in their dealings with other races, for the most part, simply because they have had so little contact with other races. Like children, they don't mean to offend, they just don't know any better.

## Beholders

### The Nation (population: Unknown)

Though individually quite powerful, as a group the beholders are a minor force within the Cluster. Constant in-fighting and their practice of attacking non-beholder races on sight has severely depleted their numbers. Though they have no friends, the beholders are not engaged in any formal wars with other races at this time.

Beholders do hold a few small worlds, populated mostly by enslaved humans, but these are of little real value. It is believed that the beholders may be preparing for a war of expansion soon, but their success is highly unlikely. With every race in the Cluster

willing to turn against them at the first sign of aggression, the beholders will probably never become much of a power in Clusterspace.

## Individuals

They're beholders—what more can be said?

## Other Races

### Population: 2,500,000,000

Many other races exist in the Cluster, including some of the goblin-kind, but most of these are scattered populations at best. Any race could be found within the Cluster, but only those listed above have any real power. The rest are regarded as curiosities or dangerous animals, but no real threat.

## Languages

As befits a sphere fractured by disaster and war, each of the races has a language of its own, which is spoken only rarely by members of other races. The neogi have established a basic tongue through their travels, which, naturally, is their own. All characters may speak the neogi language because it has spread so far within the Astromundi Cluster that it can be regarded to be as well known as Common. However, in some remote sections of Clusterspace the neogi travel only infrequently and their language may not be known in these places.

## Religions

There are 13 primary deities of the Astromundi Cluster. Many of these are the patrons of nonhuman races. Among these are the dwarven god Chodak, the elven goddess Wajek, the monstrous Lugribosk of the illithids, and Sstasa, patron of the lizard men.

The remaining deities are worshipped by the various human nations. All of these gods are described in Chapter Two of this book as they pertain to character creation.

While I'm goin' on about other races,  
ya should pick up some of their tongues when ya get a chance. Neogi's most common,  
but ya know that. Learn a dab of Thoric and ya can at least get a drink, jes' about anywhere.  
Calidian's good, too. Can never know too many tongues.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

## Celestial Features

The Astromundi Cluster is unique among the crystal spheres due to its lack of planet-sized masses. Instead, the Cluster is filled with planetoids, asteroid belts, man-made habitats and other interesting features. The following is a discussion of the celestial objects, beginning with those furthest from the central sun of the sphere (Firefall), and moving inward toward that sun.

### The Constellations

The Astromundi Cluster has a number of unique constellations which move around the interior of the sphere in a precise and ordered manner. Each of the constellations is made up of several brilliant red lights, which are actually intense pillars of magical flames, mounted atop great towers that are propelled along the interior of the crystal sphere by unknown means. The age of the pillars and their means of creation is a mystery, though it is believed the constellations are the work of the gods and as old as the Cluster itself. Some say that an entirely new race lives within the gargantuan towers, but if this is so the beings have yet to make themselves known.

The major constellations are in a flat plane in line with the central sun, Firefall, named for its unique configuration of rising and falling spheres of flame. These constellations represent the thirteen deities of Clusterspace, and time within the Astromundi Cluster is measured by their movements. Each constellation moves a fixed distance during an Astromundi month, measured in relation to Firefall and the planets. Days are measured by the intensity of the constellation, which varies in eight hour cycles. During the morning watch, the constellations are exceedingly dim, and barely visible. The brighten over a period of eight hours, until they are nearly as bright as the secondary sun, Denaeb. At this time, the constellations begin to dim once, more going out altogether by the beginning of the Dark Watch.

The thirteen constellations, in calendar order, are: Pyrax, Munigur, Gelanicus, Seltaine, Hordent, Tradifos, Yul, Fiira, Chodak, Reqis, Wajek, Sstasa, and

Lugribosk. Years are also measured in order of the months, each year holding a deity's name. A complete passage of 13 named years is an Astromundi Cycle, which is given a number. The PCs arrive (or the Campaign begins) during the Cycle 1300, the year of Hordent, Munigur.

### The Shtokan Nebula (size D, irregular, poison gas)

This somewhat amorphous accumulation of water vapor and poisonous gases floats just inside the crystal sphere in an orbit perpendicular to the plane held by the majority of the celestial bodies. The nebula manages to retain the basic appearance of a starfish. Passing through the nebula is often a deadly experience as the poisonous gases can quickly kill the unprepared. This has given the Shtokan Nebula a dark reputation indeed. Whenever the nebula aligns with a constellation during the first of a month, it is regarded an evil omen.

### The Fringe (belt, earth)

This is a sparsely populated asteroid belt. Most of the asteroids here are too small and too widely spaced to hold any significant amount of air. The few which do have a viable atmosphere have been claimed by the Thoric, who have several colonies in the Fringe that supply ice and other raw materials to settlements further into the Cluster, but no other race has a permanent settlement here.

### Highport (size A, irregular, earth)

Not far in from the Fringe, Highport is the only Arcane-held spaceport in the Shattered Sphere. Highport itself is the remnants of an old dwarven citadel with a new iron tower jutting from its top. The tower contains a Beacon Arcane (see Chapter 3), which emits a visible light for thousands of miles. Calidians and neogi run the place, the Calidians specializing in ship repair and outfitting and the neogi in trade. The Arcane are rarely seen, but are the undisputed rulers of this port. In keeping with their *laissez-faire* attitude to other races, the Arcane enforce few laws here, and the rowdy taverns are the sight of many shady dealings.

Look over that way. That's Pyrax, first of them constellations.

See all them bright and shiny bits?

O' Cargin over there, he says them's the flames of the gods.

Says they get carted around on these big ol' iron towers the gods live in.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

## **Hatha (size B, irregular, water/ice)**

This frozen world is home to a handful of Thoric settlers who make their living by hunting the fur-bearing animals who share the iceball with them, and selling the furs. Of late, the Thoric have begun to export some rather strange artifacts, which were found deep below the surface of Hatha.

## **Dalmania (size B, irregular, earth)**

This Calidian city rests atop a craggy bit of earth, which the city completely covers. Dalmania is completely dependent on nearby farming asteroids for food and water. The strongest of the outer powers, Dalmania is a bit of true civilization in the wilds outside the Inner Belt. The merchants here are as ruthless in their dealings as any neogi, but less prone to treachery. A good number of Dalmanian merchants travel the phlogiston, paying a huge concession to the elven captains whose ships they must hire to leave the sphere. The price of such travel is worth it, however, as out-of-Cluster goods often bring outrageous prices and great profit.

## **Khalzan (size C, irregular, water)**

Uncomfortably near to the orbit of Dalmania, Khalzan is the largest settlement of lizard men in Clusterspace. Little is known of the inhabitants because they refuse to allow other races to land here. Only the neogi have come to any sort of trade agreement with the lizard men, and they peddle the strange arts and crafts of the Khalzan settlement.

## **Doromakhad (size B, irregular, earth)**

This dwarven settlement was recently savaged by an attack force made up of bizarre, amoeboid creatures that have not been seen since. The attack devastated the little mining colony, but the hardened miners have not given up their lonely existence. Recently, heavy ballistae were mounted around the settlement, and other defenses strengthened or added. It appears the dwarves of Doromakhad are ready to defend against another attack.

## **Isle of Banshees (size A, irregular, earth)**

A true sailors' graveyard, this scrap of land is inhabited solely by undead sailors who perished while spelljamming in the Shattered Sphere. How they all got here is a mystery, as is the reason for their undead state. Travelers in this region must be very careful, as the undead are fond of ambushing spelljamming ships that come too near.

## **The Great Belt (belt, earth/water/ice)**

Somewhat smaller and thinner than the Fringe, the Great Belt is more heavily inhabited. Thoric settlers claimed most of the prime portions of this belt as their own, but the Calidians, elves, dwarves, and neogi quickly followed. The result is a hodge-podge of small communities dependent upon each other for survival against larger predatory communities. Vast reaches of this belt are still uninhabited, however, devoid of arable land and too sheltered from the sun to sustain human life.

## **Ironport (size A, tetrahedral, earth)**

The neogi designed this pyramidal trade base and commissioned dwarves to build it. The outside of the massive trade center is dotted with ports and landing bays, but the real action occurs inside. Miles of twisting corridors and open plazas filled with merchant stalls riddle Ironport. First-time visitors are often lost within the labyrinthine tunnels, but most are found in relatively short order. Some say that the neogi indulge their baser habits in the lowest levels of Ironport, but most think that is just a nasty rumor.

## **The Maw (size B, amorphous, liveworld)**

Avoid at all costs! The Maw is a savage living mureloid, fully grown. The locals know enough to steer clear of the thing, but more than one unknowing outsider has tried to land upon the beast, with predictably unpleasant results.

That back there was the Shtokan Nebula. Dangerous in there, lotsa poison and the like.  
Went out into it once, little job for one of the Sun Mages.  
Things live in that mess, big things. Never did get a good look at 'em,  
but snakes and worse came mighty close to us in that cloud.



**Giltiond (size B, amorphous, liveworld)**

Home of a scattered tribe of elves, Giltiond is formed from a single huge vine. The vine has grown around numerous earthen asteroids and sizeable balls of ice, from which it draws nourishment. The elves harvest all the food and water they need from the vine, from fruits and vegetables to seed pods filled with fresh water. Xenophobic and somewhat paranoid, the elves of Giltiond have started the inevitable slide back toward barbarism. They no longer build any sort of dwellings or wear clothing to speak of, and wander ceaselessly along their vine, strengthening its defenses. Caution must be taken when dealing with these dangerous savages.

**Ssthakal (size B, cluster, water)**

This cluster of worlds is another home of the Astromundi lizard men, but is much more open to contact with outsiders than is Khalzan. The Ssthakal speak of their distant relatives in slightly condescending tones, and hint that those lizard men are

hopelessly naive. Known for their fighting prowess, the lizard men of Ssthakal have seen duty in many of the wars that have erupted in the Astromundi Cluster and are also renowned for their diligence as scouts and explorers.

**Cerekazadh (size C, irregular, earth)**

This massive asteroid is the largest dwarven nation in the Cluster. The entire surface has been covered with fortifications and living quarters for non-dwarves in order to encourage trade between the various races. The interior has been used as a mine and living quarters for the dwarves, but is still largely unworked. Travelers seeking exquisite, durable metal work come here, as do those in need of a large quantity of raw materials. Due to the numerous wars in the Cluster, the Cerekazadh dwarves have become wealthy from the sale of their unique weapons.

What're those elves doin'?

When we get close to Giltiond, there's no tellin' what those beastly little critters'll try.

Gotta be careful not to get too close to their little vine,

'less ya don't mind gettin' fulla arrows.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

## **Trinona (size F, sphere, air)**

This small gas giant has two tenuous ring systems and a large moon, Netune. Colonies of Calidians have gathered here and coalesced into the Grand Duchy of Trinona. The Duchy was scoffed at when it was first organized, but its staggering mercantile success and hardy defenses quickly made it one of the Calidian powerhouses. Aside from the many mining towns and villages that exist within the rings, a goodly number of free-floating colonies have sprung up within the gas giant itself. Joined by ropes and loose bridges, these platform villages have become procurers of magical goods. No one knows the origin of the strange items and materials they offer for sale, but some believe they have something to do with the haunted ruins of Netune.

## **Drachengard (size C, cluster, water)**

Most remote of the important Thoric settlements, Drachengard is so named because the founder slew a radiant dragon. Drachengard has become a haven for adventurers and other mercenaries. It is unequalled as a jumping off point for adventurers or as a place to get information from other heroic types. Unfortunately, it's not a particularly pleasant place to live. Made up mostly of water, large sections of Drachengard freeze over when its orbit carries it away from the secondary sun, Denaeb.

## **Tronsogard (size B, cluster, earth)**

Nearly as remote as Drachengard, this Thoric settlement is made up mostly of explorers and traders. Tronsogard is a rough-and-tumble place. Rugged adventurers will fit right in here, but refined travelers may be a bit offended by the squalid living conditions. Though they have the appearance of barbarians, the Thoric here are as civilized as any. They simply don't spend as much time on comfort and appearances as other colonies might. Things here are built to be functional and simple to repair, a quality which has endeared Tronsogardian equipment to many a spelljammer captain.

## **Avarien (size C, cluster, liveworld)**

Appearing to be a tangled cluster of twisted vines and clods of earth at first sighting, Avarien becomes recognizable as a large elven settlement as one draws nearer. Somewhat reclusive, the elves of Avarien will engage in trade, as long as it is on their terms. No ships are allowed to land on their vegetable-like home; instead, the elves send their flitters out. Because of this, no one knows much about what goes on within Avarien. Attacked by illithid and Antilan forces several times, Avarien has proven that the elves are quite capable of defending their home from invasion, though they seem to have no interest in conquest.

## **Sargasso of Skulls (size D, amorphous, sargasso)**

No one knows what lies within this magic-dead area. All that can be seen from the edge of the sargasso is a ring of strange skulls which define its perimeter. Within the sargasso itself, a purplish cloud blocks vision. Occasionally, the cloud will clear for a few seconds, revealing strange creatures that are quickly gone from sight. Some old spacedogs claim to have braved the Sargasso of Skulls, but their tales are regarded as flights of fancy, filled as they are with talk of mammoth serpents and gelatinous hulks.

## **Boyarny (size C, cluster, earth)**

This Varan/Thoric co-settlement is free from the illithid presence normally associated with the Varan in other parts of Clusterspace. Here, the Varan have become trading barons, using the swords of their Thoric partners to protect their trade routes.

## **Thandilan (size C, sphere, earth)**

Here the Calidians have established a prosperous farming kingdom. Thandilan is small, but its people raise crops in abundance and ship them to less fertile settlements. The result is a land of gentlemen farmers who have accumulated fortunes over the years. As a farmworld, it is valued above all others in the Cluster, and guarded accordingly. A standing force of dwarven mercenaries guard the place, as do a number of Calidian lanceships that orbit incessantly.

Groddo! Pull in close here. That's it. Aw'right, stop it for a spell.  
This here skull, ya ain't liable to see another like it anywhere else.  
Go ahead, touch it. Jes' remember, ya see a ring a skulls like this, don't go in it.  
Sargasso'll stop yer ship deader than spit.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

## **Calimar (size G, sphere, air)**

A massive gas giant, Calimar has three moons of considerable size. Unfortunately, tempestuous weather renders these moons uninhabitable over large areas of their surface. The Calidians originally inhabited the smallest moon, Sultamar, then spread to Calamed and Amaron. By half-burying their structures, the Calidian settlers were able to weather the worst of storms. The discovery of great mineral deposits on each of the moons led to mining and the eventual ascension of the moon miners as suppliers of natural materials. Unfortunately, the settlements possessed little military might and were conquered by the Varan/illithid alliance some years ago. Now, the older mines have been converted into living quarters for illithid nobles and their Varan lackeys.

## **The Dark Group (size C, cluster, earth)**

This collection of five asteroid clusters is all that remains of one of the worlds destroyed in the First Cataclysm. Strange ruins from before that time still remain on many of the asteroids. All are infested with undead, who have considerably inhibited the exploration of the ruins. The asteroid clusters are known as Achemon (Calidian), Torin (Varan), Khel (illithid), Lumura (illithid), and Mitiar (Calidian). Achemon is the only truly free cluster here, since Mitiar is controlled by the illithids. Travel within the Dark Group is limited, but necessary to those interested in the age of men before the Cataclysms.

## **The Glacier (belt, water (ice)/earth)**

This asteroid belt is composed of cold earth and frozen ice masses, with ice predominant in the mix. Vegetation is difficult to find here, but a few Calidian settlers hit upon the lucrative business of exporting water to colonies where there is a shortage. The Calidians have established a few trade cities here. The Antilans followed, but maintain only a single outpost which supplies water to the drier colonies near Firefall. Recent arrivals, the beholder and illithid presence here is quite strong. No one is quite sure what either race is after, but violent disputes between beholder and mind flayer are common.

## **Deyomad (size F, sphere, air)**

### **Homeworld of the beholder races**

Deyomad is a huge purplish-green gas giant surrounded by a dense ring system. Asteroids of up to size C are common here, and the beholders exploit most of them. The beholders will destroy any ship that enters Deyomad space, so little is known about the system. Spelljamming spies have reported huge asteroids covered with slaves, and others speak of strange devices under construction.

## **Ushathrandra (size F, sphere, air)**

The gas giant twin of Deyomad, Ushathrandra has been stopped in its orbit by the magic of the illithids. Its moons do not orbit, either, and have been frozen in the eternal shadow cast by the planet. These moons—Darkwatch, Talos, and Ilimandara—are the seat of the illithid empire. All are mysterious places populated by illithids and things much, much worse.

## **The Varan Group (size D, cluster, earth)**

One of the largest terrestrial bodies in the Cluster, the Group is peopled by a number of Varan warlords. Most of the Varan living within the Group have family or friends in service with the illithids, and have allowed the illithids room to build fortresses and/or outposts. The Varan Group is quite cold, especially at its center, which is shielded from the light of the sun by large asteroids. Here, the temperature can drop very near freezing, making it inhospitable to most races. The illithids find it comfortable, however, and the Varan have learned to survive here as well.

## **Chakarak (size B, irregular, earth)**

A new colony, this asteroid is about twenty miles across. The dwarves here specialize in the creation of new and deadlier weapons for spelljamming ships, and many of their inventions now grace neogi decks. Other dwarves regard the Chakaraks as rebels or traitors, but will not explain their reasons for this.

## **Iliman (size B, irregular, water)**

Once a home of the lizard men, this water world was "purchased" by the neogi several Cycles ago.

We go th' long way around Ushathrandra.

I know the official line about the snake-faces. Don't dare get too near though.

Back 'bout a cycle ago, I saw 'em up close and they weren't mindin' their own business then, and I don't think they're doin' it now.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

The lizard men were seen leaving in neogi ships, but no one knows where they were bound. Now neogi settlements litter the surface of the world, and great temples to their strange gods have been erected.

## **The Inner Ring (belt, earth)**

This heavily-populated asteroid belt is the heart of the Astromundi Cluster. Antilan outposts spiral upward next to the squat Calidian city-states, illithid embassies and dwarven mining barracks sit side by side. Virtually every known race is represented here (with the notable exception of the beholders) in some form, and trade is fast and furious. By universal agreement, war is banned from the Inner Ring. The penalty for breaking the ban would be disastrous, as every other race would turn on the offender.

It is here that most adventurers start their careers, hooking up with one of the various ships leaving the Inner Ring ports or by purchasing their own spelljamming ship to journey into wildspace, or even exploring the wild, uninhabited regions of the Ring itself. There are rumors that illithid and beholder groups have sprung up in the so-called Grim Regions, but such tales are still unconfirmed.

## **Shaseogan (size A, irregular, earth)**

The neogi, ever quick to pick up on a good trading scheme, hauled this asteroid into orbit just within the Inner Ring. From here they sell all manner of exotic goods, purchased in the Ring, to captains of Antilan ships on their way to trade in the asteroid belt. The Antilan captains save travel time and the neogi make a huge profit. However, a consortium of trade houses within the Ring are looking for a way to end this advantage and it is unknown how long the neogi scheme will last.

## **Mordan (size G, sphere, air)**

This is a gas giant with three major moons (Sharya, Thuma, and Iatan) which are held by the Sun Mages and Calidians. Sharya holds many resort settlements, catering to the pleasures of all races. Thuma has a very small population, but as a water world it is very valuable to the Sun Mages' inner settlements.

The Calidians have managed to hold Iatan, though it is only a matter of time before the Antilans get serious about seizing that moon as well. For now, the Calidians use Iatan as a farming colony, providing food for their more distant settlements.

## **Dumovian (size D, cluster, earth)**

A Sun Mage slave belt, this area was once a group of Calidian city-states. The Antilans now use it to breed slaves. Rumors of rebellion among the slaves here are constantly floating about, but thus far the Sun Mages are still in power.

## **Malishan (size C, cluster, water)**

Originally an ice and earth comet, Malishan eventually fell into a stable orbit and began to thaw. Now it is a large blob of water surrounded by a few small chunks of earth, all bound together by a common atmosphere released in the thawing process. The Antilans claimed Malishan as their own Cycles ago, and use the cluster as a watering post and a staging base for local invasions.

## **The Tumara Cloud (size C, irregular, air)**

The Tumara Cloud is an air nebula a mere 700 miles across. The Antilans have established a number of free-floating towns within the nebula, using their crystal platforms as foundations. The Sun Mages use this area as a naval base for building and repairing their crystal ships. This colony is the center of Antilan spelljamming might and is defended accordingly. More than a hundred separate attempts by illithids to destroy the ship-building facility have failed in the last Cycle alone, and several more were stopped before they ever reached the Cloud.

## **The Golden Girdle (belt, earth/fire)**

Here the Antilan culture can be seen in its fullest glory. This is the center of their Empire, the richest and most hospitable of the asteroid belts. Natural resources are plentiful, including water, sunlight, and plenty of earth to build and farm on. Millions of Antilan citizens dwell within the Golden Girdle, and it is the most coveted home in the Cluster.

Comin' up on the Inner Ring now. This is where the real business goes on.  
We Thoric don't come in this way much, but sometimes we jes' have to.  
Like when someone like yerselves needs a little tour or somesuch.  
Watch yer step once we put in, hear?

# THE ASTROMUNDI CLUSTER

To further cement their power within the Girdle, the Antilans have constructed three artificial worlds which orbit in a triangular formation, each point equidistant from Firefall. Kashimar holds the infamous Crystal University, storehouse of Antilan magical knowledge. Mu-Thalak is peopled mainly by the various noble houses and the Antilan military, and is the capital of the Antilan Empire. Tan-Sharm is a mysterious world, strictly forbidden to all but the Antilans. Some say the Antilan gods live there, surrounded by their faithful, but no one is really sure. Each of the so-called flat worlds is actually a hemisphere, with the flat side facing the sun.

## **Barukhaza (size B, irregular, earth)**

This dwarven settlement was, at one time, the most profitable mine in Clusterspace. The ore bodies are now nearly depleted and many of the one-time miners have turned to mercenary work. Of course, within the Golden Girdle, these dwarves serve as Antilan shock troops. This arrangement has worked out well for everyone, as the Antilans get expert troops and the dwarves maintain their freedom.

## **The Shakalman Group (size C, cluster, earth)**

Despite being nearly uninhabitable due to extreme heat and lack of water, this cluster is very important to the Antilans. The earth masses here are a veritable treasure trove of mineral resources. Crystal ships are constructed here in utmost secrecy, as are the crystal citadels. Human slaves are stored here, to ensure that there is never a lack of labor for the building of these mammoth constructs.

Dwarven slaves are rumored to be held as miners, but this is pure conjecture. If it were true, the dwarves on Barukhaza would surely have found out by now and taken steps to remedy the situation. Then again, perhaps they value their own freedom more than that of their cousins.

## **Denaeb (size G, sphere, fire)**

This is the secondary sun of the Astromundi Cluster, an exquisite body of sapphire flame with a steeply inclined orbit. The light from Denaeb is not as

easily visible as that from Firefall, but it is no less beautiful or inspiring. Spelljammers have begun to notice flickerings within the sun's center, and many mages believe that the sun is actually shrinking. Whether this is true or not, there has been a great deal of activity around the sun in the past few years.

## **Islands of the Sun (belt, earth)**

Floating between the Cluster's two suns, this asteroid belt is intolerably hot. There is no way that anyone could live here (other than fire elementals and the like), but rumors persist that the Sun Mages have built magically protected fortresses here as a fallback position if they need to retreat during war.

## **Firefall (size I, cluster, fire)**

A unique type of sun, Firefall is a cluster of fire bodies of various colors. These bodies rotate about each other, waxing and waning in a regular pattern that is quite extraordinary to behold. The natives of Clusterspace also refer to their sun as the sun-fountain. Visitors will never forget its brilliant displays.



Well, well, well. Looks like I've a few shiprats to show about.  
I'm Gerius, your Calidian guide to the wonders of the Inner Ring.  
What would you like to do first, hmm?  
Perhaps a bit of a stroll about the market? Some neogi cuisine? Follow me.

# PLAYER CHARACTERS

There are two sorts of player character in the Astromundi Cluster: natives and outsiders. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to native player characters who have spent their lives within the Astromundi Cluster and are familiar with it. Importing characters from another campaign is easy enough to do, and will require little adjustment to the characters themselves. This is covered in Chapter One of *Adventures in the Shattered Sphere*.

## Races of the Astromundi Cluster

The Cluster is a place with many strange and wondrous races, no two of which are quite the same. Native player characters may be of any human race, elves, dwarves, gnomes (who exist on the fringes of Clusterspace society), and lizard men. Naturally, there is no restriction what sorts of character races may be brought into Clusterspace. Below are descriptions of the races native to Clusterspace, and any changes that need to be noted between them and their groundling counterparts.

The human races, unlike those in other spheres, are quite varied in their abilities and character generation reflects this. Long years of isolation and a lack of outside marriages has refined the various human races, enhancing certain traits while down-playing others. Following are individual descriptions of the various human races. The normal minimum/maximum attributes of 3/18 still apply despite modifications.

### Antilans

These men and women are the most varied of the human races due to the large number of citizens within the Sun Mage Empire. Antilan facial features are rarely seen, as members of that race always wear full face masks. Most often, the masks depict various religious symbols or family and personal sigils of identification, but many are also fanciful beasts. The more intricate a mask, the more highly placed the wearer in Antilan society, so masks are a source of pride for this race. As eating and drinking are very

difficult and undignified with the mask on, most Antilans will choose to eat alone when possible. Without their masks most Antilans are nervous and jittery.

Antilans are normally deeply tanned (except on their faces), taller than average, and quite thin, giving a slightly elongated cast to their features. Hair color varies wildly from darkest black to near-white and every normal shade in between. Though it is normally worn long, members of the wizard class commonly shave their hair and have tattoos representing their particular school inscribed upon their foreheads. Eye coloration varies, though colors unusual to other races are common among the Antilans. Pale purple, brownish-red, and gold-green are the most prevalent, with black and grey being almost unknown.

This race has no restrictions or special benefits as regards to attributes, but mages from the Antilan Empire will always have an extra first level spell in their spell books (they cannot memorize extra spells). Mage characters with an Intelligence of 17 will have two extra spells and the lucky few with an 18 in this score will receive three extra first level spells. These spells should be chosen by the DM, and represent the heightened magical awareness of the Antilan magiocracy. It should also be noted that mages from the Antilan Empire are automatically members of the minor nobility, and will most likely be adventuring on behalf of another, more important power. These characters are *not* Sun Mages, and should not be given access to sunmagic.

All other character classes are available to an Antilan player character, including psionics. These special characters are in great demand, as only they can effectively fight the illithid threat.

TABLE 1: Antilan Average Height, Weight, and Age

	Male	Female	Modifier
Height	65"	60"	2d12 + 1d6
Weight	140#	90#	3d12
Age base	20 years		1d6
	Maximum		100 + 5d10

This is the marketplace, or one of them anyway.

There are so many of these it's hard to keep your head straight one to the next.

This one belongs to the neogi: you can tell by the little tooth symbols above the poles.

That's how the neogi mark their territory—with their teeth.

# PLAYER CHARACTERS

## Calidians

The Calidian race is made up of stocky men and women, short and powerfully built. Disinclined toward magic, the majority of the Calidian populace is either mercenary or merchant. Bards sometimes arise in the more aristocratic colonies, but are something of a rarity among this race. Thieves are universally despised by the Calidians, restricting any of this race from taking up such a profession. The Calidians respect priests, but religious men are not a common sight among this very pragmatic people.

Calidian characters add 1 to Constitution and Strength and subtract 1 from Dexterity and Wisdom.

**TABLE 2: Calidian Average Height, Weight, and Age**

	Male	Female	Modifier
Height	55"	50"	3d6
Weight	160#	110#	6d10
Age base	15 years		1d4
Maximum			90 + 3d10

## Thoric

This race of blond warrior-merchants is renowned for their height and girth. They are truly giants among men, powerfully built and well-proportioned. They are also known for great stamina and shrewd business sense.

Thoric are the easy to spot at a distance, with their typically golden hair and great height. Men wear their hair short, though a long braid is common among the warrior class. Women wear their hair down and braided in intricate patterns. Beards are common among the men and are often worn in twin braids. Their eyes are blue or green, with an occasional golden-eyed baby born. Such children are considered especially lucky, and will be afforded special treatment throughout their lives.

The fighter class is the best represented among the Thoric, with most children trained with at least one weapon and often several. Clerics are common as well, and bards are gaining surprising popularity among a people not known for their mirth. Mages are

virtually unknown among this race of humans, as are psionicists, and both are distrusted by the Thoric.

When determining Thoric attributes, subtract 2 from Dexterity, and add 2 to Strength.

**TABLE 3: Thoric Average Height, Weight, and Age**

	Male	Female	Modifier
Height	65"	60"	7d4
Weight	170#	140#	6d10
Age base	15 years		1d4
Maximum			90 + 1d10

## Varan

Varan are shorter and thinner than the majority of other races. Their skin is olive-colored and their eyes have a slight epicanthic fold. They wear their hair very short, with men shaving it just above their ears and women letting it grow to just above the collar. Hair and eye color are usually dark.

The Varan are something of an outcast race due to their alliance with the illithids, but by no means are they all evil. Still, most have learned to "bend" the laws and a few are outright thieves. The rogue class is well represented among the Varan, as are the mage and psionicist classes. The Varan do have clerics in their population, but these are becoming more and more rare as the illithids impose their religion on their human allies. Fighters exist, but these are mainly bodyguards for the illithids.

Varan characters add 2 to Dexterity and subtract 1 each from Strength and Charisma.

**TABLE 4: Varan Average Height, Weight, and Age**

	Male	Female	Modifier
Height	50"	50"	3d6
Weight	120#	90#	4d10
Age base	15 years		1d4
Maximum			90 + 3d20

Drat. Illithid. I know, I know. They're supposed to be all right.

But I don't buy it, especially not back this way.

If you get alone with one of them, there's no telling what can happen.

Ah, here's an Arcane merchant. They're all right, the Arcane.

# PLAYER CHARACTERS

The nonhuman races of Clusterspace are essentially the same as those found in other spheres. The main differences are in appearance and attitude, and these are covered below.

## Dwarves

Dwarves of the Cluster are short and stocky (use the tables on p. 24 of the *Player's Handbook* for average height and weight), but do not wear beards. Instead, they weave items that they believe to be important into their hair. These items relate to important events in the life of a dwarf, and it is said that a dwarf's entire existence is tied up in his hair.

In the Astromundi Cluster, most dwarves are not as contemplative and grim as those found elsewhere. In the Cluster, this race has a "let's get it done" attitude. They do good work, but are often reckless in its completion. As mercenaries this has proved both a liability and an asset, because dwarven tactics are always a surprise, but they don't always work.

Dwarven hair is almost always gray in color, regardless of the dwarf's age. Red or blond highlights are not uncommon, though these fade with age. Their eye coloration can be virtually any shade, including those not normally found in nature. Many people believe that the dwarven race is constantly covered with dust, but that is merely the light gray coloration of their coarse-feeling skin.

## Elves

The Astromundi Cluster has not been good to the elven race. Seeking refuge, they instead stumbled into a violent sphere wracked with disaster. Their subsequent defeats at the hands of marauding goblins and narrow escapes have conspired to make them a bit paranoid.

Elves native to the Cluster are typically suspicious and untrusting, often bordering on the paranoid. Among their own kind they are at ease, but nowhere else can they truly relax. This has led them to become quite warlike and given them a reputation for short-temperedness. Although regarded as fierce savages by many, they are polite and well-mannered in the company of other races (when outnumbered).

Whether this is a part of their paranoia and fear of reprisal or true consideration is a matter for debate.

Many hundreds of cycles have passed since the elves first entered Clusterspace, and in that time their appearance has changed considerably. First, they are much shorter than elves encountered elsewhere, and virtually hairless. Despite their lack of hair, they are quite comely and exquisitely proportioned. There is not a ruler in the Shattered Sphere who would not desire an elven woman in his harem. Tattoos are common among both sexes, though males tend toward ritual scarring of the chest and arms. Women prefer more subtle body markings, often highlighting their exotic features with richly colored tattoos about the eyes and mouth. Their skin color is typically pale gold with the occasional elf born with a blue or purplish tint to the flesh. Their eyes nearly colorless, and the pupils are barely visible. In some cases, the eyes have an oily sheen, but this is not the rule and is regarded as a sign of magic.

The elven race is limited in classes just as they are in other spheres. In addition, mages are quite rare, while fighters are more common. Elves of the Cluster have no potential for psionic powers.

TABLE 5: Elven Average Height and Weight

	Male	Female	Modifier
Height	48"	45"	2d6
Weight	70#	60#	4d6

## Lizard Men

The lizard men of the Astromundi Cluster are identical in attributes and abilities to those found in the SPELLJAMMER® boxed set, but are quite different in attitude. Player characters use the information provided in the boxed set.

The lizard men were shunned and despised by all other races for many hundreds of Cycles. It was only after they were reduced to a mere handful that they began to gain acceptance, and then only as backward primitives. This has made them somewhat shy and uncertain of themselves. Lizard men rarely speak, and when they do they have little to say.

Those over there are dwarven mercenaries.  
Tough and not to be trifled with, I assure you.  
They seem to be working for those Antilans, but I don't know. . . .  
Well, mind your own business, I always say. This way, please.

# PLAYER CHARACTERS

At this time the lizard men are divided into two groups: those who want to isolate themselves from the other races, and those who wish to participate more fully in the Cluster. The former group will never be player characters, as they are simply too xenophobic and timid to go adventuring.

The second group is the more daring. Members of this lizard men faction desperately want to explore the sphere, in the hopes that they will find others of their kind and revitalize their race. To this end, adventurer lizard men are becoming more outgoing and will sign on with any group that will take them to the far-flung reaches of the Shattered Sphere. Player characters always come from this second group.

Lizard men are colored differently here than in other spheres, their scales ranging from bright red to a nearly black crimson. Their eyes are normally the same color as their scales. Tribal talismans worn on necklaces are popular among the traveling lizard men, both as a means of identification to members of their race and as an introduction to other races.

## Deities and Clerics in the Shattered Sphere

Clerics in the Astromundi Cluster have a smaller variety of deities to worship than do their groundling cousins. Despite the vast number of individuals living within the Astromundi Cluster, almost all of the humans were at one time members of a single race, and so share common gods.

The other humanoid races each have but a single god. The dwarves claim to have no need of more than one deity to watch over them, as they are more than self-sufficient. The elves do not speak of their religion, nor of the goddess who watches over them, but it is said that they number too few to earn more than a single deity. The lizard men have a god, but pay it only lip service as their philosophy calls for taking responsibility for oneself. And it is well for the humanoids of the Cluster that the illithids have but a single god, rather than an entire pantheon.

The human gods correspond to gods of groundling pantheons, and though in Clusterspace they carry

different names, the gods and the duties of their priests remain essentially the same.

Players with access to *Legends and Lore* and *PHBR3, The Complete Priest's Handbook* should feel free to create specialty priests tailored specifically to the following deities (subject to DM approval, of course). If neither of these books is available, a generic priest as detailed in the *PHB* can be created and the listings below used as cultural flavor.

### Pyrax

This is the chief god of the Antilans, a suitably hard and angry god. Corresponding to the Aztec deity Ometeotl, Pyrax is represented among his people by the central sun, Firefall. Pyrax seldom involves himself in the affairs of his mortal followers, but it is said that his pleasure or displeasure can be read by the alignment of Firefall's clusters. The Antilans refer to the central sun as Pyrax, in deference to their god, and will take offense if any around them do not do so as well.

### Munigur

A god of the Calidians, Munigur corresponds to the Norse Frey. Like the Calidians themselves, Munigur wishes peace to be maintained, and rewards those of his followers who strive toward this end.

### Gelanicus

Another god of the Antilans, Gelanicus is the goddess of death, and as such corresponds to Hel of the Norse mythos. Whereas male priests worship Pyrax life-bringer, the female members of the Antilan priesthood venerate Gelanicus. Gelanicus is a secondary god in the worship of the Antilans.

### Seltaine

The manifestation of the Egyptian god of evil is worshipped almost exclusively by the Varan, but Seltaine is a god whose worshippers are deserting him. The Varan who formerly held him in highest esteem are now in service to the illithids, who discourage Seltaine's religion. The Varan not strongly allied with the illithids no longer worship Seltaine, who they believe responsible for too many misfor-

I think we're being followed. When you get a chance, look back that way.

Yes, that's right. See a little fellow, dark of skin and hair? He's a Varan.

Works for the illithids. They've marked us.

I suggest we get you back to your ship at once.

# PLAYER CHARACTERS

tunes. The neogi, who previously had no gods, may have begun to worship Seltaine, however, so this god cannot be discounted just yet.

## Hordent

God of the Thoric, Hordent is the Cluster's representation of the Norse god Thor. He is the perfect representation of the brave Thoric, and is worshipped wherever that race travels.

## Tradifos

A deity of the traveling Calidians, this deity is a slightly altered version of the Celtic Manannan mac Lir. The deity has been adapted as the god of wildspace, rather than the sea, and his religion has adjusted accordingly. Tradifos is said to be the protector of those who travel through space, as long as they protect wildspace from the incursions of evil. Followers of Tradifos must keep on the move or station themselves in a busy port town.

## Yul

Worshipped by the Thoric, Yul is the Cluster manifestation of the Greek Hades. Representing both death and wealth, this god perfectly summarizes the difficult Thoric lifestyle wherein one must risk the one to get the other. Priests of Yul are not particularly favored by the Thoric, but are respected as is the god they serve.

## Fiira

Fiira is a relatively new deity, with only a few worshippers, but he is rapidly gaining popularity among the oppressed slaves of the Antilans. Fiira is the Astromundi version of the Indian Savitri whose priests must aid those victimized by criminals. Fiira is also a sun god, and priests of this new religion preach that the god has been angered by the assignation of a false god to Astromundi's sun. The slaves like this religion because it tells them that their Antilan oppressors will one day be struck down by the very sun that gives them their power. Of course, the Antilans hate this new religion, and the Sun Mages actively oppose its worship at every turn.

## Chodak

The Dwarven god of battle and mining, Chodak is the manifestation of Clangedin Silverbeard. The leaders of dwarven communities are often priests (or priestesses) of Chodak.

## Reqis, Wajek

The male and female halves of the same god, this is the manifestation of the elven god Solonor Thelandira. This god's male half is the god of battle, and its female half the deity of hunting. Elven clerics are rare, but some do exist.

## Sstasa

Worshipped by the lizard men, little is known about Sstasa. The lizard men simply say that Sstasa is the god of everything, and feel no need to elaborate. Sstasa has no priests.

## Lugribossk

Dread lord of the illithids, Lugribossk's name is spoken only in whispers. No one has ever seen a priest of Lugribossk, but the grisly remains of their religious ceremonies occasionally float into port.

## Nonweapon Proficiencies

Native characters begin with the normal number of NWP's, and may take any of the space proficiencies listed in other SPELLJAMMER® products.

Characters native to the Astromundi Cluster may purchase any equipment found in a groundling campaign, and may also purchase the special equipment listed in the next chapter. They may start the game with such technological items as wheel lock pistols, if the DM determines their background would allow such. In any event, Thoric characters have easy access to technological items, while Antilan characters rarely use any item of advanced technology.

Back so soon? Heh, got spooked, did ya?  
Aw'right, we'll get ya back into the stars soon enough.  
Take ya for a little cruise along the belt; then we'll see what we can see on the trade lanes.  
Show ya some of the ships as call the Cluster home.

# SHIPS AND EQUIPMENT

The Astromundi Cluster contains an odd conglomeration of old and new ideas. Below is a sampling of the various ship types found, as well as some of the more unusual pieces of equipment and weapons in use within the Cluster. All ships are described in standard SPELLJAMMER® format.

## DOOMBAT

<b>Built By:</b>	Elves
<b>Used Primarily By:</b>	Elves
<b>Tonnage:</b>	5 tons
<b>Hull Points:</b>	8
<b>Crew:</b>	1/5
<b>Maneuverability Class:</b>	B
<b>Landing—Land:</b>	Yes
<b>Landing—Water:</b>	No
<b>Armor Rating:</b>	5
<b>Saves As:</b>	Thin Wood
<b>Power Type:</b>	Major or minor helm
<b>Ship's Rating:</b>	As for helmsman
<b>Standard Armament:</b>	1 light ballista 1 Greek fire projector
<b>Cargo Capacity:</b>	2 1/2 tons
<b>Keel Length:</b>	70'
<b>Beam Width:</b>	50'

**Description:** This strange looking craft is nearly as wide as it is long, with wings perpendicular from and curved ahead of the enclosed deck where the helm rests. The weapons are below the cockpit in two small pods that hang from the main body of the craft by short lengths of fiber. These are connected to a complicated pulley mechanism, enabling the gunners to swivel the pods about.

**Crew:** The doombat can be flown by a single crewman, but must have at least three in order to use the weapons to their fullest. The ship is not intended for extended journeys, so rarely will there be more than three or four crewmen on board. A typical crew consists of two weapons operators, one helmsman, and a standby helmsman who can also use the weapons pods should they be needed.

**Ship Uses:** The doombat is primarily an assault craft, using a good helm and powerful helmsman to

fly it fast and hard through enemy ship formations. The doombat's rotating weapons pods take advantage of the ship's speed and maneuverability while staying trained on their target. This ability to fire at a ship while moving often spells the difference between a win and a loss in the Astromundi Cluster.

The ship can also be used for smuggling, a pastime which is becoming quite popular with many neogi-influenced elves. Other races would dearly love to get their hands on these craft, but thus far the elves have refused to sell and taking one has been impossible. When in danger of capture, the elves set the Greek fire alight, destroying the doombat.

## CRYSTAL SHIP

<b>Built By:</b>	Antilans
<b>Used Primarily By:</b>	Antilans
<b>Tonnage:</b>	300
<b>Hull Points:</b>	325
<b>Crew:</b>	20/300
<b>Maneuverability Class:</b>	C/E
<b>Landing—Land:</b>	Yes
<b>Landing—Water:</b>	Yes
<b>Armor Rating:</b>	0
<b>Saves As:</b>	Metal
<b>Power Type:</b>	Major Helm (40%), Minor Helm (60%) Both augmented by sunsails
<b>Ship's Rating:</b>	As Helmsman + 3 if sunsails deployed
<b>Standard Armament:</b>	1 Heavy Ballista (mounted in an underslung turret) 2 medium ballistae (swivel mounted on deck) 4 "spine mounted" light ballistae
<b>Cargo Capacity:</b>	150
<b>Keel Length:</b>	200'
<b>Beam Width:</b>	170' (350' or more with sails deployed)

**Description:** The Antilan crystal ship is the most feared vehicle in Astromundi space. Its distinctive appearance is known and despised by all free races.

Ahh, here's a ship ya should watch out for. Right there, that's a doombat.

Won't see too many of those around—they're elven.

We're safe, 'cause here in the Inner Belt there's not much fightin'.

But the 'bat, it can shoot flame and it's damnably fast.



The ship's main body looks very much like a bisected egg, round side down. The deck is open, but various curving spines rise from the craft's sides like great, twisted ribs. The spines are used as weapons mounts for light ballistae and can also be extended out to support the sunsails. The whole is built of translucent crystal which reflects light in dazzling shards of rainbow illumination. Anyone attacking a crystal ship when it is in the sun suffers a -1 attack modifier.

The ship also has two sunsails which can be extended from the sides of the vessel. If exposed to sunlight, they increase the Ship's Rating as the light is converted to magical force. Unfortunately, with the sails out the ship is much less maneuverable, so these are used only for long journeys. The sails themselves seem to be made of some sort of crystal fibers, though they absorb, rather than reflect, light. Though deceptively fragile-looking, the crystal ships and their sails are among the most durable vessels in the Cluster.

**Crew:** Crystal ships are remarkably easy to operate, as virtually every aspect of flying the craft is tied into the helm. Unlike other ships that require sailors to steer, crystal ship crewmen are needed only to man the weapons and deploy or haul in the sunsails. This allows the crystal ships to be loaded with infantry for assault or defense purposes.

**Ship uses:** Crystal ships are weapons of war, and serve little other purpose. They are never used as trading vessels, as the Antilans prefer to hire out such menial tasks to other races. In times of war, the crystal ships' large cargo area is occasionally used to haul supplies rather than troops.

The standard crystal ship is used as a planetary assault vehicle, to deliver troops from the massive crystal citadels to the ground. As this is their primary purpose, they most often leave the ship-to-ship fighting for the better armed and armored citadels. Despite their reluctance to engage, the crystal ships are among the most formidable to be found in the Cluster, and they rarely suffer defeat.

Groddo, pull hard starboard! Shield your eyes, mates!  
Antilan crystal ship comin' into the sun right there. You look too close at those,  
what with those shiny spikes and all, yer liable to get yerself blinded.  
Don't think they saw us. Good.

# SHIPS AND EQUIPMENT

Often these vessels are outfitted with even more weaponry than is standard. Eschewing technology in its many forms, the Antilans will only use catapults and jettisons in addition to their many ballistae.

Crystal ships intended for use as anti-vessel ships will typically be outfitted with grappling rams to facilitate boarding actions.

## THORIC TRADESMAN

<b>Built By:</b>	Thoric
<b>Used Primarily By:</b>	Thoric
<b>Tonnage:</b>	30 tons
<b>Hull Points:</b>	20/20/20
<b>Crew:</b>	12/30
<b>Maneuverability Class:</b>	E/F (with cargo hold)
<b>Landing—Land:</b>	No
<b>Landing—Water:</b>	No
<b>Armor Rating:</b>	8
<b>Saves As:</b>	Metal
<b>Power Type:</b>	Major (30%) or Minor (70%) helms
<b>Ship's Rating:</b>	As Helmsmen
<b>Standard Armament:</b>	1 Turret mounted bombard, 1 rear firing medium jettison
<b>Cargo Capacity:</b>	30
<b>Keel Length:</b>	120' (special)
<b>Beam Width:</b>	100' (special)

**Description:** The tradesman is a marvel of Thoric ingenuity. Designed as a cargo vessel, it is a remarkably fast ship. From the front, the tradesman appears to be three smaller ships affixed in a triangular pattern to a single, large craft. The three smaller craft are the "engines," where three separate spelljamming helms are kept. The central craft is actually a large cargo hold, anchored into a metal harness upon which the weapons are mounted.

The tradesman is an exception to the rule when it comes to spelljamming helms. The Thoric ship builders have invented a method which allows them to gain benefit from having more than one helm on a single vessel. The main helm grants the ship its full SR, and each of the supplementary helms add 1/2 of their normal SR (round up). Thus, a tradesman with

an 8th-level helmsman in the main helm and two 4th-level helmsmen operating the supplementary helms will have an SR of 6 with Major Helms or 4 with a Minor Helm. This speed increase has allowed the Thoric to maintain trade with settlements in the Inner Ring of the Cluster, despite the great distances.

The other feature of this ship is the cargo hold. The hold is completely detachable from its harness, allowing Thoric traders to drop off and pick up cargo very quickly. The holds are slid from their harnesses and unloaded by vehicles at port that load it back up again. The neogi would dearly love to get hold of these ships, and would pay a king's ransom for one.

**Crew:** The tradesman needs little in the way of crewmen, considering that it usually has no need to make sudden maneuvers or negotiate asteroid fields. A small number of crewmen can operate the ship's sails and rudders and man the weapons.

**Ship Uses:** This craft is strictly a trade vessel. Its poor armament and abysmal maneuverability would make it of minimal use in a military operation. Still, its unique design makes it the premier trading vessel in the sphere, as well as one of the most advanced.

## LANCESHIP

<b>Built By:</b>	Calidians
<b>Used Primarily By:</b>	Most races
<b>Tonnage:</b>	15
<b>Hull Points:</b>	15
<b>Crew:</b>	2/15
<b>Maneuverability Class:</b>	B
<b>Landing—Land:</b>	Yes
<b>Landing—Water:</b>	No
<b>Armor Rating:</b>	7
<b>Saves As:</b>	Thin Wood
<b>Power Type:</b>	Major or Minor Helm
<b>Ship's Rating:</b>	As helmsman
<b>Standard Armament:</b>	1 Piercing ram 1 medium ballista on top-mounted turret
<b>Cargo Capacity:</b>	7
<b>Keel Length:</b>	120'
<b>Beam Width:</b>	20'

Take my ship here. 'S'only one in the Cluster with three helms.  
Goes faster than any other too, if ya get the right helmsmen.  
Neogi want to know how we do it, but 's a secret.  
The tradesman's also the only ship as can detach its cargo hold.  
Thoric ingenuity.

# SHIPS AND EQUIPMENT

**Description:** The lanceship is a fully-enclosed Calidian design intended as a multi-purpose vehicle. It strongly resembles its namesake, especially at a distance, and even at close range the enclosed deck adds to the illusion. Maneuvering is accomplished through the use of sails that fold out from the back of the vessel and an ingeniously linked rudder. Both are manipulated from within. To land, the lanceship crew lowers twin skids from the bottom of the lance.

**Crew:** The lanceship is very easy to operate, and requires a minimal crew. Though only two crewmen are needed, there are often several more aboard to serve as boarding parties or ship defense.

**Ship Uses:** The lanceship has become infamous as a smugglers' vessel. Its high maneuverability makes it the logical choice for threading through an asteroid field, and its low profile is difficult to detect. For this reason, lanceship crews are often closely watched by port authorities. These ships are also a common choice for scouts and other explorers for the same reasons they are favored by smugglers.

As a military vessel, the lanceship leaves something to be desired. However, the neogi developed a new method of attack in their disputes with the beholders some years back. By utilizing the piercing ram, the neogi were able to lock ships up and board them very effectively.

Other types of spelljamming ship exist in the Cluster, including those which have appeared in previous SPELLJAMMER® supplements. Particularly common are ships of the illithid and human races.

## Weapons of the Cluster

The spacefaring races of the Astromundi Cluster have invented numerous weapons specifically for use in space. Each weapon described below contains information for use by both proficient and specialized wielders. Only natives may begin the game with proficiencies in these weapons; outlanders may learn the proficiencies when they can. Each proficiency requires two months of training under a character or NPC who specializes in that weapon's use.

### Crescent Whip

Cost: 5 sp

Size: M

Speed Factor: 10

Weight: 3

Type: S

Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d6-1

The crescent whip is an extra-long (15'-20') rawhide whip with a crescent blade affixed to the tip (curving edge outward). Made popular by Antilan ship-to-ship fighters, the whip is spun above the head, with line being played out gradually. Then the weapon is lashed toward an opponent who may not only become entangled but also suffer a significant slashing attack from the blade. The major drawback of the weapon is the large amount of room needed to use it effectively (at least a 10' radius). This is not a problem on the tip of a crystal ship spire, but is very much an obstacle to its use on crowded decks.

**Proficient Use:** Users proficient with the crescent blade can attack with it as normal, entangling on a roll of 19 or 20. Entangling attacks do only half normal damage, but tangled opponents must take 1d6 rounds to free themselves before they can perform any other action.

**Specialized Use:** Specialized users can choose to entangle an opponent on any successful attack roll. In addition, their skill allows them to wrap the end of the crescent whip around any sort of protrusion. The whip can support up to 300 lbs of weight making the weapon an excellent boarding tool as well.

### Slashdisks

Cost: 10 gp

Size: S

Speed Factor: 3

ROF: 2/1

Weight: 2

Type: S

Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d3

Range S/M/L: 1/2/3

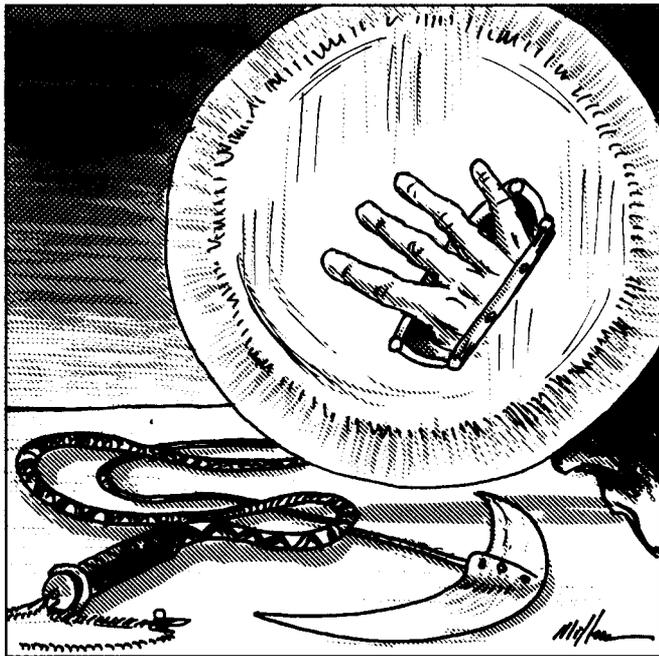
The slashdisk is a steel plate with a slit in the center and sharpened edges. It is held with the hand through the disk, with the weight of the weapon resting on the back of the hand. Originally intended for use as a melee weapon, most are balanced well enough to be thrown by skilled users.

**Proficient Use:** The slashdisk is a handy weapon, because those proficient with it can also use it in a defensive capacity. Proficient users are allowed an AC bonus of 1 when using this weapon. Pairs of these

Comin' into this here asteroid belt, ya can see some of them lanceships the Calidians are so hot on. Nice little slippers, but not much punch to 'em. Can't beat 'em for close work though, 'cause they got mighty nice steerin'.

Could do a lot worse than to get yourself a lanceship.

# SHIPS AND EQUIPMENT



weapons may be used (see the rules on p. 96 of the *PHB*), doubling this AC bonus.

**Specialized Use:** In the hands of a specialist, the slashdisk becomes a deadly missile weapon as well as a melee weapon. Specialists can hurl these weapons at the ROF and ranges listed above. Varan pirates are infamous for using these disks to cut through ships' riggings at a distance. Anyone attempting to slice through a rope or similar target must hit an AC 6, with a hit indicating the rope has been severed.

## Arm Blades

Cost: 15 gp      Weight: 3  
Size: M      Type: P/S  
Speed Factor: 5      Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d4  
(piercing) or 1d8/1d6 (slashing)

Arm blades gained a reputation shortly after the Thoric began using them. Constructed of a metal harness and a heavy, curved blade, the weapon is strapped onto the arm. The blade runs down the out-

side of the arm from just above the elbow to several inches beyond the fingertips, and can be used as a stabbing or slashing weapon. It is virtually impossible to drop, and the heavy blade can sever boarding lines with a single swipe.

**Proficient Use:** Proficient users can opt to attack with either the piercing point of the blade, or its slashing edge. Non-proficient users have a very difficult time using the weapon, both because of its unwieldy shape and its unusual design. Such novices add 2 to the speed factor and may only use the piercing point. In addition, any roll that misses the target by more than 4 also injures the user as the back of the blade can easily slash across exposed flesh. Such failures do 1d4 damage.

**Specialized Use:** Masters of these weapons can use both piercing and slashing attacks in the same action. Two targets may be engaged, as long as both are within reach of the attacker; a separate attack roll is made for both opponents. If both attacks are used on one foe, only one attack roll is made.

## Bootknives

Cost: 7 gp      Weight: 2  
Size: S      Type: P  
Speed Factor: 4      Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d3

Bootknives are exactly what they sound like: blades affixed to the sides of boots or other foot gear. Normally the blades are kept retracted alongside the side of the ankle, but they can quickly be snapped down so that they protrude well beyond the heel of the shoe they are worn on. Mostly useless in a gravity field, bootknives can be used to deadly effectiveness in the weightlessness of space, where characters can lash out with kicks in any direction.

**Proficient Use:** Proficient users can extend and retract these weapons at will, and use them to attack in a weightless environment with no penalty. In a gravity plane, proficient users can also make an attack with the weapon, but do so with a -2 attack penalty. These weapons can be extended and used in the same action.

**Specialized Use:** Specialized users can use them just as proficient users, but suffer no penalty for

Well now, here we are at Highport.  
Take special care in here, mates; bad things can happen to the careless.  
Good place to stock up and find work, it is. Buy what ya can,  
but watch out for "deals," traders here rob ya blind, if ya let 'em.

# SHIPS AND EQUIPMENT



using them in a gravity plane. In a weightless environment, a specialist can make an extra boot knife attack every round, in addition to attacks made with other weapons.

## Clusterspace Equipment

Long conversant with spelljamming, the people of the Shattered Sphere have invented a number of items to aid them. These are listed below, along with pertinent game information and descriptions.

### Beacon Arcane

Cost: 1,500 gp      Weight: 100 lbs.

The Beacon is a device used to attract spelljamming ships to ports, emitting a fiery blue glow that can be seen for thousands of miles. Typically, these beacons are used only on the largest of ports because they can attract unwelcome visitors.

Beacons are fueled by gold, which they burn at a rate of 1 gp an hour. This makes a Beacon very

expensive to keep running, but most trading ports believe them to be worthwhile investments as they keep potential clients from flying past. Some ships also carry a Beacon Arcane in case they are stranded and require rescue, but such use is rare.

The Beacons resemble squat-legged stoves with clear, crystal globes on top. Gold is fed into the body and flames appear within the globe. Beacons Arcane are sometimes mounted in towers on a rotating platform like a groundling lighthouse.

### Shipwalkers

Cost: 10 gp      Weight: 1 lb.

These are merely spiked gloves and boots, used to pull oneself along a stationary spelljammer in space. Repair crews use them to good effect, as do pirates and saboteurs. Movement is slow, though, equal to 1/3 a character's Dexterity in feet per round. This piece of equipment is similar to the thief's harness (described in the *Arms and Equipment Guide*).

### Signaling Crystals

Cost: 50 gp      Weight: 1/2 lb.

Signaling crystals are flat, reflective crystals mounted on a swivel. They (and a special coded language) were designed by the Antilans to facilitate inter-ship communication.

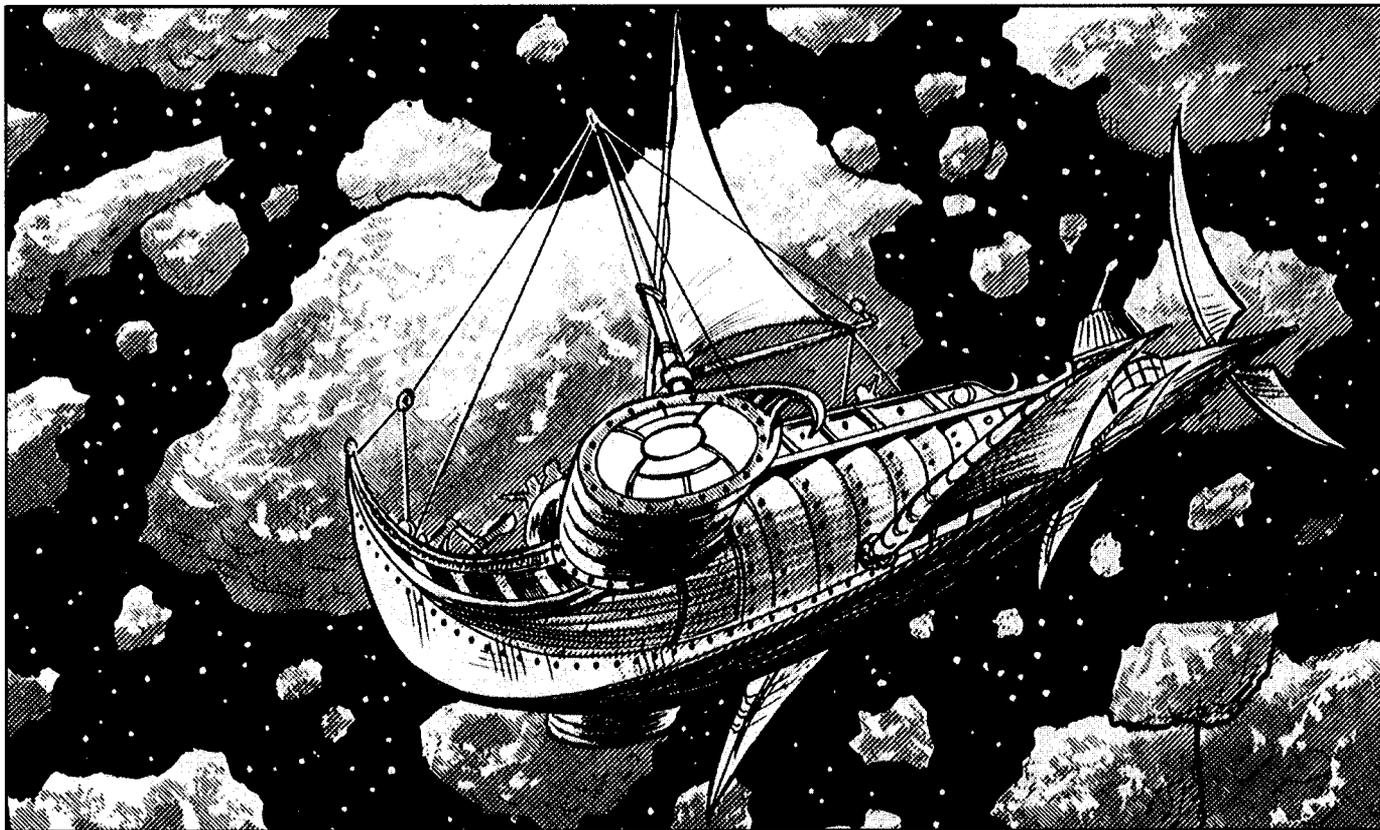
Ships within Clusterspace still use the original Antilan coded language for communicating between ships. Characters can take the code as a normal language, or as a nonweapon proficiency should they so desire. Signaling Crystals can be seen out to ten miles in the deeps of space, half that in an asteroid field or nebula. Larger versions visible out to fifty miles have been seen aboard Antilan crystal ships, but no other race uses them.

### Line Casters

Cost: 20 gp      Weight: 2 lbs.

Line casters are small crossbows modified to fire adhesive bolts (see below). The caster can fire up to 50' with no penalty, as long as it is firing at something relatively large (such as a ship) and the location of the hit is not important. The line caster is used

This is as far as this old dog's goin', friends.  
I've shown ya around, and ya've seen the trade routes and what not.  
Be careful and watch yer back out there. Best of luck to ya,  
and try not to take any of that neogi wooden coin, hear? Be seein' ya.



by sailors who fall overboard, and sometimes sees use in boarding actions. The line can be climbed at normal climbing rates.

If fired at a man-sized or smaller target, or if location of the hit counts, the ranges are: 15/30/45. Line casters can fire normal crossbow bolts at these ranges, but damage is reduced by half as the caster is not designed to drive the bolts with lethal force.

#### **Adhesive Bolt**

Cost: 1 sp

Weight: 12/1 lb.

Adhesive bolts are used in conjunction with line casters. They are essentially crossbow bolts with an eye for threading a tether through in the back. The adhesive comes in a small oiled leather bag, and the bolt is dipped into it before firing. The adhesive will hold its grip on a successful hit, and can hold up to 300 lbs without coming loose. A solvent is sold with the adhesive, and can dissolve the glue in two rounds. Because of the gooey adhesive tip, adhesive bolts inflict only a single point of damage to crea-

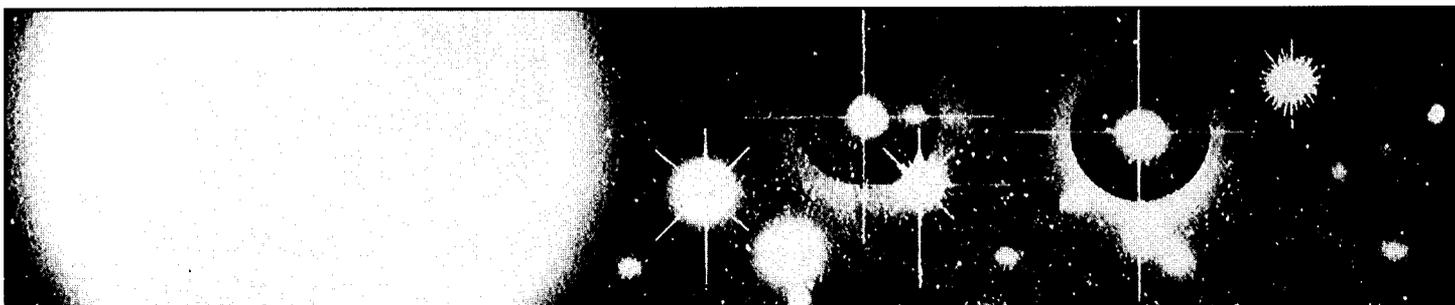
tures they hit. Even this point of damage is negated if the character is wearing metal armor.

#### **Cableslides**

Cost: 10 gp

Weight: 2 lbs.

These are metal spools within a wooden handle. The spools swing freely from one side of the handle and have an inch or so of clearance beneath them. The spool is closed over a cable strung from a high point to a low point. Used by Calidian pirates during boarding actions, these have proven to be lethally effective when combined with line casters. Characters using cableslices can cross the distance of the cable within a single round (unless it is an extremely long cable), but can make no attacks during their slide. Because of their great speed, they receive +1 to their AC during the round they are sliding. Cablesliding characters must make a successful save vs. petrification or suffer 1-4 points of damage on impact with the target surface.



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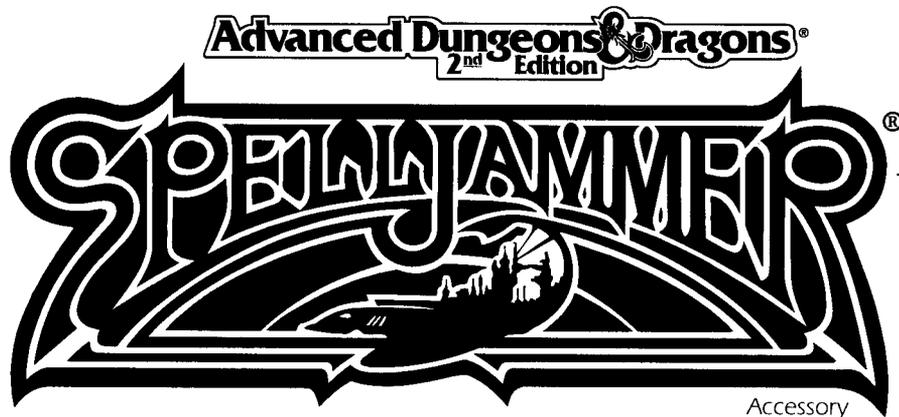
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons<sup>®</sup>  
2nd Edition

# SPELLJAMMER<sup>®</sup>

Accessory

## The Astromundi Cluster

The Celestial Almanac



# The Celestial Almanac

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# CLUSTERSPACE

The Astromundi Cluster's secrets await your perusal between the covers of this volume. Where *The Astrogator's Guide* provided a vital overview of Clusterspace for use by players, this book contains detailed information intended for the DUNGEON MASTER™ only.

Chapter One describes the physical makeup of the Cluster. Here you'll find information concerning:

- The types of asteroids and other bodies that litter Clusterspace.
- Various creatures and peoples that live on and around the asteroids.
- Methods of travel within the Cluster, ways of keeping track of such travel, and the navigational hazards within the Shattered Sphere.

Chapter Two deals with the economic aspects of a campaign based in the Shattered Sphere. Each of the major powers has its own methods of trade and piracy, and these are explained. In this chapter you'll find information that details trade routes and the various exportable commodities found in or around the important settlements in the Cluster.

Chapter Three, the main portion of this book, covers the various ports, cities, and mysterious asteroids that make up the Cluster. This chapter includes a variety of NPCs who figure prominently in the Cluster and may find their way into a campaign.

Chapter Four contains information about sun-magic, including new spells and two Sun Mage magic items; a description of a crystal citadel; and a couple of tanar'ri *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*™ sheets for your use should the Arcane prove successful in their plot.

## The Crystal Sphere

The crystal sphere that houses Clusterspace is a very strange one. The sphere is resistant to any spells that could be used to open portals from within, but its interior wall can be breached simply by touching it with a **living** spelljamming craft, such as those used by the elves. These living ships may pass through the sphere's inner surface with no difficulty, but no other ship can, even if towed by a living ship.

Note that there is no other way to breach the interior of the crystal sphere.

With the ability to leave the Cluster at will, the elves have gained power disproportionate to their numbers. Other races must bow to the demands of the elves if they want to journey beyond the sphere, and the elves have used this advantage mercilessly. The elves have also kept the secret of why they can leave the crystal sphere, knowing that their power will end as soon as someone else discovers that the living ships are the key.

From the outside, the Cluster's crystal sphere is as easy to pass through as a wall of mist. Ships approaching the crystal sphere will pass through quickly and with no difficulty—only to find they cannot escape.

Wizshades (SPELLJAMMER® MC 7) are behind the "selective egress" aspect of the crystal sphere. There are several such creatures within the Astromundi Cluster, and they are intimately tied to the sphere itself (see The Sundeath chapter in *Adventures in the Shattered Sphere* for more information). The wizshades knew of the tanar'ri plot to conquer the Cluster and invested the sphere with a portion of their sentience. This allows the sphere to screen those beings who wish to leave the Cluster, thereby preventing a tanar'ri conquest of the Prime Material Plane.

## Other Planes

The Astromundi Cluster resides within a crystal sphere that has a unique relationship with the other planes of existence. While most crystal spheres are firmly rooted in the Prime Material Plane, Clusterspace bobs within a boundary region where the barriers between the various planes are quite weak. Thus, it is possible for creatures to pass through the Inner Planes with relative ease in and around the Astromundi Cluster. This has allowed a number of evil creatures to come into the Cluster from other planes, but also allows the entrance of good creatures who may serve as allies to the characters.

For purposes of game mechanics, the following rules apply to characters or creatures interacting with

"Kender? What's that taste like?"

Riktal, Dragon of Highport



the various planes of existence.

First, characters traveling in the phlogiston within 1,000 miles of the crystal sphere can travel to the Ethereal Plane by concentrating on their desire to do so for no less than two turns. Of course, not many people are going to be moving through the phlogiston and suddenly decide they want be in the Ethereal Plane! The elves know this secret, but, as with all elven secrets, they aren't telling.

Second, spells or items that interact with the other planes of existence operate at double efficiency. At the DM's option, this increase can affect any aspect of a spell or item, and need not remain constant. That is, a spell's range or area of effect, damage or duration could be doubled if used within the Cluster. One time it could be duration, the next range, depending on the whim of the DM. After all, there's no telling just how the magical nature of Cluster-space will react at a given time.

Third, the Second Cataclysm caused certain barriers to be erected against the Outer Planes, and the

Abyss in particular. Contact with the Outer Planes is very difficult, and spells that attempt to converse with a creature of those or travel outside of the Prime Material Plane will fail 25% of the time, -5%/level of the caster above 15th. Contact with the Abyss is virtually impossible. The barriers which keep characters from making contact with the Outer Planes also make it impossible for creatures of the Abyss to contact or come to this Plane (unless aided by Arcane servitors) and very difficult for other Outer Planar creatures to enter the Cluster.

Though very powerful, these planar barriers do not affect the spell-granting powers of the gods. The wizard-shades who erected the barriers had neither the power nor the inclination to separate the gods from those that worshipped them. Unfortunately for clerics, contacting a god is still restricted as above. Thus, priests have no difficulty receiving spells from their deity, but may not be able to contact such divine beings due to the barriers which seal the Cluster off from the Outer Planes.

Shadowstone may be forged into weapons, but requires months of preparation time. Only the Antilans can use the stuff with any degree of success.

# CLUSTERSPACE

Fourth and last, any characters who exit the Shattered Sphere via the other planes of existence and subsequently return to the Prime Material Plane will find themselves back within the Cluster. The wizards used their combined power to create a powerful spell which binds the essence of those within the Cluster to the Prime Material Plane.

While a character may be able to move into planes other than the Prime Material, when he exits, he will always be in the exact location within the Cluster from which he left the Prime Material. In other words, if a character used a spell such as *plane shift*, and managed to successfully cast the spell (abiding by the penalties listed above) he could exit the Prime Material Plane and enter another. But no matter how far that character moved on that other plane and no matter how many other planes the character moved through, when he returns to the Prime Material Plane he will come back to the exact spot from which he had departed. Such is the nature of the crystal sphere surrounding the Astromundi Cluster.

## Planetary Movement

The Cluster is a big place with scores of asteroids, planetoids, and other celestial bodies. The major celestial bodies are shown on the Planetary Display Map in their standard orbital patterns. DMs who desire simplicity can assume that all of the bodies represented on this map are locked into a synchronous orbit. That is, their distance and locations relative to one another do not change. This eliminates the need to keep track of planetary movement, easing that bit of the DM's workload. It also allows easy calculation of distances and travel times.

It does not, however, give the flavor of a living, moving universe for the characters. DMs who desire a bit more complexity may use the following system to track the movements of the planets on the planetary display map.

The starting position of each of the celestial bodies must be determined at the start of the campaign. This is done using the method defined on p. 71 of

*The Concordance of Arcane Space* included in the SPELLJAMMER® boxed set. Now, the DM should roll 1d4 for each body shown. On a roll of 1 or 2, that body moves in a clockwise direction around the primary sun, Firefall. On a roll of 3 or 4, the body moves in a counter-clockwise direction relative to the primary. Some celestial bodies have erratic orbits, and these are explained in Chapter Three.

Those celestial bodies on the outer track move approximately one space every 4 cycles. Since each space on the outer track is 400 million miles, variations in orbital speed are not a major factor.

Bodies on the inner track move somewhat quicker, averaging one space (30 million miles) every 10 days. Orbital speed variations matter here, so if the DM opts to alter the speed at which bodies orbit, he is advised to make note of the change.

Keeping track of where bodies are can be done with markers, or the DM can simply note down the location of planets at various dates in a notebook and refer to the notebook when celestial locations are important. The latter method requires more book-keeping, but allows the players to use the planetary movement display for ship placement without revealing to them the location of every celestial body in the Cluster.

Ship movement is as detailed in the *Concordance of Arcane Space*, p. 72. Encounters are handled in the manner described in that book. DMs should note that characters within the Inner Ring have a -1 modifier to wildspace encounter checks because of the level of activity within the Inner Ring. Also, the entirety of Clusterspace is considered to be a system with extensive spelljamming, so all encounter checks receive another -1 to the roll (-2 total for all wildspace encounter checks in the Cluster). These modifiers are in addition to any other modifiers that may apply.

On Card #21 in this set is an encounter table suitable for use in the majority of the Cluster. Some modifications may be necessary if the characters are in heavily or very sparsely populated areas. If an encounter check calls for an encounter, roll percentile dice and consult that table.

The Thoric have found a gem they call a fire diamond.  
When exposed to the sun, the gem becomes hot enough to start a fire.

# CLUSTERSPACE

Of course, this table does not contain every sort of encounter the characters could happen upon. In fact, it covers a scant handful of those encounters that could come to pass in the Cluster. DMs who wish to make changes or additions to this table should feel free to do so. After all, in the depths of wildspace, anything can happen.

## Asteroids of the Cluster

The Astromundi Cluster has thousands upon thousands of asteroids scattered throughout. There are many different types of these celestial bodies, some of which are described below.

**Animate Asteroids:** The Astromundi Cluster has always been a sphere high in both violence and magical activity. The combination of these two often results in the creation of undead beings, either as an indirect result of magical battles or because a mage needs a large supply of disposable troops in a hurry. In many cases, these undead are either forgotten or misplaced by their creators and left to fend for themselves. This has led to the scattering of undead, alone or in small groups, throughout the Cluster.

These undead often float through space, clinging to one another in an attempt to find solid ground and continue their tasks. After weeks or months, the group coalesces into a tight bundle of undead creatures. Dust and small rocks coat the group of undead, and they eventually become dormant.

Such animate asteroids can be extremely dangerous if approached. The skeletons and zombies may become active at any time and will attack anyone who is too near them when they do. Animate asteroids are also called "dead rocks" by experienced sailors. Though rare, the animate asteroids have led to a standard practice of firing harpoons or other projectiles into any asteroid that a spelljammer wants to approach. Of course, this led to some disagreements with living asteroids (see below).

**Bone Clusters:** There are a great many creatures in wildspace that are of massive dimensions. Such creatures typically live far out away from civilization

and die the same way. Sometimes the bones of these creatures are so large that they become celestial bodies of their own. Typical bone clusters are less than a hundred feet across, but some are the result of several great creatures and can be thousands of feet across. Bone clusters are very useful because they are both lightweight and durable, making them ideal platforms for floating towns or outposts. And all that talk about the spirits of the dead haunting them is just talk, right?

**Gasteroids:** Occasionally, gases will coalesce around a solid core of a rock or ice asteroid. These gasteroids are dangerous to investigate, because quite often the gases they are composed of are hazardous to intelligent life. Those that are comprised of beneficial gases, however, are highly prized and sought after. Two types of gas that may be found are listed below.

*Flame gas* is, as its name suggests, a highly flammable, volatile substance. It can be contained in pottery or glass containers. A rag is then wrapped around the container, lighted, and the whole is thrown toward an enemy. When the container strikes an opponent or the ground, it breaks. The gas comes into contact with the flames and a cloud of flame 5' in diameter is the result. Anyone caught within the radius of the flame takes 1d6 points of damage. The main advantage of these weapons is not anti-personnel, but their ability to set fires to spelljamming ships. Flame gas appears as a murky brown vapor which smells of tar.

*Growth gas* doubles the speed at which plants reach maturity and bear fruit, but has no effect on living things other than plants. If used against plant-type monsters, the growth gas will heal 1d10 points of damage each round for 1d6 rounds, after which the gas dissipates. This healing can take the monster over its hit point maximum, as it causes rapid growth of the creature's body.

Remote settlements will pay highly for containers of this gas which can help them survive without relying on outside sources of food. An uncompressed one gallon container can be planted deep within the

Undead in the Cluster are generally more intelligent than those in other spheres. Even skeletons and zombies show some strategic sense in battle.

# CLUSTERSPACE

soil, and as the gas slowly leaks into the soil a one acre plot of land will be affected. Growth gas is colorless and odorless.

Many other types of gas are possible, limited only by the imagination and desires of the DM.

**Hulkships:** Occasionally, abandoned spelljamming hulks drift in or near a gravity well (see Navigational Hazards, below). These wrecked vessels compress so tightly that they become essentially one mass. They are home to all manner of strange creatures, and large numbers of undead among the wrecks are not uncommon.

Dangerous as they are, hulkships (as these accumulations of space detritus are known) also have a tendency to hold great, lost treasures, some dating as far back as pre-Cataclysmic times. Such prizes are naturally avidly sought after, making it quite likely that adventurers will find work exploring these ship graveyards.

**Ice Asteroids:** These are highly prized asteroids comprised of frozen water. Though they litter the Fringe, they are rare within the asteroid belts nearer to the suns. Because they represent one of the few natural supplies of water, ice asteroids are enormously expensive and the Thoric have a near-monopoly on their sale and transport.

Fortunately for the Thoric, there is little possibility of exhausting this resource: between the Glacier and the Fringe, there is enough ice to supply the Cluster for several thousand years at least. The expense of the ice is due to the difficulty of transporting it without losing half of it in the process (it has a tendency to melt and leave a trail of pretty, but worthless, water droplets).

**Living Asteroids:** There is nothing stranger in the Cluster than the mysterious living asteroids. They are apparently congregations of powerful psionicists who have retreated into a shell of rock and ice and become a single organism. They are normally content to float through space, exploring the interiors of their own minds and ignoring the presence of all



**Druhga:** A meal prepared by the neogi, over which business can be discussed. A thick stew, its main ingredients seem to be meats and red peppers.

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others. However, if they are approached, it is possible to convince them to awaken and dispense their words of wisdom.

This has become harder and harder to do, mainly because some of these living asteroids have been hit by harpoons when paranoid sailors believed them to be animate asteroids. For a description of a living asteroid, see Phalangilon, in Chapter 3.

**Rock Asteroids:** Most asteroids are comprised of basic rock. They may contain minerals, or some pockets of ice or frozen gases, but for the most part, they're just plain old rock. These are useful for building on, and if large enough, make good atmosphere anchors for floating colonies. Rock asteroids that contain mineral elements are the home of buzzjewels and, if large enough, dwarves or even the rare grav (see MC 9) colony.

## Navigational Hazards

The Astromundi Cluster is not your average crystal sphere, so it stands to reason that the wildspace of the Cluster is a bit stranger than the norm. Because of the Cataclysms and planar stresses the Cluster has experienced, traveling through wildspace has a number of hazards. Below, the most important of these hazards are described.

**Gravity Wells:** When the Cataclysms broke the planets apart, they also created a number of vortices that spin to this day. These vortices are gravity centers, and venturing too near to them can cause great difficulty for the unwary spelljammer.

Fortunately, gravity wells are not that hard to spot. Depending on the size and intensity of the well, they can often be seen from miles away, appearing as great swirling masses of space debris. When seen from afar, they are easy to navigate around. If they are not avoided, they can cause severe damage to a spelljamming craft.

Gravity wells come in three basic sizes. Small wells are less than a hex in size. Small wells cannot be seen until a ship is almost in the well itself. An Intelligence check at -3 is required to see a small gravity well that

lies in the ship's course. Medium wells are between one and two hexes in size and can be seen from quite a distance, requiring an Intelligence check to spot before a vessel actually enters the well's area of effect. Large wells can run anywhere from three to five hexes in area and are almost impossible to miss; characters need only make an intelligence check at +2 to notice the swirling cloud of debris around the well before they are in its area of effect.

While the size of a well is important in seeing and steering around it, it is not so much the well's size, but its intensity that determines the danger it presents to spelljamming craft and their crews. Ships that cross a well of any size at spelljamming speeds will be forced to slow to tactical speeds by the well.

Gravity well intensities are rated as either light, moderate, or severe. Wells with a light intensity have very little effect on a spelljamming craft, but they will force a drop in speed, reducing a ship's SR by 1 for as long as the craft is in the well. If a vessel for some reason stops within a light gravity well's area of effect, it may have some difficulty moving out.

A ship must have an SR of at least 2 (after the -1 modification for the effect of the gravity) in order to escape from the well. With that rating it will take 5 rounds to move out of the gravity well's area of affect and proceed with normal spelljamming travel. Each additional point of SR lowers the time it takes to reach "escape velocity" by 1 round. Gravity wells of light intensity are too weak to hold a dangerous amount of debris within their area of affect.

Medium intensity gravity wells are somewhat more hazardous, as they often have large chunks of debris swirling down into their centers. Such chunks have a tendency to impact with unwary spelljamming ships that enter the well's area of affect. A craft that unwittingly finds itself within a gravity well of moderate intensity will have its SR reduced by 2 as long as it is within the well. During the time the ship is in the well, it will be "attacked" by debris. Treat the debris impacts as light catapult attacks with a THACO of 16 and standard chance of a critical hit. The ship will be attacked by one such missile a round, reflecting the danger of whirling debris within the gravity well.

If you think a gravity well is near, fire a jettison.  
The well will suck up the smaller debris before it can affect your ship,  
giving you warning to get clear.

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Spelljamming vessels that enter a medium intensity gravity well have their SR reduced by 2 during their time in the well. Ships that stop in a gravity well's center will have to spend 7 rounds attempting to pull out of the well's center. This assumes a ship with an SR of 2 (after the -2 modifier for the strength of the well), ships with a lower modified SR will be unable to escape the well. Ships with higher SR ratings reduce the time needed to escape the clutch of gravity by one round per point of SR above 2.

Severe intensity gravity wells are incredibly dangerous to the unwary. Should a vessel enter a severe gravity well, it will find itself hard-pressed to remain in one piece. The intensity of the well reduces the SR of any ship by 3 for as long as the vessel remains within the well.

The amount of debris present within a well of this intensity makes it very likely that ships will take significant damage. Every round that the craft is in the well it will be pummeled by celestial debris. To simulate this merciless pounding, for each round that a craft is within the well, roll an attack against it as if a heavy catapult with THAC0 of 17 were firing against it. A critical hit occurs on a roll of 18+.

**Infinity Vines:** The elves of the Astromundi Cluster use infinity vines as a major defense for their colonies. As a result, many ships which attack the elves become entangled in the vines. When these vessels pull away, large chunks of vine remain attached to the ships. The crews of these ships generally scrape the stuff off out in wildspace, leaving large patches of infinity vine scattered throughout the Cluster. Most of these are easy to spot and avoid, but a new strain of vine is much harder to detect.

Though much the same as a standard infinity vine for game purposes, the so-called midnight vines have begun to grow in as black as the depths of wildspace, making them very difficult to spot. Look-outs aboard spelljamming ships will have to make an Intelligence check at -6 in order to spot the stuff in time to avoid it. Otherwise, ships will sail directly into the vine and become entangled in its leathery tendrils.



The elves find all of this to be quite amusing and are rumored to be cultivating the midnight vine for their own use. Fortunately, the vine is still rare and is much more difficult to maintain than a standard infinity vine, which limits its usefulness to the elves.

**Sargassos:** Nothing is more frustrating than having your ship's helm conk out, especially in the deeps of wildspace. And that is precisely why the Navigator's Guild will pay huge fees to those who manage to chart the location of a new sargasso.

Sargassos are places of null magic, where the motive force of spelljamming does not function. They are invisible to the naked eye and are rarely marked on star charts. The Sargasso of Skulls is one of the few sargassos with visible boundaries, though it is unknown just who marked it off from the surrounding areas of wildspace.

DMs should feel free to litter sargassos about wildspace, though these areas should not become too common. When a ship enters a sargasso, its spell-

Black infinity vines cannot abide the touch of shadowstone.  
If you can, keep a little of the gem on your ship  
to cut it loose from the so-called midnight vine.

# CLUSTERSPACE

jamming engines immediately “die” and the ship drifts one tactical hex for every point of SR it had before the helm quit. This inertial effect places the character’s vessel well within a sargasso, making it very difficult to fly back out. Unprepared sailors caught in a sargasso will spend their final days there.

Escaping from a sargasso can be as simple as being spotted by another ship, which then fires a tow cable out to the unfortunates (often for a hefty fee), or as complex as tearing the helm loose from the ship, tying a rope to it and catapulting it and a mage out of the sargasso so that he can pull the ship free. The last method is quite extreme, and although it will work it will also reduce the SR of the ship by 2 (to a minimum of 1) until reseated by a trained professional.

Some sargassos are nastier than the common type, and go by the moniker of magekillers. Magekillers randomly drain a spell per hour from mages stranded within them, and when all the spells are gone they start in on the mage’s hit points, deducting 1d4 every eight hours the mage spends within the sargasso. Clerics are affected in the same way, though their spells are much easier to replace than a mage’s, as mages cannot study new spells while within a magekiller sargasso.

Typical sargassos are between 5 and 15 hexes across at their widest points, though some are much larger. Magekiller sargassos are fortunately quite rare, but they are also much larger, ranging from 10 to 20 hexes or even larger.

**Temporal Fugues:** Everyone has heard the tale of Gilly Oldfellow, that intrepid explorer who ventured into a nebula and reappeared fifty years later, looking just the same as when he’d left. The tale of Gilly is more than nonsense, however, because such nebulae do indeed exist.

If a group of characters enter a temporal fugue, they will be moved forward in time, sometimes being transported through decades in the blink of an eye.

Characters that fall prey to these temporal glitches often feel disoriented and extremely tired while they remain within the fugue. For every hour that the

characters spend in a fugue, 1d10 years pass in the outside world. If a group sleeps within a fugue, their dreams will invariably be of time passing them by, or of people they know in the outside world aging and dying before their eyes. But other than the time that passes in the outside world, characters suffer no ill effects from time spent in the fugue.

It is virtually impossible to detect a physical or visual difference between temporal fugues and nebulae. A *detect magic* or similar spell will reveal the sorcerous nature of these phenomenon from within, but there is no reliable way to detect a temporal fugue from the outside.

DMs should be cautioned about putting characters through such time distortions. Characters who jump forward in time may find themselves in a sphere ruled by illithids or tanar’ri—without ever having a chance to thwart the creatures’ plans!

**Undead:** Those undead that do not form themselves into animate asteroids may find a nice piece of asteroid to call home. Such undead sometimes grow in intelligence and cunning, often finding ways to disguise their asteroid to attract unsuspecting spelljammers that are then eaten. These asteroids are highly prized by necromancers, who seek them out to gain a quick army of relatively intelligent undead which can be used for a variety of nefarious purposes.

**Vents:** Occasionally someone tries to escape the Astromundi Cluster through the use of plane-breaching sorcery. Occasionally these attempts do work, but more often the inherent magic of the Cluster works to manipulate the magic to its own ends. Thus, there are many one-way vents into the Astromundi Cluster. These portals allow creatures from other spheres and other planes of existence (though never the Abyss) one way-access to the Astromundi Cluster.

Vents are dangerous to characters because there’s just no telling what sort of nasty critter will crawl out. Things coming out of a vent are in danger because the intelligent races of the Shattered Sphere are liable to attack anything that crawls out of the vent and worry about whether it was hostile or not later.

If you spend too much time in a magekiller sargasso, there is a chance that magical weapons will lose their bonus. The chance is 25% for 8 hours, increasing 2% every four hours after that. Subtract 5% from the chance for every +1 the weapon has.

# CLUSTERSPACE

Vents appear as pale blue ovals that seem to wink in and out. When active (that is, when something is passing through them), background scenes from various planes of existence can be seen through them. Unlike a wrinkle, (see below) there is space in a vent, and they can often take several days to travel through. Such journeys are surreal and unnerving as those within the vent are witness to scenes taking place in the planes they move through.

**Wild Zones:** Some areas of wildspace are also areas of *wild magic* (see *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* and *Tome of Magic*).

These operate just as they do in a groundling campaign, including wild surges. The difference in a spelljamming campaign is that characters in a spelljamming helm are essentially using magic constantly. Such characters cause a wild surge every turn they travel through a wild zone, making life aboard the ship quite chaotic. Wild zones seem to shimmer a bit from the outside, but once a character or group of characters are within the zone their surroundings appear normal. Most wild zones are 3 to 6 hexes across at their widest point.

**Wrinkles:** The existence of these particular navigational hazards is not common knowledge. The illithids believe that they exist and the Arcane know that wrinkles exist, but few others have a clue.

Wrinkles are distortions of space and time that tie two distant points together. Entering a wrinkle from either end will immediately transport you to the other, often making a long trip extremely short. While it seems that these would be ideal trade routes, wrinkles are extremely hard to detect. Many travelers have passed right through a wrinkle and not realized it, until they checked their stargates and found themselves millions of miles off course. Another quirk of wrinkles is that they are not all permanent, and some move from one area to another. Also, a wrinkle that works one way may not work the other, stranding characters in the far reaches of wildspace.

Arcane theorists suppose that a reason the wrinkles

are so hard to find is that many of them have their exits in the heart of Firefall, Denaeb, or in other hazardous areas. Thus, explorers may have found many wrinkles and simply never lived to tell about them.

These strange portals vary widely in their appearance, from fiery holes in space to innocuous shimmering veils. In most cases, there is no space between the two ends of a wrinkle. That is, when a craft enters a wrinkle, it is already coming out the other side with no sensation of time spent within the wrinkle itself.

Wrinkles are a DM's toy, a way to get characters from one place to another quickly and without letting them know exactly what is going on. They can also serve as the focus of several adventures as characters are charged with tracking down wrinkles and charting their paths for the illithids or Arcane.

There's no telling what the characters may find on the ends of some of these twisted little time/space tunnels, so here's a chance for DMs to really go all out!

Other hazards are surely present within the sphere, but are not as common as those listed above. DMs are encouraged to come up with mysterious danger zones of their own, keeping an aura of mystery about the Cluster and keeping the players on their toes.



It is rumored that magekiller sargassos can be detected by shadowstone. If floated in a dish of water, the shadowstone will spin erratically when one of these hazards is near.

# TRADE AND PIRACY

The first thing to keep in mind when thinking about trade and piracy within the Astromundi Cluster is the sheer size of the place. From the Fringe to the inner track of the navigational map is 8 billion miles. But the Fringe is still a major player in the trade action, bringing in great chunks of ice that can be melted down for potable water. How can this be possible?

First, the Thoric of the Fringe have the Thoric tradesman, which is an extremely fast and powerful ship. Such ships are vital in moving across the vastness of the Shattered Sphere, and are the main reason the Thoric have survived as traders as long as they have.

The second reason that trade can successfully exist across such vast areas is that people know how to plan for it. Everyone knows that a certain group of traders may not find their way back to them anytime soon, so they buy up all they think will be needed.

Finally, the people of the Astromundi Cluster have some very unique methods of commerce. These methods do not allow for very quick trade, but they do provide for a constant flow of goods and currency along the established trade routes.

## Trade Routes

Trade routes are the usual method of transporting goods from seller to buyer and market to market. Established trade routes are carefully patrolled by hired swords who protect asteroid trading posts scattered along the routes.

Ships rarely travel an entire trade route from one end to the other. Instead, a ship loads up at one end, transports the goods to a ship at the next trading post and loads up with new goods for the return trip. This process is repeated along the trade route, allowing goods to travel quite a distance while limiting the actual time they spend aboard any one ship. This is not only much easier on the crews of trading vessels, but allows a steady flow of goods along the trading routes.

A list of trade routes follows. The routes are listed from their outermost point to their innermost, with ports of call listed in the order that they are visited.

## The Prime Routes

- 1) Donalblan, Trinona, Mitiar, Iliman, The Inner Ring
- 2) Highport, Boyarny, Thandilan, Lumura, Deyomad, The Inner Ring
- 3) Hatha, Boyarny, The Varan Group, Ushathrandra, The Inner Ring
- 4) Dalmania, Drachengard, Tronsogard, Khalzan, Calimar, Khel, The Inner Ring
- 5) Doromakhad, Torin, Dashandra, Ushathrandra, Iliman, Atalan, Mordan, Malishan

There are also a number of private trade routes which are not listed above. The Antilans, for instance, maintain a number of routes from the Inner Ring to the Antilan Empire and they allow no one else to use these routes. Most private routes are maintained by a particular government or trading house, and competitors are rather rudely (and violently) prohibited from using them.

## Piracy

While the idea of pirates in the vastness of wild-space does seem somewhat ludicrous, along trade routes it is much more feasible. As merchants have made their lives much easier by establishing set schedules and ship movements, they have also made themselves targets for spelljamming pirates.

The pirates know just where to find the ships that are liable to be most loaded with resalable booty, as well as those that are the farthest from immediate aid. Merchant guards have done a lot to keep pirates in check, but there are still quite a few pirate groups active along the various routes.

More commonly, pirates hide within inhabited asteroid belts, preying on the unwary. Such belts have few established trade routes because the next port is only a few million miles away, less than a day's trip for many spelljamming craft. This means that there are no "protected" places where traders can travel. They must instead rely on hired swords for protection, which cuts down on their cargo space.

Greedy merchants have tried to "speed run" through pirate infested areas, relying on sheer swift-

*Illithids are hard to impress, but it can be done.  
Try giving them a piece of shadowstone.*

# TRADE AND PIRACY

ness to get them through. Because pirates have developed traps and tactics specifically to deal with these “fat purses,” such runs rarely succeed.

The most effective pirates are those of the goblinoid races, who seem to strike at random. The goblinoids have taken up residence in the more remote areas of many asteroid belts, using their stealth and skill at maneuvering to avoid law enforcement and bounty hunters alike.

Human pirates aren't rare, either. They prefer to work from within the system, hiring on as mercenaries aboard a merchant ship then “liberating” it after the craft is well out into wildspace. Such tactics are even sanctioned by various governments and these “privateers” are granted charters to prey upon the vessels of enemy nations. The illithids are particularly fond of chartering mercenaries to liberate Calidian vessels operating in their territory.

The only types of ship that are proof from the predations of one sort of pirate or another are Antilan vessels. The Sun Mages have a zero-tolerance position on piracy, and have been known to expend massive resources sweeping asteroid fields clear of pirates.

For this reason, pirates steer clear of crystal ships or trading vessels carrying the Antilan banner. All other vessels can count on encountering pirates at one time or another, and should prepare accordingly.

## Economy

Money is vital to the functioning of any society, and Clusterspace is no exception.

The predominance of Antilan culture has led to a standardized unit of trade exchange known as the bar. A bar is a 1/4 ounce ingot of precious metal, cast and stamped in the Islands of the Sun at the Imperial Foundry and Mint. There are gold, silver, and copper bars, all of which are treated the same as the coins found in other TSR worlds for the purposes of buying and selling equipment. Bars are also available in 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 bar sizes. Because bars are heavier than most coins from outside the Cluster, outlander coins must be converted to bars

before they can be used. The normal conversion is 3 coins to the bar.

Among merchants it is common to use scrip in trade agreements. The Trade Houses of the Calidians were the first to introduce the use of paper agreements of payment at a later date, and other merchants quickly caught on. Scrip can be stolen, but is of little value to the thief, because only the authorized party can cash it and passing yourself off as someone you're not is very difficult in the tightly knit merchant community.

The neogi have standardized the use of scrip to a certain extent, and use it almost exclusively. Individuals occasionally use scrip, but most people prefer the solid weight of bars in their pouch at the conclusion of a deal to a flimsy sheet of paper.

So how does this money get from the foundries of the Antilans to the pockets of the man on the street?

First off, it must be understood that there are two types of economy within the Cluster. The macro-economy refers to the exchange of money and goods across the sphere as a whole. Micro-economy refers to the economic health of individual settlements.

The macro-economy of the Cluster is extremely healthy, as goods are continually traded among the settlements scattered through wildspace. As the goods move, so to does the money, bringing wealth to the merchants of these settlements and, through taxes, to the governments of these settlements.

Micro-economies are spurred on by this trade as well. Following the money chain it is obvious how it works. First, merchants sell their goods to a trader from another settlement. The money merchants get is theirs, but a portion of this must go to pay government taxes. Some more of the hard-earned bars go to those the merchant bought the goods from in the first place. Even more of the money passes on to the landlord, who owns the building from which business is conducted. The merchant's employees also must be paid. The employees, in turn, have things that they need to buy. They might purchase new clothes, or food, or pay their rent. As you can see, it doesn't take long for the money from one trade deal to get spread around. Now think of how many trade deals

Neogi are quite fond of new bodyrings.  
Presenting them with adornments for their piercings  
is a sure way to get in good with them.

# TRADE AND PIRACY

occur in a given day, all across a settlement!

So, with all the trade that goes on, there is little danger of poverty. Those that are considered poor by the wealthy are not at all bad off, as they do have housing, clothes, and generally enough food to eat. Severe poverty does exist, but only in the dim regions of wildspace where regular trade does not exist. These sad little settlements are dangerous to visit because the residents are liable to attack landing ships to get food or other necessities.

These colonies are regularly raided for slaves by the Antilans, who give the wretches that remain just enough food to live through until the next slave raid. This tactic is also used by the illithids and neogi, though the illithids are as liable to eat their slaves as preserve them. At least, that is, when they are out of sight of those that could damage their reputation.

## Commodities

Different celestial bodies have varying amounts of natural resources or other trade goods. Some of them have an abundance of foodstuffs grown under ideal conditions which they trade for finished products they cannot make themselves. Other settlements may have fine artisans who produce high-quality artworks which are sold to traveling traders, either for gold with which necessities can be bought, or traded directly for needed supplies.

Trade goods are broken into three groups: Raw Materials, Finished Goods, and Necessities. Raw materials is the stuff out of which Finished Goods are made. Necessities are those things that are not used to make anything, but without which settlements could not survive.

The items listed below are also priced per unit, showing the average selling price for a given amount of each item. These prices may vary wildly from one place to the next. Note that the prices are listed in standard AD&D® conventions, which translate directly into bars on a one to one basis. That is, 1 gp = 1 gold bar.



It is common practice for the neogi to pierce a body part upon the completion of an important deal.

# TRADE AND PIRACY

Item	Base Cost
Amber	1 sp/oz
Animal, Herd	20 gp
Bronze	7 cp/lb
Chalk	16 cp/lb
Cinnabar	1 sp/oz
Coal	5 sp/lb
Copper	3 cp/lb
Cotton	5 sp/sq. yd.
Animal, Riding	200 gp/animal
Dyes/Pigments	2-5 sp/8 oz
Feathers, Rare	25 sp/100
Feathers, Common	5 sp/100
Furs	1-5 gp/fur
Hides	1-5 gp/hide
Gems	special
Glass	2 gp/lb
Gold	11 gp/lb
Hardwood	5 sp/sq yd
Herbs	2 cp/lb
Ink	8 gp/gal
Iron	3 cp/lb
Jade	10 sp/sq yd
Leather	5 cp/sq yd
Marble	20 sp/sq yd
Obsidian	10 sp/sq yd
Oil, Flammable	3 sp/gal
Oil, Lamp	3 sp/gal
Oil, Cooking	5 sp/gal
Paper	150 gp/100 8' x 11' sheets
Resins	5 sp/8 oz
Rope	5 sp/50'
Salt	5 cp/lb
Silk	4 gp/sq yd
Silver	6 gp/lb
Spice, Exotic	7 gp/lb
Spice, Rare	1 gp/lb
Spice, Uncommon	5 sp/lb
Sugar	1 sp/lb
Wax	2 sp/lb
Spell Components	special
Shadowstone	5 to 10 gp/nugget
Lead	4 cp/lb

Some of the items listed in the above table are listed as having a "special" price. Such trade goods are generally quite rare and the merchant can get pretty much whatever he asks for them. See the "Export" and "Import" entries in Chapter Three for details of some specific markets.

Note that the prices shown above are what a manufacturer would pay to his supplier. These raw materials are then turned into products, which are sold to wholesalers at a considerable mark up in price. These wholesalers then sell the goods to merchants (after another price increase), and the merchants raise the prices yet again before selling the goods to the general public. The final price of finished items are those found in the *Player's Handbook*.

In some instances, raw materials are not made into goods, but are instead sold directly to merchants who sell to the public. In these cases, characters will be able to buy the goods for 15% above the prices listed on the table.

## Finished Goods

As mentioned in the paragraph above, Finished Goods cost about as much as they are listed in the *Player's Handbook* or other equipment guides. There are places where bargains can be had, though you only get what you pay for.

Characters who wish to make a habit of carting about large quantities of Finished Goods can become wholesalers. Wholesalers make their living selling finished goods to merchants who mark them up and sell them to the man on the street. Wholesalers buy direct from the manufacturer of items and are able to get a sizeable discount, commonly purchasing items for 25%-40% below market value. Those who buy in particularly large quantities may get an even larger discount.

Merchants who then sell the Finished Goods to the general public manage to purchase the goods for somewhere between 20% and 30% off the final price. Those who make exclusive deals with wholesalers or make extremely large purchases can expect a larger discount. Merchants who get the biggest discounts can either undercut their smaller competitors, or sell

It is an insult **not** to pierce part of your body when finishing a deal with the neogi.



to the elite, lowering volume and increasing price per unit. Either option is viable in the cutthroat business world of the Astromundi Cluster.

## Necessities

Necessities are things that a settlement must have in order to maintain its day-to-day functions. This includes vegetables, meats, water, and other staples. The price for necessities runs about 1gp/100 pounds or 25 gallons, regardless of the exact nature of the item purchased. This, of course is the price from manufacturer to wholesaler, and the mark up from wholesaler to merchant is roughly 35%. Merchants then sell these items to the man on the street for the prices listed in the *Player's Handbook* or the various equipment guides.

## Characters as Merchants

Some characters may decide to go into business for themselves, plying the trading lanes of Astromundi in search of the ultimate bargain. Those DMs that get caught up in the PCs' schemes to begin the next great trading barons will have to do a little research. The prices listed above are going to work for most cases, but there are going to be characters who want to trade in something that is not on the price guide.

Two resource books will prove invaluable to DMs running such campaigns: *Dune Trader* by Anthony Pryor, and *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue* by the design staff at TSR, Inc.

Both books will do much to enhance your understanding of both the trading life and the sorts of items available for sale in the Cluster. A few judgement calls will have to be made (price changes from the *Dune Trader*, which uses DARK SUN® monetary conventions, for example), but the books will reduce the DM's work considerably.

Crystal citadels have one weak point—their spelljamming centers. If you were to ram a ship into one of these, you could probably cripple the citadel.



# THE ALMANAC

This section will probably be referenced by the DM more than any other in this box. Here is where you'll find detailed information about many of the celestial bodies within the Astromundi Cluster. Each of the most important asteroids, worldlets, and other sub-planetary bodies has its own entry and description. For each entry, dominant races, population, resources, imports, exports, and alliances are provided for use in your campaign.

Also included are a number of interesting NPCs who can be used to add spice to any Astromundi campaign. These NPCs can be used at any time, either dropped into an encounter to lend it personality, or as merciless opponents.

Last but not least, the Almanac has maps and descriptions of several important locales for use in your own adventures. An illithid infested mine, an Antilan shipyard, and the mysterious Isle of Ban-shees are all detailed here.

## Key to Celestial Bodies

Each of the descriptions of the Astromundi Cluster's various bodies are broken into several categories, which are described below.

**Type:** Standard spelljammer terminology is used to describe the type of celestial body, whether it's a fire body, live body, or earth body. The overall shape of the body is described as well, for example: ring, amorphous, cube, etc.

**Size:** While many celestial bodies are difficult to describe in absolute terms of size due to their shifting form, average diameter remains fairly constant.

**Population:** The average resident population of a given celestial body. Transient populations are not considered part of a body's population.

**Primary Inhabitants:** Most bodies are populated by one racial type, or one dominant type. Bodies that have no clear-cut dominant race are listed as mixed.

**Natural Resources:** Most planets have at least one naturally occurring item that can either be sold or turned into something that can be sold, or that can fill the role as a necessity item such as food, water, or

building materials. When trying to sell items to a settlement which produces them as a natural resource, a trader will only be able to get 75% of the price listed on the Raw Materials table (Chapter 2).

**Imports:** These are the things that the inhabitants of a body must import to function, or to maintain the level of comfort to which residents have become accustomed. When selling such goods to a body that has those goods listed as an import, shrewd traders can receive two to three times the listed selling price.

**Exports:** Most settlements sell or trade things to other settlements. This section lists the things that a particular body sells to incoming traders. Merchants who try to sell goods to a settlement that exports those goods will only receive 50% of the normal price for those goods.

**Seen From Orbit:** A description of the body as seen from a distance when a ship approaches it.

**Description:** What the place is like, as well as an overview of what is going on with the people of that body. In some cases this will be broken down even further, as in the case of gas giants and their moons, where there is more than one location in question.

## The Almanac

### AVARIEN

**Type:** Live cluster, infinity vines

**Size:** 550 miles

**Population:** 36,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Elves only

**Natural Resources:** All necessities, building materials (organic)

**Imports:** Spell components, inorganic building materials, metal ores, finished metal weapons

**Exports:** Foodstuffs, Megalier wine (30 gp/bottle), star charts, transport services (not technically an export, but the most lucrative money-maker the elves of Avarien have)

**Seen From Orbit:** A twisted mass of wildly growing vines that twine and curl about one another in ever-tightening knots. The whole mass seems to be somewhat hollow, as if the vines have grown into a thick sphere. Lights flicker dimly in the interior, but

Laws are strictly enforced in most of the Inner Ring.  
Unfortunately, they are enforced by neogi.  
Offenders end up as meals, more often than not.

# THE ALMANAC

these could be the dim light of the constellations seen through breaks in the foliage.

**Description:** Avarien is the largest elven settlement in the Cluster, and the only one that has regular dealings with other races. Like Giltiond, the other major elven settlement, Avarien is comprised of infinity vines that have twined themselves about large clods of earth and globules of water. This creates a solid surface upon which the elves have constructed elaborate dwellings, using the organic building materials that are readily available.

From a distance, Avarien does not look like the home of an intelligent race, or any race at all. The vines have grown wildly and curled back around themselves, creating pockets of open areas. These pockets are where the majority of the elves live, tucked into their beautiful homes and away from the prying eyes of other races. No visitor to the area surrounding Avarien has ever lived to see one of these homes, nor is it likely that they ever will.

Traders coming to Avarien should be warned not to approach too closely. Those used to dealing with the elves know to wait within the settlement's gravity plane until a flitter-borne envoy arrives to give instructions. Usually, the envoy will be the one who haggles over prices and cements the trade agreement. Then elven ships will come out to the trader to receive the cargo and make the necessary payments. This keeps everyone well away from the homes of the secretive elves.

If anyone ever does manage to penetrate the thick veil of infinity vines that surround Avarien, their breath will be stolen by its beauty.

The Grand City of Avarien has been woven from the living infinity vines. The vines grow in twisted spires and whorled constructs that seem to defy gravity. Rather than travel along earthbound roads, the elves of Avarien have grown interconnected skyways that allow them easy access to the many levels of the city.

The secret of Avarien is that it is the only elven shipyard in the Cluster. Here is where the graceful elven craft are grown from natural materials and prepared for flight. Armadas cannot be constructed

here, but the shipyards can create a man-o'-war in a month or a flitter in a week. Repairs can also be taken care of here, though the elves will not repair the ships of outsiders.

The elves of Avarien are also virtually the only guides for traders wishing to go out of the sphere. For a very high price (10% of the total value of the ship's cargo) the elves of Avarien can be convinced to take a merchant out of the Shattered Sphere.

The disadvantage of this is the high price the elves ask for their services, and the fact that an elven ship must be hired to transport the trader's goods. This is very expensive, usually running around 1,000 to 2,000 gp. The elves won't say why they have to use their ships, because this would give away the secret of the Cluster (that only living ships may leave it).

Avarien elves are also known to indulge in piracy of ships that venture too close to their growing home. Even the Antilans have learned to give this area a reasonably wide berth. Twice the Sun Mages have tried to punish the Avarien elves for attacking Antilan ships and twice the Sun Mages have been repelled. The Avarien elves are intelligent enough not to push their luck, though, knowing quite well that a sudden attack by a crystal citadel could easily breach their defenses.

No one really likes the elves of Avarien, mainly because of their extorsive prices and their habits of piracy. The dwarves are the only ones that tolerate the elves, regarding the elves as mercenaries much like themselves. Of course, the dwarves keep their opinions of the elves to themselves so as not to damage their reputation among the other races.

Despite the fact that no one cares for them, Avarien is rarely attacked because of its formidable defenses. The infinity vines have a rapport with the elves who live among them and will attack any non-elven ship they come into contact with. Such attacks quickly mire a ship in a weave of tough, green vines, immobilizing and making them an easy target for the crack Homeguard of Avarien.

Only the goblinoids actively threaten Avarien, leading vicious strike attacks against elven ships outside of Avarien and selling the crews into slavery. If

"Death before impurity!"

Elven Homeguard war cry

# THE ALMANAC

the goblinoids gain any allies within the sphere, there is a very good chance that they could become more than a nuisance for the elves of Avarien and elsewhere.

## **Assungy Lustrus, 12th-level Elven Fighter**

AL LN; AC 1 (-3 vs. missiles); MV 12; hp 85; THAC0 9; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15

**Equipment:** *Elven chain mail +2; large shield +1, +4 versus missiles; longbow +1; scimitar of speed; 24 sheaf arrows*

**Description:** Assungy is the leader of the elven Homeguard, and the highest ranking elf that visitors to Avarien are likely to encounter.

In appearance, Assungy is much like any other elf of the Cluster, being short and dark of skin. He is more heavily muscled than average, and wears open-necked shirts and short pants to accentuate his physique. His eyes are the color of a green opal, with tiny flecks of red seeming to flicker around his pupils. Heavy scarring at the temples and across the bridge

of his nose bring these piercing eyes to a viewer's attention, as do the tribal tattoos that spread across his forehead, over his eyelids and down his cheeks. Overall, he has the look of a very dangerous, very feral elf.

Unlike many of his kind, Assungy doesn't hate outsiders. He long ago came to the realization that Avarien needs to grow to survive, and it can only grow through the integration of outside blood. He is, however, an elven purist. This has led to something of a dilemma; he wants to expand the elven bloodline, but among the shrinking elf population this is all but impossible. The only answer lies in elves outside the Cluster, or non-elven bloodlines. The last answer terrifies Assungy, as he knows it will spell the end of the elf race as they are subsumed into the polyglot gene pool of the Cluster.

Assungy takes his job in the Homeguard very seriously, and will take no impertinence from those in his territory. Visitors to Avarien are advised to treat this warrior with admiration and deference. As long as he

Recipe for disaster:

1 squad of Antilan Warlocks. Add a group of illithid priests. Stir vigorously.

# THE ALMANAC



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# THE ALMANAC

is not challenged, Assungy can be very easy to get along with. Obstinate characters will find themselves facing every difficulty that Assungy can place in their way. Politeness is a watchword among any elf population, but especially around Assungy.

Assungy's followers admire him, though they are a bit leery of his unyielding attitudes. They sometimes resent the fact that they are pushed into near-impossible situations, but grudgingly admit that Assungy can generally pull them through any scrape he gets them into. No one would willingly cross Assungy, and despite their reservations the elves' loyalty is complete.

## BARUKHAZA

**Type:** Earth asteroids, irregular

**Size:** 75 miles

**Population:** 22,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Dwarves

**Natural Resources:** Minerals

**Imports:** Food, water, clothing

**Exports:** Finished weapons and armor, finely crafted jewelry and gems, dwarven mercenaries

**Seen From Orbit:** Barukhaza is a cluster of dead-looking asteroids. There are no surface structures, but the exteriors of the asteroids are littered with what appear to be excavations. In spots, what look like portals have been hewn through the rock and dim lighting is visible through them. At sporadic intervals, steam explodes from various chimneys scattered across the asteroids' surfaces.

**Description:** This cluster of asteroids is the home of hardened dwarven miners who have turned to mercenary work as their mines played out. Now the asteroids are mostly hollowed out shells filled with dwarven homes and forges.

The dwarves here have also gained a reputation as weapon and armor crafters, and due to market demand now turn most of their mined ores into tools of war. These fetch a very high price on the market (usually half-again to twice the standard price) and are of unusually fine quality. These weapons and armor are worn by all the mercenary troops of Barukhaza, which only stands to make the dwarves

more valuable to those in need of military might.

Hundreds of years ago, when Barukhaza was at its zenith as a mining colony, the Antilans came with an offer. The dwarves could be enslaved, or they could sell their ores to the Antilans at a reduced price. Realizing they could never resist such a powerful enemy, the dwarves agreed to the terms of the "treaty" and provided quality ore for economy prices.

Relatively recently, dwarven representatives managed to renegotiate the treaty. In light of their depleted ore reserves, the dwarves agreed to supplement their dwindling metal shipments with mercenary work. Since the new treaty went into effect, the dwarves of Barukhaza have become almost as feared on the battlefield as the dread Sun Mage Warlocks.

Their well-earned reputation as powerful warriors has led the dwarves into the employ of almost every race in the Cluster. As long as they are not fielded against the Antilans, the dwarves are more than happy for the work. After all, it furthers their own plans for conquest.

Dwumor Barethold is the leader of the dwarves here, and is the most cunning among the Four Kings. He has used his position to maneuver in close to the Antilans, increasing their dependence on dwarven troops even as the Antilans are trying to phase them out. By providing hardened troops capable of dealing massive damage to enemy units, Dwumor has forced the Antilans to shelve their suspicions that the dwarves may have bigger plans than they are letting on.

And, indeed, the dwarves do have some big plans. Dwumor is intent on raising his status among the Four Kings, and to do that he needs to find a new mine for his people. What he hopes to do is shift the trade balance between his settlement and the Antilan government. If successful he will provide the Sun Mages with powerful troops in exchange for a few asteroids selected from the Shakalman Group.

While it is unlikely that the Antilans will jump at the offer, they would probably agree if the dwarves would sell the ore from those mines at a reduced price (at least to the Antilans). Should Dwumor succeed, he will no doubt increase his prestige and that

Hidden agents almost always approach potential recruits with a letter. They never go face to face until they have a better handle on the recruit.

# THE ALMANAC

of his people. Not only that, but he will be within easy striking distance of the Antilan mines within the Shalman Group.

Should the dwarves become firmly entrenched here, they would be quite capable of disrupting Antilan mining operations and use the asteroids as bunkers to protect themselves from Sun Mage retaliation.

Dwumor is also open to approaches from groups dedicated to the overthrow of the Antilan government. If such groups can escape Sun Mage notice, the dwarves will be more than willing to shelter them and allow anti-Antilan forces to use abandoned asteroids as their base of operations. If these groups endanger the dwarves, however, Dwumor and his people will happily turn them over to the Antilans, scoring points with the Sun Mages and protecting their own hides.

## **Rukka Barethold, 8th-level Dwarven Fighter**

AL NG; AC -1; MV 6; hp 60; THAC0 13; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 13

**Equipment:** *Plate mail +1, shield +2, arquebus, battle axe*

**Description:** Rukka is the grandson of Dwumor Barethold, ruler of Barukhaza. Unlike his wise grandfather, Rukka is a wild one; he is a dwarf with little regard for tradition and a serious fascination with adventure.

Raised within Barukhaza by his parents, Rukka spent most of his early days being groomed for the crown. Though it was impossible for Rukka's father to inherit the throne (heirs must skip a generation), Rukka seemed to be the leading choice to be the next king. Rukka was schooled in the sciences of diplomacy and leadership during the day, and his evenings were spent sneaking down to learn the art of hammer and shield among Barukhaza's mercenary troops.

Though he managed to keep up with his studies for a while, Rukka betrayed himself with too many long hours practicing his fighting skills. After falling asleep during his tutoring sessions one too many times, Rukka fell out of favor with the throne.



"We were hired to kill you.  
Unless you can make a better offer?"

Dwarven mercenary captain

# THE ALMANAC

Rukka couldn't have been happier. He was no longer in the running as heir to Barukhaza and began using this as an excuse to avoid classes while learning more of what it took to be an adventurer. Eventually, Rukka managed to get permission to leave Barukhaza to seek his fortunes with a mercenary company.

Though less than twenty cycles old, Rukka became a powerful leader among the mercenaries. His training in diplomacy allowed him to work the best deals for his unit and his leadership paid off more than once on the battlefield. Eventually he came to lead his unit, and Rukka's Regulars became a feared and respected enemy.

Rukka led his soldiers across the sphere, blazing a trail of adventure and success wherever he traveled. He fought on both sides of the Antilan/illithid wars, scoring great victories for both employers. For a time he served as a neogi guardsman, but the easy life chafed against the Regulars and Rukka himself. The mercenary troop left with full purses and no hard feelings, in search of grand adventure.

Now Rukka has returned home to Barukhaza, sure that he can regain the favor of his grandfather and get back in line for the throne. Rukka has been unsuccessful so far, but is gaining on his nearest competitor. His cousin Bauki Grimdroll is still the leading choice, but Rukka may be able to overwhelm Bauki with feats of valor so admired by the dwarves.

If the characters encounter Rukka (likely, since he's always interested in swapping tales with other herotypes), he will be very friendly, though somewhat annoying with his constant games of one-upmanship. No matter how great a tale the characters have for him, he'll have one better. Anyone openly calling him a liar (though often he can be caught mixing up his stories) will have to face his wrath, as well as the hundred or so members of Rukka's Regulars.

Characters who sit back and listen without contradicting the dwarf will find themselves on good terms with one of Barukhaza's most influential warriors. This has its downside as well: characters may be hired by Bauki to spy on Rukka, or the other way around.

If the party become friendly with Rukka, the blustery dwarf captain could very well take them across the Cluster. Known for restlessness and extended wanderings, Rukka is also known for his habit of taking those who happen to be near him along for the ride. Such adventures will surely be outrageously dangerous, as those are the only kind Rukka will spend time on. Of course, characters who come to him with a particularly dangerous mission may find a powerful ally for just that reason.

## BOYARNY

**Type:** Cluster, earth

**Size:** 610 miles

**Population:** 380,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Varan

**Natural Resources:** Wood, food (primarily vegetables and fruits), livestock

**Imports:** Metals, gems, clothing

**Exports:** Food (fresh and dried fruits and vegetables), animal breeding stock

**Seen From Orbit:** The Boyarny asteroid cluster is a green place. Everywhere are lush fields of vegetables, or orchards whose trees are laden with various fruits.

All in all it appears to be a very pastoral place, with lovely meadows and even small forests. The most noticeable feature is a complete lack of water on the surface. Ice crystals can be seen tied in orbit, trailing globules of water as they melt, and these are obviously the source of this cluster's liquids.

**Description:** Boyarny Varan are the only large group of that people who have not been brainwashed into accepting illithid rule. So far the illithids have not demanded that the Boyarny bow down to them, a situation that may change at any time.

Over the course of generations, the Varan of Boyarny have established themselves as trade barons. Their delicious fruits and vegetables are considered exotic delicacies by virtually all other races (save the illithids and neogi who prefer redder fare). These foods are the key to the Varan success, because they will grow only in the native soil of Boyarny and in that cluster's specific ecosphere.

"How many umber hulks? Only 20?  
I thought you said we were outnumbered!"

Rukka Barethold to his only remaining soldier

# THE ALMANAC

The Thoric allied themselves with the Boyarny Varan long ago, trading ice chunks for fruit and livestock. This has proven to be mutually beneficial to both races, giving each much of what they need to survive. They still continue this practice today, and the Thoric have even gone so far as to hire themselves out as guards on Boyarny trading ships.

Despite their fabulous success as traders, the Varan of Boyarny are still not fully trusted by most races. The Thoric trust them completely, and the Calidians have begun to accept them (though professional pride keeps them somewhat aloof), but all other races view them as something slightly lower than amoeboids. Even the other Varan feel this way, thinking that their Boyarny relatives are traitors to their masters, the illithids.

The Boyarny Varan have done their best to ignore these prejudices, but are starting to get a bit angry and a few are thinking of living up to that reputation.

If this should happen, the trading scheme of the Cluster is going to change somewhat. The Varan will likely begin a cutthroat campaign with other produce-shipping traders, doing what they can to force competitors out of the market.

The leader of the Boyarny Varan is Luke Hashtal, a handsome man in his early thirties. He is respected by all the Boyarny Varan, and is reckoned a shrewd trader by all who know him. Behind him in influence is the lovely Rahne Kistra, a merchant princess with a penchant for making difficult deals. As long as these two retain their leadership, the Boyarny Varan will remain ethical traders.

These leaders are also behind Boyarny's recent attempts to gain information concerning the illithids. They have authorized the hiring of outsiders to investigate illithid actions, and are currently collating their findings.

In the future, they hope to turn this information to good use. Specifically, they want to free their Varan brethren from the tyranny of the illithids. They would like to see a Varan nation, and are sure that others of their race will want the same. What they do not understand is the complete brainwashing that their relatives have undergone in their years of servitude

to the illithids. Even if the Boyarny were able to free their race from the illithids, it is very unlikely the other Varan would want to join the Varan nation, and would most likely just go right back to the illithids.

If the Boyarny do attempt to form a free nation of Varan, it is almost assured that the mind flayers will attempt to crush them once and for all.

## **Rahne Kistra, 9th-level Varan Fighter**

AL NG; AC 3; MV 12; hp 68; THAC0 12; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15

**Equipment:** Chain mail, long sword, *medallion of ESP* (90' range)

**Description:** Rahne is an attractive woman in her early thirties. Her hair is cut down to the scalp along the sides of her head, and allowed to grow long on top and down the back. Her skin is pale and somewhat sallow (like most all Varan), but her eyes are a sparkling blue that more than compensates for her bland skin coloring. Her most distinguishing feature is the great nose ring that she always wears. The ring is of gold and jewel encrusted, stuck through the flesh of her left nostril. A fine silver chain joins the ring to an earring in her left ear lobe.

Upon first meeting Rahne, most people are struck by her calm and self-assuredness. Unlike most traders, Rahne looks a client straight in the eye and shows none of the greed all too common in her line of employment. Her voice is smooth and soothing, capable of phrasing a demand like a request that can't politely be refused. And politeness is very important to Rahne; she will do whatever is necessary for politeness sake. It is said that is how she ended up with her interesting piercings: being too polite to a neogi during a deal.

Of all the Boyarny Varan, Rahne is the most trusted by outsiders. She is known to have a word of bonded platinum and always delivers on her end of the deal. Other traders aren't particularly happy about her success, but no one carries a grudge either. She built up her clients honestly, without gouging her competitors, and Rahne has never resorted to the sort of backstabbing and thievery expected of the Varan.

There are a number of hidden cities scattered throughout the icy waste of the Glacier.  
Who knows what may be found there?

# THE ALMANAC

Rahne also has a reputation as a risk taker, someone who is never afraid to brave the unknown. In her time as a trader, she has managed to trade with illithids very near to Ushathrandra, only just escaping with her skin intact. Rahne has also led secret missions against the neogi of Ironport, sneaking in to steal trade route maps and other important mercantile information. This should have been her downfall, but other traders hid her until the danger was over. Rahne had insured their loyalty by making copies of the stolen information for anyone who helped her.

Rahne's main mission in life now is to discover the secrets of the illithids. She firmly believes that she can be instrumental to the defeat of the illithids, if only by gathering and distributing information about them. Anyone with little known facts about the mind flayers can win a few silver or even gold bars from Rahne. This is a well known fact, and a good way for characters to get to know her. If Rahne consistently buys information from the same people, she may offer them a very special sort of employment.

Characters who accept such jobs will be sent to actively seek out illithid secrets. They will be expected to do whatever they can to find out just what sort of weaknesses the illithids have, as well as the exact details of their strengths. In short, they will become agents charged with finding the easiest way to cripple the mind flayer forces. Though it is not recommended for those hired to do these jobs to actually hunt illithids, it is rumored that proof of an illithid kill (usually the left hand of a slain mind flayer) will earn a bonus of some sort. This isn't exactly true, but if characters bring back proof of a significant number of illithid kills, they will receive ships better equipped for their fight as well as any spare magical items Rahne may have.

Rahne's spy network has grown so large that she now has little time to oversee her trading house. She still travels with a trading vessel, but this is more of a front than anything. Particularly important deals or difficult clients may receive special attention from her, but for the most part the day-to-day business is left in the hands of her employees.



*"You can lead a neogi to water,  
but you have to be strong and determined to drown it."*

Dwarven proverb

# THE ALMANAC

## CALIMAR

**Type:** Gas giant (moons: Sultamar, earth and fire; Calamed and Amaron are both earth)

**Size:** 100,000 miles (moons: Amaron, 10,000 miles; Calamed and Sultamar both 1,000 miles)

**Population:** 2,400,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Calidian, conquered by Illithids/Varans

**Natural Resources:** Minerals, metal ores, water, shadowstone

**Imports:** Food, equipment, finished goods

**Exports:** Metal ores, gems

**Seen From Orbit:** Calimar is a massive gas giant of black and red with swirling clouds of ashen gray scattered across its surface. Its moons appear to be lifeless husks, coppery in color and surrounded by tempests that blow up huge funnel clouds of metallic-looking dust. All in all, it does not look like a pleasant place to visit, much less live.

**Description:** Calimar is a gas giant wracked by terrific storms that sometimes lash out into wildspace as great tendrils of wind and poisonous gases. The storms that tear at it also batter the gas giant's moons, where the Calidians first settled.

The Calidians believed that they could escape slavery by settling here, the most inhospitable spot they could find. Those Houses that settled here became known as the Shattered Houses, both a reference to the harsh nature of their home and because most of them had lost everything to slavers.

The Shattered Houses enjoyed a few years of peace as they developed underground housing to escape the storms. They first settled on Sultamar, which is beyond a doubt the most dangerous moon of the gas giant. While tunneling down into the interior of that moon, they discovered there was great mineral wealth to be had here, but there was also instant death waiting in every new tunnel. The interior of Sultamar is mostly molten lava, and once the surface was breached, it became only a matter of time before flames or magma came gushing up into an excavation. The Calidians left Sultamar as soon as possible.

Their next settlement was on the much more

pleasant (relatively speaking) moon of Calamed. There they discovered less ore to mine, but there was an abundance of subterranean springs and a natural-growing lichen that was both tasty and nutritious.

The Shattered Houses prospered and grew beneath the surface of Calamed, and eventually expanded their operations to the largest moon, Amaron.

Amaron was the turning point for the Shattered Houses. Where the other moons had iron or silver veins in abundance and a few scattered pockets of semi-precious gemstones, Amaron was a veritable treasure trove of precious metals and priceless red diamonds. The Calidians dug deep and fast, hauling out cart after cart of gold ore and shimmering jewels. And the next time the off-world traders arrived, the Calidians had a big surprise for them.

Word of the Calidians' newfound wealth spread slowly at first. Those traders that dealt with the Calidians were eager to keep the information quiet so that they could capitalize on this rich trade. Eventually, though, word leaked out to the illithids, who immediately set about conquering Amaron and the other moons of Calimar.

The Calidians were completely unprepared for this attack. As long as they had lived around Calimar they had never so much as heard rumors of illithid interest in their goods, and suddenly the mind flayers were everywhere. With no military to speak of, the Calidians were conquered almost immediately.

Now, the illithid and Varan forces have taken up residence in the older mines and converted them for their own purposes. Only scattered pockets of isolated Calidians remain free on Amaron, hiding within sealed off tunnel complexes. Already the illithids are doing what they can to tunnel over and capture them as well.

The Calidians are not completely helpless, however, and the free humans have done much to sabotage the mines of the illithids. They have a greater familiarity with the mines, which has allowed them to wage a tunnel war against the illithids with some success. Rumor has it that the Hidden are very concerned about what has happened around Calimar and are planning to do something about it, as soon as they

"Dwarves make good dinner companions.  
Appetizers, too."

Neogi saying

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can spare the manpower (or hire some adventurers).

The storms that ravage the moons of Calimar make it nearly impossible to land a ship on the surface. To overcome this difficulty, the Calidians use large cargo holds with spelljamming helms attached to them to get things into orbit, where traders can get to them without danger. These “powerhelms” are able to punch through the storms because they are very sturdy and need only to go straight up and down. They need no rigging for maneuvering, making them much less susceptible to high winds.

These storms also help the Calidians because the illithids cannot use typical spelljamming helms and are afraid to let captured Calidians fly goods into orbit and back on powerhelms. A few Varan have dabbled with the cargo lifters, but so far have had very little success and quite a few spectacular crashes. If the illithids do not come up with a way to get goods and troops off and on planet, they are going to keep losing ships and slaves. Still, it is doubtful they will abandon this lucrative mining operation until it is completely stripped of precious ores and gems.

## A Conquered Mining Base

The Calidian mining bases are ingenious designs that both shelter the miners and give them quick access to the mines. Of course, now that the illithids have conquered them, they have a grimmer aspect as well as a more warlike structure.

Below is a description of just such a base. The descriptions of the various areas correspond to the diagram on Card #17, an illustration and map of the base.

**Guard Barracks:** These are the posts of the Varan guards who serve the illithids. As these men and women rotate through their active post-times, there are usually between 15 and 20 guards sleeping here at any one time. The other 40 or so are out on active duty or training themselves in the martial arts.

**Slave Quarters:** Slaves are kept chained to the walls or floor by thick, iron bonds. They are typically blindfolded or have their heads tied into hoods so



“It is better to avoid an Antilan  
than take a chance of annoying him.”

Calidian proverb

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they cannot see to try and escape. Their beds are filthy and usually infested with biting vermin of one sort or another. Three to five guards are always present here, quick to put a boot in the back of an unsuspecting slave or to fetch one for an illithid's special meal.

**Elite Guardroom:** The Bodyguard are those Varan trained specifically to protect their illithid masters. Most are masters of the blade, fighting with two weapons as easily as with one. They are fanatically loyal and willing to give their lives for the illithids who are their masters.

Depending on the number of illithids who are currently staying within the base, the number of the Bodyguard changes. There are three Varan for every illithid within the base. Since there are typically three or four illithids at a base, that means there will be three or four guards asleep here (because they rotate shifts of guarding their masters) at any given time.

**Armory:** Dwarven smiths are often hired by the illithids to make and repair weapons and armor. The Barukhaza dwarves are particularly favored in this regard, and there are normally 2 to 6 such smiths in any given mining base. What the illithids do not know is that someday all of those dwarves are going to turn on their masters and try to bring them down. Here on Calimar this is very likely to happen, as the dwarves make many more weapons than they need, just in case a slave revolt is required. See Barukhaza, above, for more details.

**Storehouse:** This is where food, water, and other necessities are kept. This area is always guarded by three Varans, both to keep slaves from trying to get more than their fair share of food and to prevent raiders from tunneling in to swipe supplies.

The roofs of these rooms are all trapped to collapse at the command of the on-duty guard officer. This was done as a "sour grapes" tactic once the Calidians began burrowing into the storerooms from other mines. Those Calidians who try it now are liable to be squashed beneath a ton or more of rock.

**Illithid Quarters:** The illithids had new quarters carved out of the deepest layers of rock when they conquered the moon of Calimar. At most bases there are three or four private rooms for the illithids, all of them dark, moist and cold—just the way the mind flayers want them. The Bodyguard (above) is always stationed outside these rooms, two to a doorway. Anyone trying to get into an illithid's private quarters is most likely going to be killed.

Note that this diagram does not show all of a mine, but only those areas most commonly used. The mine tunnels themselves are not shown, but extend for miles beneath the moon's surface, radiating out from the central mine like immense spider legs. It is through these mines that the free Calidians stage their attacks, ambushing unsuspecting Varans and freeing slaves on their way to work in the mines.

The illithids have caught on to this tactic, however, and now try to send at least one of their kind out with the slave work groups. The most recent Calidian attacks have met with failure as the mind flayers' powerful mental blasts repelled them. When the Hidden come, they will probably have psionics along with them, but until then the Calidians are going to be hard-pressed to win any more victories.

Player character psionics would be highly valued here, and likely be extremely well paid. . . .

**Genevus Ryal, 10th-level Calidian Psionicist**  
AL LN; AC 6; MV 12; hp 37; THAC0 16; Str 16,  
Dex 15, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 15

**PSPs:** 122

**Disciplines:** Clairsentience, Psychokinesis, Psychometabolism, Telepathy (Primary)

**Sciences:** Clairvoyance (C), Disintegration (PK), Shadow Form (PM), Mindlink (T), Probe (T)

**Devotions:** All-Round Vision (C), Danger Sense (C), Animate Shadow (PK), Control Body (PK), Levitation (PK), Body Weaponry (PM), Catfall (PM), Displacement (PM), Awe (T), Conceal Thoughts (T), Contact (T), Daydream (T), Ego Whip (T), Invisibility (T), Psionic Blast (T)

**Defense Modes:** All

"Never trust a Varan."

Every race has a proverb of this sort

# THE ALMANAC

**Equipment:** studded leather, short sword. Genevus prefers to travel light, rarely carrying anything not absolutely essential to her current task.

**Description:** Genevus is a short Calidian woman of muscular build. Her fiery red hair is cropped close to her head, with a thin braided sidelock above her right ear. Deep brown eyes stare out from either side of an aristocratic nose that is slightly bent from a long ago fight. A tattoo of a dagger is just visible at the very top of her neck, where the skin starts to curve into her chin.

When speaking to Genevus, it is obvious that she has few social skills and less patience. Her sentences are clipped and to the point, rarely more than five words in length. The only time she really breaks into long speeches is when discussing warfare tactics or rallying her troops. Otherwise she rarely speaks, preferring to glare down her nose at anyone who comes to her with unimportant questions.

Genevus had only recently arrived on Amaron when the illithid invasion began. She had been planning to set up a Hidden cell here and head back to the Inner Ring where she was normally stationed. Instead, she has found herself doing what she can to lead her people against an overwhelming force of illithid oppressors.

So far she's done a fabulous job. The isolated areas of free miners can now communicate, thanks to Genevus' psionic powers. This allows them coordinate attacks against the illithids and warn more distant areas of coming attacks. Some of the Calidians here have uncovered their own psionic abilities under Genevus' direction, and this has improved communications immeasurably.

Genevus' goal is to hold out long enough to send for help. Her people are busily assembling a cargo lifter from spare parts which have been stolen or discarded by the illithids. When this is done, Genevus will lead a small but well-trained group to the surface to capture an illithid ship. With this she hopes to get word to the other members of the Hidden, and return with a large force to free her people.

Characters known to be sympathetic to the Calidians may find themselves recruited by the Hidden to

help liberate Calimar's moons. An entire campaign could be built around this sort of thing, with the characters taking up residence on one of the moons in order to fight the illithids. Such a campaign would surely be a desperate struggle, but one from which legends are made.

## CEREKAZADH

**Type:** Irregular, earth

**Size:** 110 miles

**Population:** 46,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Dwarves

**Natural Resources:** Iron, gems

**Imports:** Food, water, clothing

**Exports:** Tools, weapons, armor, jewelry

**Seen From Orbit:** Cerekazadh is a massive asteroid that is slowly being modified by the dwarves who live there. The surface of the asteroid is largely unworked, but one side has been carved to resemble a fierce dwarven visage. The mouth of the massive sculpture is used as a landing port by traders and also serves as a bazaar for the dwarves. Behind the eyes are the military headquarters and barracks where the dwarven army is quartered. The rest of the asteroid's exterior is dotted with vents and chimneys that are used to exhaust the heat of the massive furnaces and forges that are constantly at work.

**Description:** Cerekazadh is the single largest dwarven nation in the Cluster. Its people are the wealthiest of their kind, all of them having access to all the raw materials necessary to create beautiful jewelry and deadly weaponry. Each family has its own trade, and they are all experts at what they do. Traders come from all over the Cluster for the opportunity to trade with the dwarves of Cerekazadh.

The interior of Cerekazadh is a lightless maze that is nearly impossible for non-natives to navigate. The dwarves have carved out tunnels in search of ore and gems, and these tunnels criss-cross and interlace in patterns that boggle even other dwarves. Internal lighting is nonexistent, though heat vents from the forges periodically cross through tunnels, making it easy for those with infravision to see.

As the oldest and largest dwarven colony still

"Terror is a tool of the oppressor;  
it's also a tool of the freedom fighter."

Hidden agent

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existing in the sphere, Cerekazadh leads the other settlements in matters of policy. Cerekazadh is the only one of the dwarven settlements to have an intelligence-gathering clan. These dwarven “spies” are not as subtle as their human and illithid counterparts, but they are able to garner large amounts of military data as they question the dwarves returning from mercenary service.

The intelligence service of Cerekazadh is currently manipulating the price of dwarven mercenaries, raising and lowering them in different areas to increase market demand across the sphere. This serves to further the dwarven nations’ goal of forcing other nations into dependence upon the dwarven mercenaries.

Cerekazadh also sets the prices of dwarven goods and services throughout the sphere, issuing monthly “rate sheets” to the other settlements. While this has led to some disgruntlement from the other races, it has allowed the dwarves to avoid competing with one another, increasing their marketing power.

Spelljamming is not something that most of the dwarven nations delve into to any large degree. Cerekazadh is the exception to this rule, as they work to mount spelljamming helms within the bulk of the asteroid itself. If successful, they will have an immense fortress that could probably take on even a crystal citadel with a decent chance of success. The Arcane suspect that the dwarves of Cerekazadh are doing something with spelljamming, but their agents have yet to determine what. If the dwarves’ plans are discovered, it is a sure thing that the Arcane and Antilans will do what they can to halt the sale of spelljamming helms to Cerekazadh.

The warrior clans of Cerekazadh are the colony’s greatest asset, and its greatest weakness. While these doughty fighters help to make Cerekazadh a virtually impregnable fortress, their leaders have plans of their own for these troops. Skalia Kurebold has long had dreams of gaining the throne, but her brother, Makky Kurebold (the current king of Cerekazadh), doesn’t seem to be ready to step down or die any time soon.

Skalia is still patient (after all, she is a hundred years younger than Makky), but it is only a matter of



<Smash!>

War cry of the dwarves of Cerekazadh

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time before she makes her bid for power. It is uncertain how many of Cerekazadh's soldiers will side with her, but Makky would likely step down to avoid the bloodshed which would come about as the result of a civil war.

Of course, he would also try to have his sister assassinated, which is why Skalia is desperately trying to find non-dwarven allies. She would like to find someone who could give her the edge she needs to cement her power, without hooking up with an enemy who might very well use her to destroy Cerekazadh. For now, she is frozen with indecision, but the tightrope she walks could very well decide the fate of the dwarven nation as a whole.

## **Karnim Peereyes, 6th-level Dwarven Thief**

AL NG; AC 7; MV 6; hp 22; THACO 18; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 11

**Equipment:** Leather armor, shortsword, *dagger +1*

**Description:** Karnim Peereyes is the youngest spy of Cerekazadh, a mere stripling of 17 cycles, and he looks it. Karnim's nearly blond hair is something of an oddity, and a facet of his appearance that he is not at all comfortable with. Though he hopes the color will fade to a nice gray as he gets older, for the time being Karnim hides his hair beneath a large, floppy hat. His eyes are brightly colored, too, a nearly blazing purple with a thin orange line around each pupil.

His unique appearance has made Karnim more than a little shy. Childhood teasing has led Karnim to try and avoid attention, and this hasn't changed too much over the years. Karnim speaks very quietly, almost in a whisper, and rarely looks directly at whomever he is talking to. Instead, he looks at the floor, at his fidgeting hands, and anywhere but at the person with whom he is conversing.

This leads many to believe that Karnim is not as bright as he actually is. This has become quite an asset as people often make allusions around Karnim, sure that he won't be able to figure out what they are talking about. Playing dumb has been a great way for Karnim to gather information for his clan.

Karnim's assignments have been mostly domestic. He kept a watch on Skalia for awhile, discovering

some of her plot to overthrow Makky. He has also been used to infiltrate some of the smaller dissident groups that have sprung up in Skalia's wake, and has been generally successful in all his endeavors.

Now, though, Karnim is about to embark on his first real assignment outside of Cerekazadh. He'll be traveling with a mercenary group going to work as guards for the neogi. His task is to discover as much as he can about the neogi and their society and report back. This isn't exactly a glamorous job, but it is a start, and will prove that Karnim is capable of completing outside jobs.

The characters can come into contact with Karnim in any number of ways. They may meet him during his stay with the neogi, or he might be recruiting people to harass Skalia Kurebold's followers. He will surely be able to get the characters involved in all manner of intrigues as he talks them into helping him with his jobs.

## **CHAKARAK**

**Type:** Irregular, earth

**Size:** 21 miles

**Population:** 8,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Dwarves

**Natural Resources:** Iron, wood, vegetables

**Imports:** Water, clothing, meats

**Exports:** Weapons

**Seen From Orbit:** From orbit, Chakarak looks very much like a clump of earth pincushioned with trees. There is no visible water on the planet, though there are some towers that could very well contain water. Large silos also dot the surface, rising well above the tree line. A band of black encircles the entire asteroid, scorched clear of trees and other vegetation. From this band rise obsidian cylinders which periodically emit choking clouds of smoke.

**Description:** Chakarak is essentially a colony of outcasts. Those that follow Gordo Runelight are regarded as traitors to their race, because of Gordo's "radical" policies.

Gordo has refused to go along with the subterfuge of the other dwarven nations, and will not guarantee that his troops will pull back to Cerekazadh when

"What do you mean you're not supposed to have metal there?"

Chachtka, xixchil surgeon



Makky (ruler of Cerekazadh and most influential of the Four Kings) decides that it is time for the dwarves to make their bid for power.

Instead, Gordo plans to rise to power himself, with or without the aid of his dwarven brethren. Already he has begun working for the illithids, knowing that this inhuman race is more than capable of giving him the power that he needs to meet his goals. When he made his plans known, a surprising number of dwarves from other colonies agreed to back him, forming Chakarak.

The illithids have agreed to supply Gordo with magical items in exchange for Chakarak's services. Gordo has agreed to produce all manner of strange and diabolical weapons for the illithids, specifically those meant for use on spelljamming ships. Those designs that the illithids find suitable are given to the mind flayers, while the other are sold to the highest bidder. The neogi are usually the ones to get these "rejected" ideas, often coming up with new and unusually inventive uses for the weapons.

The Antilans know very little about Chakarak, other than the fact that its dwarves do not follow the same mercenary code as other members of their race. This has led to some friction in the past, but the Antilans have essentially decided that Chakarak is simply too small to waste effort on conquering it. Besides, attacking Chakarak might very well anger the dwarves of Barukhaza, eliminating a strong source of mercenary power that the Antilans desperately need.

The other dwarven colonies will not discuss the dwarves of Chakarak, saying only that they are not like other dwarves. Makky Kurebold has been heard to say a few more choice words on the subject, but only when he thinks outsiders are not nearby to overhear.

The illithids plan to boost Gordo's power via powerful magic eventually, but not until they are sure that he can be controlled. Right now, they are biding their time and enjoying the weapons that he has produced. What they really plan, though, is to move

"Hey! Wait! Don't—aaarrghhhh!"

Neogi captain watching his crew fire an untested weapon from the dwarves of Chakarak

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some of their ships into Chakarak, as well as some Varan assassins. This will give them first-strike capability against the Antilans, enabling them to indulge in close range sabotage and intrigue against the Sun Mages.

If this dwarven colony goes over to the illithids, then there is a very good chance the mind flayers will gain a strong foothold in Antilan space. This could shift the balance of power and cause another outbreak of open war between the Antilans and the illithids, despite the neogi treaty.

## **Gordo Runelight, 12th-level Dwarven Fighter**

AL NE; AC 9 or 4; MV 6; hp 87; THAC0 9; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 15

**Equipment:** As ruler of Chakarak, Gordo rarely wears armor or carries weapons. When he does, though, he prefers the feel of chain mail and the heft of a warhammer in his hands. He also has a storehouse of various minor magical items.

**Description:** Gordo Runelight is a pariah as far as most dwarves are concerned. Not only did he reject the rule of Makky Kurebold, but he has also "mised" a large number of other dwarves. The founding of Chakarak was the final nail in this dwarf's coffin, a betrayal and rebellion that forever set him apart from those dwarves who would not follow him.

When Gordo rebelled against Makky's rule, he attracted the attention of the illithids. These vile creatures saw a chance to use the rebellious dwarf for their own gain, and began plying him with magical favors and promise of power to come.

Gordo fell completely under their spell, turning Chakarak into an illithid weapons facility. For years he has worked for the mind flayers, and all he has to show for his efforts is a few minor magical items.

Gordo would like to tear loose from the illithids, but every time he gets ready to cut his ties with them they hint at some new magical trick. This carrot and stick routine has lasted for years and if Gordo doesn't get his courage and willpower up soon, it will last for years more.

## **Weapons of Chakarak**

### **Crew Casters**

Cost: 1,000 gp (gliders are 500 gp ea.)

Range: 4 hexes (8 w/glider)

Damage: nil

Crew: 2

Rate of Fire: 1/3 (1/5 if using gliders)

THAC0: 14 (16 w/glider)

Critical Hit: On 20

Crew casters are not weapons, but are used in combat situations. In effect, the caster is merely a medium ballista used to throw people, not bolts, at enemy ships. While it is not advised, crew members can simply be strapped onto a caster board and fired toward enemy ships. Such characters always take 1d6 damage upon landing.

The more efficient, and safer, method of using the crew caster is with the gliders designed for its use. Up to three crew man-sized crew members can fit comfortably into the glider, which is then be fired at the target. The glider is little more than a frame with some moveable wings and a rudder, making it very susceptible to combat damage.

Any hit from a shipboard weapon will destroy the glider and scatter the riders. If a critical hit is made with the caster, the crew makes it in one piece without suffering any damage. A normal hit indicates the glider has made it to the ship, but the landing will be more than a little rough. The glider will cause some minor miscellaneous damage to the ship, and the riders each suffer 1d8 points of damage. Typical damage to a ship hit with a caster will involve the sails or rigging, because gliders are prone to tangling in such things.

If those fired from the crew caster miss their target completely (due to a failed roll), they'll continue floating along at the pace of 1 hex/round.

### **Swing Ram**

Cost: 330 gp per ton of ship.

This ram hangs down below the ship and extends well forward of the prow. When the captain declares a ram, 6 crewmen scurry below deck and take the handles of the ram. They can then swing the ram

"Hmm. Didn't work quite like I thought."

Dwarven inventor of Chakarak  
watching neogi fire an untested weapon

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moments before impact, using its own weight and fine balance to increased damage.

Swing rams cause 3 extra points of damage. In addition, should a ship with a swing ram get "locked up" with an opponent after the ram, it is a simple matter to release the ram from its housings and withdraw.

Swing rams reduce the cargo space aboard a vessel they are installed in by half.

These are just two examples of the sort of weapons designed by the engineers of Chakarak. Neogi ships are often outfitted with either of the two weapons listed above, and can be equipped with whatever outlandish designs you can come up with. Illithids also equip their ships with Chakarak designs, but only the more elegant and proven ones.

## CONSTELLATIONS

**Type:** Tower

**Size:** 5,000 miles (per constellation)

**Population:** 10,000 (per constellation)

**Primary Inhabitants:** The Tenders

**Natural Resources:** None

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

**Seen From Orbit:** The constellations are visible from all over the sphere as blue-white spots of light in various patterns (see Card #19). As one draws closer, it is obvious that the spots of light are intense flames atop gargantuan towers. The towers appear to be constructed of massive crystal girders encircled with mile-long lengths of black cord. The innards of the towers are only vaguely visible through the crystal girders, but if the observer is within a few hundred feet of the towers, it is quite obvious that giant-sized beings inhabit the towers.

**Description:** The constellations are as old as the Cluster itself, with the sole exception of the constellation to Lugribosk that dates from shortly after the Second Cataclysm. The constellations serve as a time-keeping mechanism and a reminder of the power of the sphere's gods. The creators of these masterpieces are a group of contemplators

(SPELLJAMMER® MC 9). They were charged by the deities to oversee the constellations, construction, as well as their day to day running.

The contemplators themselves live within the towers' flames. They exist there as divinely protected beings who serve as representatives of the gods. The gods themselves rarely interact with the creatures of the Cluster, at least directly, and the contemplators act as their spokesmen.

Clerics of high levels (above 12th) must make a pilgrimage to the constellation of their god at least once every five years. There they will be given a quest that must be completed before the cleric can ascend to the next level. These quests are decreed by the gods and passed on through the contemplator. Each quest is tailored specifically for the individual, and represents a test of faith, skill, and dedication to the deity's ideals.

Few people brave the trip out to the constellations, fearing those that dwell within them. This fear isn't completely without basis. The evil gods require expensive sacrifices of gems and livestock to keep the flames of their towers lit. Those that come unprepared to appease these dark appetites must face their god's wrath. As the number of followers declines, more sacrifices are necessary to keep the flames from going out.

On occasion the dark gods will demand sacrifice from their priests. When this happens the priests must acquire the necessary sacrifices and bring them out to the proper constellation.

But there are other reasons to visit the constellations. The Tenders (see below) are a good reason, as they can sometimes be "borrowed" from their tower. The cause must be one that furthers the goals of the god in question, and one that will not overly endanger the Tenders, of whom there is only a finite number. More information concerning Tenders is given later on in this section.

Another reason to visit the constellations is for information. For important decisions, some characters (like paladins and clerics) rely on divine guidance. Characters of sufficient power can find their way out to the constellations for the really important

Baatezu may prove unlikely allies in the event of a tanar'ri invasion.

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answers; for example, how to defeat the Antilans, illithids or other threats, or the nature of the Darkgate and Sunslayer are good questions to ask.

Of course, these shouldn't be used as easy outs for the characters. Answers to questions should be helpful but not all-revealing. They might discover that the Darkgate can be used against the illithids, but not how this is possible. Keep the answers short and to the point, but still cryptic enough to give the characters something to think about.

The Tenders aren't always eager to have characters traipsing around their towers, either. They are there to protect the privacy and serenity of the contemplators, not to serve as doormen. They will attempt to stop anyone from entering the tower. Unless the characters can prove a legitimate need to see the contemplator of a tower, they will probably be turned away.

Some of the towers contain the wizshades that originally came to protect the sphere. The Tenders are especially protective of these towers, and will let

almost no one inside. Even the gods understand the importance of the wizshades within the Astromundi Cluster and have done their part to protect them.

Killing hundreds of Tenders is another way to get in, but the Tenders will not allow themselves to be senselessly slaughtered if they can avoid it. After all, the god the tower belongs to can act through the contemplator to do away with the wrongdoers if that becomes necessary. This method of gaining an audience is not recommended, as the killing of Tenders will undoubtedly anger the god of the constellation, making it very unlikely that deity will aid the characters in any way.

The constellations should remain mysterious places where only the most powerful characters dare to tread. Everyone who has been there is charged to guard the secrecy of the constellation upon pain of divine retribution, and those who talk of the constellations at all will exaggerate the dangers greatly. That alone should be enough to keep all but the bravest or most foolhardy away!

Player characters should not be allowed to make frequent jaunts out to the constellations; these places are not intended to serve as an unlimited information source. The sheer length of such trips is enough to discourage most journeyers.

Play up the danger and inconvenience of making such expeditions. Unless there is some real reason for the characters to head out to the constellations, they should be discreetly steered away from them in order to retain the dramatic impact and mystery of this location.

## Tenders

These creatures were created by the various gods to protect their constellations within the Astromundi Cluster. They are creations of flesh and blood, but Tenders do not suffer from aging or disease, and are immune to psionics as they have no true mind to affect.

Tenders are creatures with a very well-defined function: they protect their constellations and the contemplator who lives within them. Tenders do not speak except to challenge those who would enter a

It is conceivable that several archliches exist within the Astromundi Cluster. Such creatures could be a powerful allies against the Antilans or illithids.

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constellation tower, and do not appear to communicate with one another. In reality, Tenders are linked together through the consciousness of the god who created them and all Tenders of a particular god operate well as a team.

Tenders are all identical in design. Each has AC 3, 7 HD (40 hp) and 2 fist attacks (1-8/1-8). They are not particularly bright, and tend to attack in overwhelming waves rather than in a subtle manner.

## DALMANIA

**Type:** Irregular, earth

**Size:** 25 miles

**Population:** 33,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Calidians

**Natural Resources:** Wood, water, cotton, silk

**Imports:** Food, meat, tools, weapons

**Exports:** Clothes, out of Cluster goods, wood

**Seen From Orbit:** Dalmania is a pale clod of earth, with square cotton fields and patchy forests easily visible. There are numerous globs of water floating about the asteroid that are retrieved by Calidian vessels for drinking water and to keep the forests and cotton growing. Numerous ships can be seen landing and taking off; Dalmania is a busy trading port despite its distance from the Inner Ring.

**Description:** Dalmania is one of the most prosperous Calidian settlements outside of Highport. The Dalmanians are blessed with a climate naturally suited for growing cotton and trees and have used this to their advantage. Once they discovered that giant silk worms could exist quite well within the forest, they imported a few and now have silk as well. With such an abundance of clothing materials at hand, many of the traders turned their hand to clothing design and manufacture. Now, the finest clothes to be found come from Dalmania.

Dalmanian traders are also adept at engaging in out-of-Cluster trade. The Calidians are willing to pay the elves outrageous fees because they always manage to recover their expenditures with plenty of profit left over.

The real reason that the Calidians of Dalmania have become so successful is, of course, the dowhar,

the clever penguinoid traders who have elevated the Calidians to their current status as rising merchants. They are very much the real power of Dalmania, making all major decisions and dealing with other races through their human catspaws. The Calidians still believe that they are on equal footing with these master traders, but will soon be disillusioned.

Already, the dowhar have established a large force of giff within the city of Dalmania. When the time is right (after they have used the Calidians for all they're worth), they intend to use this mercenary force to seize control of Dalmania and begin their trade conquest in earnest.

This has left the Hidden in a difficult position. They realize that the Dalmanian Calidians may fall into the role of slaves to the dowhar (the Hidden has spies who have discovered some of the dowhars' plans), but even they have become dependent on the income generated by Dalmania.

The Hidden have so far declined to become involved in the intrigues of the dowhar, hoping that they will not have to make a choice between their ethics and their pocketbook. Should they be forced to deal with the situation, they will most likely try to come to some sort of compromise with the dowhar.

Few outsiders are allowed to frequent the city of Dalmania itself. This is because the large giff presence would be very difficult to explain; giff are not native to the Cluster, having been brought with their dowhar masters. Traders that come to Dalmania will most likely be directed to land just outside of the city, where Dalmanian merchants meet with them and decide what they want to buy. Mini-caravans then bring goods to or from the city.

The illithids are currently looking to invade Dalmania, but are leery of having to take on what their spies tell them is a very large force of militant, dangerous creatures (the giff). So far, the Dalmanians have remained free of illithid control, but it is hard to say just how long this will last in light of the illithid fascination with conquering Calidians.

"Dowhar? What's a dowhar taste like?"

Riktal, dracon of Ironport



**Marco Castus, Calidian Trader (0-level human)**  
AL NE; AC 9; MV 12; hp 4; THACO 20; Str 12,  
Dex 10, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14

**Equipment:** Marco carries very little with him. Generally he has an ornamental weapon on his person, and heavy robes that provide him some protection (hence AC 9). His guards carry whatever he thinks he might want, and are highly trained fighters with the best weapons and armor available.

**Description:** Like most Calidian traders, Marco likes to overdress somewhat. He generally wears a great cloak of expensive fur, with silk blouse and tights. His belt is usually of some semi-precious woven metal, and is almost always inlaid with gemstones. He also wears a short sword, but one look at it is enough to tell an experienced warrior that the weapon is purely for show.

Despite his outrageous clothing, it is obvious that Marco is quite fat and out of shape. His clothes are tailored to hide this, but it is impossible to conceal the great rolls of flesh beneath Marco's chin and the

roundness of his face. His eyes are like pale yellow beads of glass shoved into a blob of dough.

Marco's manners pretty well fit his overall appearance. On the surface, he appears to be a decent enough man who says most of the right things at the right times. But there is an undercurrent of ugliness in Marco's voice that belies the pleasant things that he says. In short, he is a weaselly conniver with only barely contained contempt for almost everyone around him.

Until a few months ago, Marco was just a fat little merchant on a backwater asteroid. He was always tottering on the brink of bankruptcy, rarely able to keep customers because of his attitude. He was the perfect pawn for the dowhar.

The dowhar set about driving him out of business. Through the subtle use of their telepathy, they were able to steer customers away from Marco's trading post. Just as Marco was about to go out of business, they sent a giff messenger to fetch him.

The deal they offered was simple enough. Marco

Never eat first at a Calidian dinner.  
The host must always taste the food before the guest. It's a show of trust.

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would act as their agent in trade and would receive 20% of the profit for his troubles. A ship and its cargo would be provided, but Marco would have to come up with his own crew (though the dowhar would pay for that as well). Marco jumped at the chance to make some money. He threw together a crew and headed for wildspace in his new ship.

Things went very well for Marco after that. He did what he was told and bought and sold when the prices were right. Despite his repugnant personality and appearance, Marco quickly rose to an enviable position of wealth and power.

Since that time Marco has been used to introduce other Calidians to the dowhar. He has used his influence and success as powerful lures to draw others under the influence of his nonhuman allies. The Hidden don't like Marco, seeing him as little better than the dowhar who use Calidians for their own ends, but the trading clout he has won for the Calidians has prevented them from taking action thus far.

Marco might come into contact with characters in a number of ways. He could hire them to come along on a trading mission into dangerous territory. Or if one of the characters happened to be a Calidian, he could introduce the characters to the dowhar. However they meet up with him, the characters will have to be on their guard to avoid being used for Marco's profit and their loss.

## THE DARK GROUP (GENERAL OVERVIEW)

**Type:** Cluster, earth

**Size:** approximately 500 miles

**Population:** 1,700,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Calidian (Achemon, Mitiar), illithids (Khel, Lumura), Varan (Torin)

**Natural Resources:** Shadowstone (Achemon), rare spices (Khel), livestock (Lumura), vegetables (Mitiar), iron (Torin), water, antiques (all)

**Imports:** Food, wood, building materials, slaves (Khel, Lumura), mining tools (Torin)

**Exports:** Shadowstone (Achemon)

**Seen From Orbit:** The Dark Group is five asteroid clusters scattered outside of the Inner Ring. They are

mostly inhospitable-looking places of lustrous black stone, with sparse patches of sickly yellow vegetation. Globules of brackish water float in and around most of the clusters, providing sufficient water for drinking and agriculture, though this liquid must be boiled before it is suitable for drinking. As travelers draw closer to the various clusters, strange ruins dotting their surface in seemingly random patterns can be seen.

**Description:** The Dark Group clusters are almost entirely controlled by the illithids or their Varan allies. The mind flayers chased the Calidians to ground here, and when they discovered the strange ruins that litter these asteroid groups, the mind flayers decided to study them.

This is why the Dark Group has no economy to speak of and does very little exporting; the clusters are essentially big laboratory/workshops for the illithids and their Varan lackeys.

The Calidians of Achemon have maintained their freedom primarily because they supply shadowstone to the Antilans, who would certainly take offense were the illithids to endanger their supply of this precious rock. What the Antilans do not know is that the Calidians have an ace up their sleeve and that the shadowstone is not exactly what it appears.

When the Calidians first came to Achemon, they were fleeing the illithid slavers. They ran to ground on Achemon, discovered the tunnels that run through it and chose them as a place to burrow down. The illithids tried to find them, but withdrew after rousing several pockets of angry undead.

The Calidians did not entirely escape the attention of the undead, either. While looking for a way back to the surface, they encountered Achemon the archlich. This creature was freed from its bonds when the Calidians entered its ancient shrine. When she awoke, Achemon was agitated, but the Calidians quickly convinced her that they were not responsible for what had happened to her.

Recognizing them as the beleaguered people that they were, Achemon agreed to help them against the illithids. Within weeks of her reawakening, Achemon had gathered enough information to know the best

"The only good Calidian is the one I just ate."

Ssstaka Gul, Illithid Slaver

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way to protect the Calidians was to strike a deal with the Antilans.

Achemon also knew enough not to give the Antilans exactly what they wanted. With a sample of shadowstone readily available (it was a common enough building material in the ages before the Cataclysm, so there was plenty in the ruins), Achemon was able to create an alchemical composite that closely resembled shadowstone but did not have all of its properties. The Antilans (and the Arcane) believe that they are getting huge shipments of shadowstone from Achemon, but are in fact getting a lot of glossy rocks with a few shadowstones thrown in. Unless they realize this soon, it could set the Dark-gate plot back months.

The Group is largely unexplored, because it is infested with all manner of strange undead. The illithids have mounted massive campaigns into the some of the clusters' ruined cities, but even with thousands of slaves to use as cannon fodder they are continually repelled by the undead hordes. The mind flayers have discovered and cleared out some of the crypts deep within the asteroid cluster, but are still unsure of the uses and properties of the artifacts they have found. Illithid scholars are currently trying to decide if any of these can be used to fulfill the prophecy of the Sunslayer.

The Varans are, at best, uneasy about their presence in the Dark Group. Too many of the things that they have seen conform to ancient legends and scary bedtime tales.

Many of them have asked the illithids to pull up stakes, but the mind flayers are having none of it. Since the illithids started putting dissenters to death, small underground cults have begun to spring up among the Varan. Most of them propose only harmless deals to give the Varan hope, but a few of them are based on worship of some of the more powerful undead that abound in the Dark Group. If the illithids are not careful, it is very likely that a large number of their Varan will fall sway to these cults and turn against their former masters.

Of course, such a revolt would be almost completely futile, but it would give the Calidians a chance

to strike at the illithids when they are vulnerable. With Achemon to back them, there is a very good chance that they could make a real dent in the illithid presence within the Dark Group.

Besides Achemon, the other clusters of the Dark Group are not exactly safe for those who are not on very good terms with the illithids. Attempting to enter any such cluster is an invitation for attack by squid ships or worse, and the undead that fill the asteroid clusters are no less dangerous. Characters who wish to study the mysteries of the Dark Group should start on Achemon, where they will be able to stay with the Calidians, at least for a while.

## Falen, 12-level Calidian Mage

AL CG; AC 3; MV 12; hp 37; THAC0 17; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 15

### Spell Book:

**1st:** *Alarm, gaze reflection, magic missile, spook*

**2nd:** *Detect evil, detect invisible, hypnotic pattern, web*

**3rd:** *Blink, fly, Leomund's tiny hut, lightning bolt*

**4th:** *Evard's black tentacles, magic mirror, minor globe of invulnerability*

**5th:** *Cone of cold, dream, Mordenkainen's faithful hound, teleport*

**6th:** *Geas*

**Equipment:** *Staff of striking, wand of frost, wand of polymorphing, beads of force (6, worn as earrings), bracers of defense (AC 3), brooch of shielding, chime of opening (earring), cloak of arachnida, necklace of missiles (9 die, 6 die, 5 die, 3 die (x2), 1 die (x4), rope of climbing, rope of entanglement.*

It is likely that Falen will have many other items hidden about his person. Most items are disguised (as the *beads of force* worn as earrings, and the wands up his sleeves), as Falen is loath to reveal more about his personal resources than he must. It is believed that he has a *bag of holding* from which he can draw almost any item at a moment's notice.

**Description:** Falen was one of the first mages to begin magical exploration of the Dark Group and Achemon in particular. His age is beginning to show now, but there are still traces of the dashing adven-

"See how fast that illithid ate that slave I poisoned?"

Rika Nef, Hidden Assassin

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turer that shine through now and then. He wears his grey hair pulled back into a long ponytail bound with a simple black ribbon. His ears are pierced multiple times, and there are rumors that a number of his earrings are actually powerful magical items. Falen's eyes are a nearly clear hazel in color, streaked with amber. Though he occasionally grows a short beard, Falen is normally clean shaven.

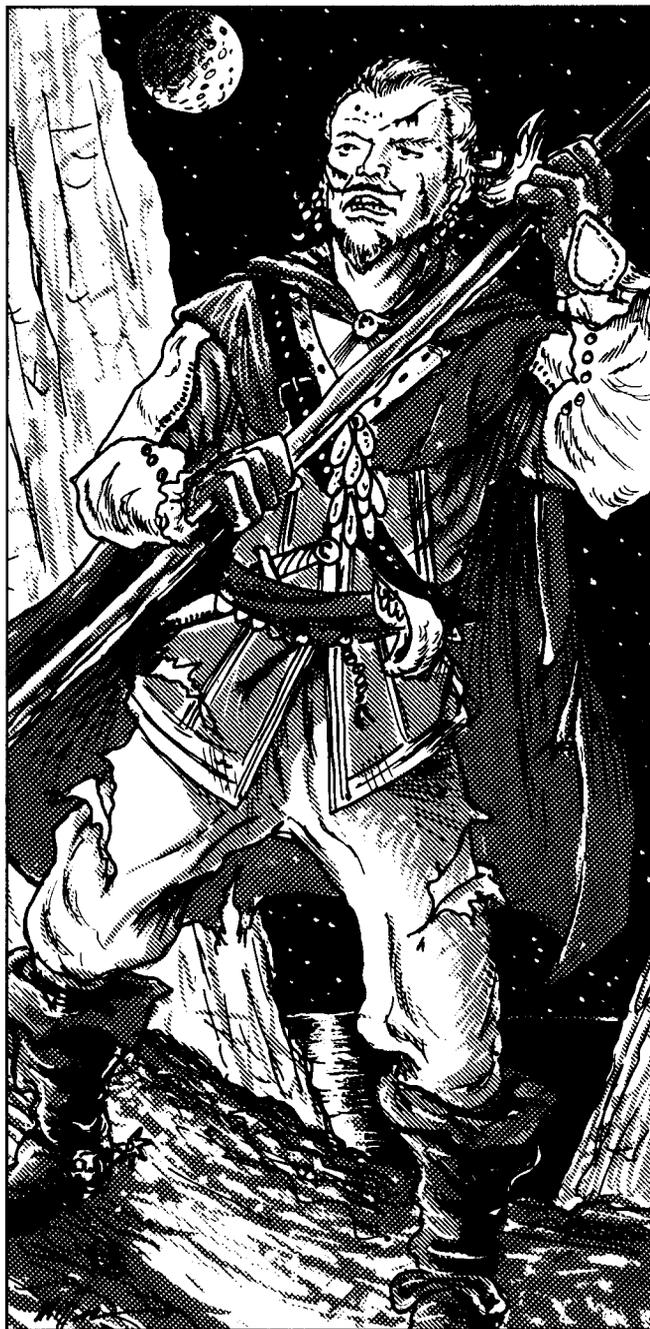
When traveling about, Falen will wear typical adventurer's garb, though he prefers to dress in the manner of a rogue rather than a mage. In his own words: "Why do you want to wear all those silly robes? They just get caught on loose nails, or snagged on shattered doors, or catch fire on deck lamps. Not to mention the fact that they make a handle for any monster that takes a liking to your flesh. No, I'll stick with these old, comfortable things—and no pointy hat!"

Any magic items Falen does have with him will usually be disguised, like his earrings. He has three holes in each ear, and generally at least two of the ornaments hanging from his lobes are actually *beads of force*. Other hidden items are wands in forearm sheaths, amulets worn as belt buckles and enchanted daggers concealed in his boot sheath. Enchanted ropes are a favorite of Falen's as well, and are usually kept in a belt pouch.

Falen is one of Achemon the archlich's agents. Achemon and Falen rarely meet face to face, but when they do they are often sequestered for days at a time, discussing who knows what. Falen's connection to the archlich has kept him out of a number of scrapes, as most powerful mages have at least heard of the archlich and do not want to offend her by interfering with her agent.

This has given Falen something of a swollen head; while he is quite powerful in his own right, his ego far outstrips his ability. Achemon has chastised him for this in the past, but he has shown little interest in changing his ways so far.

Falen might come into contact with the characters during one of his missions, or be assigned to watch them if they enter the Dark Group. In either case he will be arrogant and stand-offish, only speaking to



"Urrk." <Thud>

Ssstaka Gul, after eating a poisoned slave

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the characters when absolutely necessary.

This attitude may mellow somewhat if the characters show themselves to be at least marginally competent. Adventurers that go stomping off in search of monsters and wind up in the cookpot will be rescued, but only after a condescending tongue-lashing about the virtues of being prepared. Under no circumstances will Falen let the characters interfere with his current mission, and those that do will certainly find themselves on the business end of some very nasty spells.

## DRACHENGARD

**Type:** Cluster, water

**Size:** 220 miles

**Population:** 18,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Mixed (mostly adventurers)

**Natural Resources:** Water

**Imports:** Food, building materials, miscellaneous supplies

**Exports:** Adventurers

**Seen From Orbit:** From orbit, Drachengard appears as an icy cluster of asteroids with a few larger asteroids of earth. Numerous ships flit through the ice asteroids to touch down on the largest earth chunk, and just as many are seen leaving the asteroid for wildspace.

**Description:** Drachengard is a rugged place, not generally frequented by genteel tourists. The average visitor to Drachengard is the adventurous type, seeking the wonders of wildspace. As a jumping-off point for wildspace adventures, Drachengard is the place of choice. Here can be found all the tools that an adventurer might need: weapons, armor, all kinds of equipment, and even a hireling or two. The prices are quite reasonable and the help most polite.

Good food and strong spirits are also available in abundance, though none of gourmet quality. The more time is spent in Drachengard, the more it becomes obvious that this place was designed with the concept of function over style. And that function just happens to involve catering to adventurers.

Drachengard was founded by a Thoric adventurer who slew a radiant dragon during a dispute over the

ownership of this particular cluster of rocks and ice. The dragon's bones are now the roof supports for the huge inn and tavern Drachenbane, the most famous adventurers' meeting ground in all of Clusterspace.

Drachenbane is a warm, friendly place, where competing adventurers become fast friends and share a few mugs of ale next to a roaring hearth. Fighting is strictly disallowed within the inn, to protect the health and privacy of all patrons. A pair of spacesea giants enforce the no fighting rule, and those that test the limits of the stricture are usually beaten quite severely.

Drachengard is not a typical orbiting cluster. Most starcharts mark it as stationary, though in reality it bobs and dips through the "neutral" celestial inclination. While it is always in the same track on the map of Clusterspace, it is often much higher or lower than a standard orbit. At the zenith and nadir of its bobbing "orbit," Drachengard becomes an extremely frigid place.

Those free-floating globs of water freeze and become balls of ice. As the asteroids near the neutral inclination, a good portion of the ice thaws (though some of it is always frozen) and spelljammers are sent out to scoop up as much of it as they can. Since Drachengard's founding, some two hundred years ago, the number of ice asteroids has decreased considerably.

The Antilans, neogi, and illithids are not at all amused by the sort of plans that are hatched out at Drachengard. They know only too well the sort of dangerous schemes that come about when a number of adventurers spend their leisure time together.

In the past, all of these factions have attempted to assassinate one or more influential adventuring parties, and all have been thwarted. This has led to the banning of members of those three races from Drachengard. An Antilan character could come to Drachengard in the company of a group that vouches for his or her behavior, but he or she would be watched very closely.

The Thoric will sometimes offer sanctuary to those hunted by the illithids.

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## **Bjornil Wulftyr, Thoric Scout (3rd-level Fighter)**

AL NG; AC 5; MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 18; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14

**Equipment:** Chain mail, battle axe, longsword, assorted survival gear

**Description:** Bjornil is a powerfully built man, nearly seven feet tall, with muscles stretching at every seam of his clothing. His hair is long and blond, and his eyes are blue as sapphires. Bjornil is normally dressed in the rugged manner of those who follow his profession: leather shirt and pants lined with fur, a massive fur cloak, and several weapons jutting from the edges of his belt. Encountered away from Drachengard, he will also have an enormous pack (filled with all manner of supplies) on his back.

Bjornil is a plain-spoken man, forthright and honest in the Thoric fashion. Though he's known to embellish the tales of his adventures, he's as dependable a scout as any. Many adventurers have become quite wealthy after following up on one of Bjornil's tips.

Bjornil spends most of his time at Drachengard attempting to drum up business. For a fee, he will either lead characters to a destination, or come with them on an exploratory mission. The first option is his favorite, and the one for which he makes the most money. He need only show the characters how to get where they want to be, and collects his fee. The second option is quite dangerous for him personally, because he may find himself far from home with no real way to get back if something should happen to his employers.

But it is this more dangerous work that makes him so indispensable as a scout. He can tell his employers how best to survive while traveling across the freezing ice of the glacier, how to avoid the perils of asteroid fields, and other advanced survival techniques. Best of all, he can then lead other adventurers to these spots, making further profit. And if his employers want him to keep quiet about what they find, well, that costs extra.

Bjornil will occasionally take off on his own, looking for areas of adventure. When he finds something interesting, he returns to Drachengard to drum up

business. Usually he advertises on the community bulletin board, then takes the highest bidder. Bjornil never actually enters the adventure sites he leads people to, preferring to remain aboard the ship where he's safe and sound. Of course, for a reasonable price Bjornil might let himself be hired out as a bodyguard or man-at-arms, but these are rare occasions. In any case, Bjornil takes a cut of any treasure retrieved during these missions.

Bjornil is also a font of information that characters may find useful. He seems to know a lot of what is going on all over the Cluster. He can tell characters all about the troop movements of the Antilans inside the Inner Ring, or the illithid assaults on Calimar.

Bjornil makes the perfect NPC for starting adventures from Drachengard. He can offer to lead the characters to the site of the next adventure. Or he can simply pass on some information that might start the next adventure or encounter. Possibilities are nearly limitless with an NPC like Bjornil.

## **THE GOLDEN GIRDLE**

**Type:** Belt, earth

**Size:** 300 miles (this is the size of the three artificial worlds that the Antilans have constructed)

**Population:** 12,000,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Antilans

**Natural Resources:** All

**Imports:** Slaves

**Exports:** All

**Seen From Orbit:** The Golden Girdle is a lush, earthen belt. It is close enough to Firefall to be tropical, but far enough away to have plenty of moisture. The asteroids within the belt are as likely to be forested as farmed, and none are barren. Burrowing beneath the surface of most asteroids, even a little way, will reveal gems or precious metals. The Antilans have, without a doubt, the richest territory in all the Cluster.

While the asteroids and their vegetation are impressive, the most outstanding features of the belt are the "flat worlds" of Kashimar, Mu-Thalak, and Tan-Sharm. All of these artificial worlds are hemispheres with their flat sides gently inclined toward

The Thoric have outlawed exploration of Fringe ruins. However, you may be able to get a peek at them if you can prove scholastic interest.



Firefall. The flat worlds rotate very slowly, giving a semblance of a day/night cycle which is almost unique within the Cluster.

**Description:** Kashimar is reserved for the greatest of the Sun Mages (and their slaves), who have devoted their lives to the study and improvement of sunmagic or other magical disciplines. The Arcane prefer to live here as well, guiding the construction of the Darkgate from deep within the great Crystal University. This “center of learning” was created by the Antilans to provide a free exchange of mystical knowledge among the Sun Mages.

What happened was predictable: the Sun Mages used the University as a way to gain prestige. Infighting is still rife within the walls of the university, as mages jockey for position and try to gain new knowledge without giving away too much of their own learning. Since the Arcane took up residence here, things have worsened. The Arcane seem to take great pleasure in playing the mages off one another, and use this game to keep the Sun Mages unaware of

the Darkgate and its purpose.

Outside mages have come to the University, but almost always in the role of advisor and teacher rather than student. The Antilans are always eager to learn outside secrets but loath to part with their own.

Mu-Thalak is home to the great noble houses of Antila and their slaves. This flat world is the most beautiful of the three, with all the homes constructed of multi-hued crystals and the streets of hammered copper inlaid with intricate enamelled designs. No non-Antilan has ever set foot upon Mu-Thalak, but there are artists’ renderings of the place in many noble homes throughout the Cluster. The whole of the place was designed with a graceful sense of symmetry laid out by early designers. Though the city proper has grown quite a bit since it was first designed, the intelligent use of space and adherence to the early plans have created an ideal place to live.

Mu-Thalak does have a dark little secret, however. A strange cult has reared its head recently, and quite a few of the nobles have become enamored of its

“Other races are merely slaves waiting to happen.”

Garin Stularian, Antilan Noble

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customs. Even among the pleasure-loving Antilans, these nobles have become known as excessive hedonists who indulge their every desire. The slaves of such nobles live in fear of who might be called to serve at one of the cult's parties, knowing that slaves present at such functions are not seen again.

What the nobles do not know is the source of the cult. They believe that one of their own kind originated it and designed its precepts in accordance with some ancient theology. In truth, a Varan infiltrator with psionic powers conducted the first meetings, using his powers to influence the perceptions of the Antilans who were there. Since that time (a few years back), the Varan has used his influence with the Antilan government to discover useful information for his illithid masters.

So far he has managed to remain undetected, but any slip-up could reveal the Varan servant for what he is. Following that there would be the purging of all the noble houses involved, and the inevitable wars for position would begin. The illithids know all of this, and are currently debating whether or not it would be worthwhile to sacrifice their operative to create such chaos within the noble houses.

Tan-Sharm is the most mysterious of all the flat worlds. The Antilans not only disallow the presence of any non-Antilan (who isn't a slave) on the flat world, they are also known to immediately attack any spelljamming vessel that comes within a hundred miles of the place.

The reason for their paranoia concerning outsiders near Tan-Sharm is a result of the unimpressiveness of Tan-Sharm. Home to freemen and their servants, Tan-Sharm isn't much to see. The buildings are old and collapsed in some parts, and the roads are rutted dirt trails. Because no one of importance lives here, there is very little policing done and crime has run rampant. Tan-Sharm is a metropolitan nightmare, with all manner of criminal syndicates vying for control of the population.

The freemen in some sections of the city have banded together against this threat, and are bent on taking their city back. Such restorationists can only do a little at a time, but they are getting their neigh-

borhoods back in shape and banding together against the criminal element. If the Antilan Empire was to give them any aid at all, they would surely be able to turn the tide and take their city back from the criminals. As it stands now, though, they are a small force facing a huge threat. Sooner or later they are going to be crushed.

The more daring of Tan-Sharm's freemen are looking beneath the surface of their city for help. It is well known that the city has been built and re-built several times over the centuries, with previous levels serving as the foundations for the new one. Some residents of Tan-Sharm believe that there may be powerful magic hidden down there and would seek it for their own uses. A few of these men and women might even go so far as to smuggle in some adventurers to do their dirty work for them. Even though this would be a defiance of their rulers, the citizens of Tan-Sharm are starting to believe that they have no other choice.

What no one knows, or even really suspects, is that a large number of baatezu are imprisoned within each of the flat worlds. As creatures of great power, they serve as a power supply of sorts, keeping the flat worlds moving. None of them are at all amused by their current situation, and have been plotting their escape for millennia. All of Antila has forgotten about how the flat worlds were created and powered. The people of Tan-Sharm must be very careful, lest they come into contact with some of these devious creatures and mistakenly set them free.

Characters must be no less careful if they confront these creatures. Most PCs will never have seen such beasts before, and may be seriously injured or slain before they have a chance to discover the nature of their assailants. DMs who decide to send their characters on this sort of adventure should be careful to balance the scenario. Only the most powerful characters could possibly survive.

If any of the baatezu are released from their prison, that flat world will stop rotating on its own axis, bathing the city in either eternal night or a never-ending day (depending on which side is facing the sun when the rotation stops). This will immediately grab

"The Antilans are already slaves and don't know it. Fools."

Unnamed Arcane speaking to a tanar'ri warlord

the attention of the rulers of Antila, who will send a large force to rectify the situation.

They will be too late to solve the immediate crisis, but they should be able to track down and dispose of the baatezu before they become much of a problem. Characters who are even remotely connected to the escape of the baatezu will earn the undying wrath of the Antilans. Of course, they may also gain the respect of the illithids through the same act. . . .

Overall, the Golden Girdle is in a section of space reserved for the ships of the Antilans. Other ships are rarely welcome here, and are often driven out of the Girdle by force. Characters who wish to adventure here will have to use stealth and guile to avoid attracting unwanted attention. Of course, characters could also be brought to Antila as slaves and have to escape their captors, throwing them into the midst of Tan-Sharm's current difficulties.

## HATHA

**Type:** Irregular, water (ice)

**Size:** 80 miles

**Population:** 25,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Thoric

**Natural Resources:** Fur, ice

**Imports:** Building materials, food

**Exports:** Cold weather gear, ice

**Seen From Orbit:** Hatha is a glaring blue-white, visible from more than a thousand miles. There are no discernible surface features, other than the occasional plume of smoke or a pack of wandering beasts. As the traveler comes in closer, ice sailers are visible skimming across the snowy plains and the snow-built dwellings of the Thoric are easily spotted.

**Description:** Hatha is a harsh, unforgiving asteroid, as is typical of Thoric homelands. Unlike most asteroids in the Astromundi Cluster, Hatha has weather, or the nearest thing to it. A biting wind constantly scours the surface of Hatha, driving before it a blinding cloud of ice crystals and powdered ice. It is this wind that allows the Thoric to use their ice sailers and is viewed as both blessing and curse; blessing because it does permit rapid transportation, curse because of the storms it generates. Given a choice,

most Thoric will stay well clear of the so-called "toothed wind."

Because of the toothed wind, the Thoric of Hatha have decided to build underground dwellings carved from ice. Individual rooms are lined with furs and are quite warm, but hallways and tunnels that link the various homes together are unadorned and frigid. Cooking and other activities that require fire are taken care of around the shafts. These large ventilation tunnels penetrate the dwellings in various areas, providing a means to remove smoke and keep the air fresh. The areas around the shafts are quite large and also serve as communal meeting places, allowing the residents of the area to gather and talk.

There are five separate dwelling centers under the surface of Hatha, each of which contains some 5,000 Thoric. These huge structures must be constantly renovated to keep them safe for expansion. Each of the colonies has "dead areas" in which the ice has become rotten and no longer safe to dwell in. The colonies grow around the dead areas, expanding in a widening circle that seems to spread every day.

The Thoric are governed by five Wise Women, and each Wise Woman oversees a separate colony. The Wise Women are not like a standard government, in that they have no real authority. They are respected by the Thoric, and their suggestions are almost always taken to heart. But, theoretically, every Thoric is responsible only for himself. Among a race less honorable this would be a recipe for disaster, but among the Thoric it allows a great deal of personal freedom while still maintaining a cultural standard.

Traders to Hatha (or most other Thoric settlements) are likely to be confused by the lack of centralized trading areas. If you want to cut a deal, you have to get permission to go down into the colonies and hawk your wares to those who live there. Of course, if you're selling raw goods it makes your job a little easier, but not much.

Because there are no trading centers it is near impossible to shop around for the best buyer, and most traders to Hatha have learned to deal in quantity, not quality, in order to make a profit. Another popular trading scheme is to trade goods to the

Antilans will sometimes remove their masks in front of non-Antilans.  
Never look directly at their face if they do so—they'll likely kill you if they catch you peeking.



Thoric in exchange for their raw materials. Often, the materials gained by trading can later be sold for a far greater price than could have been obtained selling to the Thoric. A good rule of thumb for traders to Hatha is this: expect to make only a very marginal profit on every unit of goods that you trade. In order to make money trading with the Thoric, you have to bring a lot of trade units.

Hatha has become a mecca for artifact seekers in recent days. Large areas of rotten ice collapsed, revealing strange dwellings encased in ice and obviously quite old despite their near-perfect preservation. The news of these finds spread like wildfire through Clusterspace, and before the Thoric knew it, they were being swarmed by treasure seekers of all kinds.

This caused concern among the Wise Women, who were certain that these adventurers would be nothing but trouble. Before any real exploring could occur, the Thoric closed their borders to adventurers, preserving the finds for themselves. A few hardy

souls still attempt to find the ruins for themselves, but all but the Thoric have a difficult time finding anything on this icy world.

## HIGHPORT

**Type:** Irregular, earth

**Size:** 1400' tall, 3 miles around at base

**Population:** 25,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Mixed

**Natural Resources:** None

**Imports:** All necessities

**Exports:** Various trade goods

**Seen From Orbit:** From orbit, Highport looks like an asteroid with a tower spearing up from it. Atop the tower is a strong purple light, the Beacon Arcane. Lights dot the tower from top to bottom, some tiny pinpricks of soft, yellow light, others barely outlining the gaping maws of shadowy docking bays. The asteroid itself is also lit here and there, mainly where small clusters of buildings are huddled at the base of the tower.

**Vrig:** A stout, bear-like beast native to Hatha and surrounding ice asteroids. Hunted for its fur and meat by the Thoric.

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There are a few landing bays within the asteroid itself, but these are almost unnoticeable and appear to be in various states of disrepair. Ships flutter about the tower and asteroid, hovering in place as they wait for an open landing bay, or ducking and weaving as they search for a way through the crowded pattern and into wildspace.

**Description:** This is the only Arcane-held trading facility in the whole of the sphere. As such, it is a grandiose affair, much larger and more spacious than it needs to be and all the more impressive for just that reason. Hundreds of ships can dock in and around the tower and asteroid, and most often do. It is rare to wait less than twelve hours for a spot to land. Because traffic control is almost nonexistent, this can be quite tricky. Most ships float as near as they can to a bay, and as soon as someone leaves they fly right in. Under this system, politeness will get you nowhere. If you aren't aggressive in getting a spot, you could very well wait for days before someone lets you in ahead of them.

Inside the tower, Highport is a festive place. Most intelligent races can be found somewhere within its walls, including life forms as rare as the reclusive xix-chil and powerful dragons.

Highport is divided into a number of sections, each with a fairly specific purpose. Each section may contain several levels, but the lines of demarcation between sections are fairly obvious.

The first level is the **mine**, whose passages riddle the asteroid upon which Highport stands. It is here that slaves toil endlessly in search of any scrap of metal or gems to fulfill the harsh quotas their neogi taskmasters set for them. The mines are foul places, with hellishly primitive working conditions. Slaves often die before finishing their first year in the mines. The mines are kept from the eyes of visitors, especially those who might view them as a reason to stop trading at Highport or who might tell the Hidden about what is going on.

Above the mines are the **slave pits**, the lowest level of Highport's tower. The pits are surprisingly well maintained, and the slaves regularly fed and cleaned. While they are kept chained, the slaves are

property of the Arcane, and the Arcane treat their tools well. After all, sickly, underfed slaves can't do nearly as much as healthy ones.

An unofficial section of Highport, **Rogues' Alley** is a crowded, squalid sector of the trading port. Here is where the down and out go, to the cheap taverns and filthy hostels where they drown their sorrows in potent drink. Thieves and killers stalk the corridors of Rogues' Alley with impunity. The Arcane have declared the Alley a free zone, and do not enforce laws there. The only areas within the Alley which are safe are those that lead between the slave pits and the next level, Minstrel's Way. Rogue's alley is cheap to stay in, with prices for a night's stay and a meal averaging 3 to 8 sp.

**Minstrels' Way** is home to some of the most practiced bards in the Cluster. Though conditions are rough at best (a bare step above Rogue's Alley), the bards seem right at home. The Arcane have carefully controlled the number of bards that are allowed within the Way. Spending time here is an experience that most bards have paid dearly for, and the Arcane want to be sure that they will keep paying. The greatest bards are allowed to come here for free, and lesser bards pay the Arcanes' outrageous fees in order to study at the feet of the masters.

The Way is also home to a small but dedicated group of the Hidden, who use the winding passages of the Way to strike at the oppressive nobles who come here to hear poetry or opera. The Arcane have attempted to drive the Hidden out of this area, but have had limited success.

The Way is a bit more expensive place to stay, with prices running from 5 to 10 sp. The shows and poetry readings are considerably more expensive than similar entertainments in other parts of Highport, and some cost as much as 5 gp to attend.

The **Dwarven Quarter** sits above Minstrel's way, and is perhaps the safest area of Highport. The dwarves come to this place for the same reasons that bards flock to Minstrel's Way. Dwarves, however, refuse to pay the prices the Arcane once demanded, and now the Dwarven Quarter is a place where knowledge is passed freely back and forth between

Neogi keep idols with them aboard their ship.

Stealing these is a sure way to drive the captain of such a ship to distraction.

The Calidians sometimes do this to make the neogi merchants easier to trick in business deals.

# THE ALMANAC

masters and apprentices.

Few other races are comfortable here, and even uninvited dwarves shun the place. Dwarves are notoriously finicky about whom they teach their metalworking arts, and those who come uninvited often find themselves rather roughly dismissed. The cost of the average night's stay (including a meal and moderate entertainment) costs from 2 to 5 gp.

The next section is the largest in Highport, and is simply referred to as the **Commons**. Here is where the average traveler goes to rest, and it is here that the majority of Highport's visitors find themselves. Not especially fancy or elaborate, the Commons are simply a good place to relax and make some deals with traders that one might not see at home. The Arcane realize that the Commons are where the majority of their port's wealth comes from, and visitors there are well treated. Crime is low because of the strong security present, but mishaps do happen despite this. Most often these are minor offenses such as pickpocketing or room-pilfering, but occasional assaults are not unknown.

The cost for staying in the Commons is reasonable considering their safety and luxury. A room for the night (including a meal) runs around 5 gp and entertainment is abundant. Shows of various sorts are almost always underway, and can usually be seen for less than 5 sp.

Above the Commons is the famed **Highport Repair Deck**. The Deck is manned by Calidian workers who know just about everything that there is to know about ships, from putting them together to taking them apart. It is said that Calidians can put any ship back in shape, though they do charge an arm and a leg for their work. Assume any repairs performed on ship at the Deck cost twice as much, but only require one half the time. Deck repairs are also known to improve the existing ship, so there is a 10% chance that any repair performed here will raise the SR by 1. This can only occur once, after which the ship is at its peak performance.

Naturally, the repair deck is just below the **Dock**. The Dock is where most ships put in and unload cargo. Private ships can put in at the numerous bays

scattered throughout the port, but all trading vessels must dock here for customs. Ships are checked for contraband (the only things not allowed are powerful magical items and items that compete with the Arcane market on spelljamming equipment) and their cargos are logged in.

Interestingly, no trading is allowed on the Dock, but must be conducted in the **Great Bazaar**. This requires all traders to buy a stall in the Bazaar, which is not at all cheap. Goods are stored on the dock until purchased, and then loaded onto the buyer's ship. Characters who are not in the good graces of the Arcane should not come through here if they can avoid it. It is here that the Highport security teams will nab those the Arcane wish to enslave, and such prisoners are rarely seen again.

The Great Bazaar is right above the dock, making it easier for traders to come and go. The Bazaar is huge, littered with stalls and wide open terraces lined with people hawking their wares. A stall here rents for 100 gp/day, regardless of its location, and all are the same size (10' x 10'). Carts must also be rented, but are much more reasonably priced at only 30 gp/day. Characters who attempt to trade without renting a stall or cart will certainly find themselves on the wrong end of Highport security.

The advantage to trading at Highport offsets this cost for most traders, due to the volume of buyers that passes through the port. On a given day, a merchant can sell twice the number of items he or she could sell elsewhere. Deals are also available for the careful shopper. Those that are looking for specific items may find them at as much to 50% off if they spend a few hours looking around at the various stalls.

It should be noted that characters can't just buy things at the bazaar. Merchants are not allowed to store any goods for sale here, only display samples. When something is bought, the merchant gives the purchaser a ticket which is then taken to the Dock where the actual merchandise is held. There, characters must pay a 10% tax on their purchases.

**The Garden** is nearly as famous as the Bazaar, and is home to some of the most exotic botanical won-

Though the Antilans do know how to contain phlogiston, they don't use it too often.  
It's entirely too unstable.

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ders to be found in the Cluster. The whole of the place is interlaced with rope bridges and natural-looking terraces that seem to be part of the plants to which they are attached. All are welcome to pass through the Garden, but harming any of the plants or small animals that live here is a capital offense. Highport depends on its Garden to produce breathable atmosphere, and the Garden is dependent on a fragile, sophisticated ecosystem.

Above the Garden is one of the most luxurious areas in the Cluster. **The Reserve**, as it is called, is an area that caters exclusively to the very wealthy. This area is completely crime free and filled with servants who have no purpose but to cater to the whims of the guests. Staying in the Reserve is outrageously expensive, costing somewhere between 750 and 1,000 gp a night. This covers the cost of a room and all meals and other entertainments, but the popular gambling halls require the players to put up their own funds.

Rulers and heroes from all over the Cluster come to stay at the Reserve, giving themselves a vacation without worries. But not everyone is allowed within the Reserve. Those who wish to come here must make arrangements almost a cycle in advance, giving the Calidians who run the place a chance to check out the visitor's background. Those that are found to be in trouble with the law, or known ruffians, are turned away politely, but firmly. The Hidden have made many attempts to get an agent into the Reserve, but have been unsuccessful so far.

The **Arcane private quarters** sit above the Reserve. No non-Arcane has ever been within their quarters, and it is likely none ever will. The entire area is dimly lit and furnished in soft, pliant materials. The walls, ceilings, and floor are all carpeted in luxuriant style, and the temperature is kept at a constant 75 degrees. This allows the Arcane to wonder about mostly nude, which is comfortable to them.

Certain areas of the private quarters are kept as illithid holding pens, where Arcane can interrogate the mind flayers at leisure. Illithid travelers to Highport are warned to be on the alert for agents of the Arcane who are rumored to steal unwary mind flayers for Arcane experiments.

The highest level of Highport is reserved for the very wealthiest visitors. Known as the **Haven**, its rates are not paid in currency, but in promises of future favors to Highport. This keeps those who are not powerful in their own right out of the Haven, and cements those who come here together. The most exotic appetites can be sated here, and the most deplorable rites are said to be enacted within the Haven's shrines.

In truth, the Haven is an area where the Arcane have subtly introduced the concept of the Darkgate to those who might be able to help them put it together. Mages, psionicists, and other powerful characters may be asked to come to the Haven, where the secrets of the Arcane will slowly unravel for them. The danger is that visitors to the Haven are rarely allowed to leave without first pledging to aid the Arcane. Those that take the pledge and do not carry through on their assigned tasks may find themselves attacked by Antilan crystal ships or stalked by mysterious assassins.

In general, Highport is a good place for adventurers to come. They can find all manner of work here, and have their ships outfitted or repaired as well. With so many different types of people here, it is very possible for characters to find virtually any sort of hireling they might need, as well as any obscure piece of equipment necessary.

There is also adventure aplenty awaiting the most daring hero. Slaves could be rescued from the hellish mines, or nobles kidnapped from the near-impregnable luxury hotels of the Reserve or Haven. Of course, such adventures are almost always frowned on by the Arcane and their neogi and Calidian allies, and Highport security is notoriously forceful in its dealings with characters.

But Highport can also be a very dangerous place. Characters who have made themselves known enemies to the Arcane should avoid this place if at all possible. Otherwise, they could very well end up imprisoned in the deadly slave pits.

"So tell me, do I look skinny to you?"

Riktal, dracon of Highport



# THE ALMANAC

## **Riktal Vlakis, Dragon Warrior**

AL LG; HD 6; hp 33; THACO 15; #AT 2 or 1;  
Dmg 1-4/1-4 or by weapon type

**Equipment:** Riktal has fallen on hard times. The only item that he still owns is a battered old scimitar given to him by his father. Riktal will not use this weapon in combat until he can wield it against the elves that destroyed his pack.

**Description:** Riktal is a dracon without a family. As such, he appears shrunken and somewhat deformed. His depression at the loss of his tribe has caused him to neglect personal hygiene; his skin has become spotted with the remnants of his last few meals, his scent is more than a little pungent and his eyes are dull and cloudy. Riktal will rarely stand at his full height, seeming to lack the energy to rise to more than a half-crouch.

Those that see Riktal may at first believe him to be a drunk or other undesirable. If some time is spent getting to know him, though, it will become obvious that the dracon is just depressed. If a group of characters hang around him long enough, the dracon will start to perk up. He will start calling the characters "packmates" and try to teach them the proper path of dracon behavior.

Riktal came to the Astromundi Cluster several months back. He and some of his packmates had hired on to act as mercenaries for a neogi trading ship. Unfortunately, the neogi ship was destroyed in an asteroid storm shortly after entering the Cluster. Riktal managed to survive, as did a few of his packmates. Elves found them however, and were less than merciful. Several of Riktal's packmates were killed outright by the xenophobic elven warriors, and Riktal himself only survived because he was struck unconscious and left for dead.

The dracon was later picked up by a group of Thoric merchants who were on their way to trade with some ships that had only recently entered the Cluster. The Thoric took Riktal with them, and nursed him back from the edge of starvation. Riktal accepted the burly traders as his packmates, and seemed to be improving.

The Thoric, however, quickly found out how much

a dracon can eat. When the Thoric arrived at Highport, they asked Riktal if he would please stay there and wait for them, never intending to return.

Riktal reluctantly agreed and has fallen into deeper and deeper depression since that time. Characters may find him in any of the lower class areas of Highport, most likely in Rogues' Alley or the Great Bazaar. Once he hooks up the characters, Riktal will try to get them to take him back into wildspace. He has two things that he wants to accomplish: first, he wants to find the Thoric who helped him and thank them and second, he wants to find the elves that killed his packmates and revenge himself on them.

If the characters agree to help him perform the latter task they will no doubt become involved in all manner of trouble with the elves. This can be the start of a long-running series of adventures centering around the elves and their attempts to take care of the characters. The only way the characters will be able to clear their name is to justify their actions to the elves, an unlikely proposition at best. More likely, they will have to hire themselves and Riktal out as mercenaries to any group willing to protect them from the elves.

## **THE INNER RING**

**Type:** Belt, earth

**Size:** Varies

**Population:** 10,000,000+

**Primary Inhabitants:** Mixed

**Natural Resources:** All

**Exports:** All

**Imports:** All

**Seen From Orbit:** The Inner Ring is the most densely populated asteroid belt in the Cluster. There are literally millions of asteroids, and a large percentage of these are inhabited by one sort of creature or another. From the outside, the Inner Ring is a great accumulation of asteroids. On the larger ones can be seen the tell-tale lights and columns of smoke that tell of civilization. On others are small forests, and on still others there are gardens and other cultivated areas.

Ships are omnipresent in the Ring, traveling from

**Aganar:** A small asteroid in the Inner Ring.  
Known primarily for the quality of its steel.

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one port to another or merely passing through. Some areas of the Ring can be seen as darker than others, hidden from the sun by larger asteroids. These sections are known as the Grim Regions, and are largely unexplored and inhabited by all manner of strange creatures and hostile monsters.

**Description:** The Inner Ring is the center of civilization in the Astromundi Cluster. Nowhere is population so dense and so varied, or cultural tensions so lax. Ironically, it is the neogi who are largely responsible for the success of the Inner Ring, and for keeping the peace.

When the neogi were first establishing themselves as the trading power in the Astromundi Cluster, civilized areas were few and far between. This scattering of small communities spread across millions of miles was not exactly an economic paradise. The neogi managed to convince the other races to establish trading bases within the Inner Ring.

There, they promised to provide price breaks and other incentives to keep the people there. The Inner Ring became a sort of free market, though the neogi controlled who could trade with who. The other races balked at this at first, but quickly succumbed to the greater economic might of the neogi.

Over time, the trading colonies grew larger, and eventually support colonies were needed to maintain them. Now there are all manner of settlements within the Inner Ring.

When the illithid/Antilan disputes began to bring their unrest to the relatively peaceful Inner Ring, the neogi stepped in. Using their economic clout, they forced the signing of the now-infamous Neogi Agreement. In short, all those who trade in the Inner Ring must abide by the following three restrictions:

1) They must never bring their wars or disputes into the Ring.

2) A portion of all profits must be given to the neogi who so benevolently established the wondrous trading circle of the Inner Ring.

3) No one may raise a hand against a neogi.

These restrictions are enforced by fears that the neogi will withdraw their support from the Inner Ring, causing its collapse. All races have become some-

what dependent on the trade generated by the Inner Ring and will do nothing to jeopardize their status in the Ring. If anyone does break the strictures of the Neogi Agreement, all other races in the Inner Ring will turn against them.

The neogi are aware that their power in the Ring is a legacy left over from an older age, but also know enough to promote the image of neogi as trade rulers. The other races may someday realize how simple it would be to turn against the neogi, but are now content to benefit from the Ring and the peace generated by the Neogi Agreement.

The Ring is not populated evenly, but in clumps based around trading colonies of various sorts. The three most important colonies are discussed below, and following these is a description of another largely populated area of the Belt.

## Atalan

**Type:** Irregular, water

**Size:** 100 miles

**Population:** 100,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Antilans

**Natural Resources:** Water, vegetation

**Exports:** Water

**Imports:** Building materials, meats

**Seen From Orbit:** Atalan is an amorphous conglomeration of water globules that orbits a huge city. The city is Atalan proper, and is the primary gravitational body in the area. Atalan was the original Antilan trading post, established in order to serve as a watering station for Antilan crystal ships headed back to the Golden Girdle.

Since that time, it has become one of the primary trading ports in the Ring. The water around Atalan has been added to over time with the addition of ice asteroids which melt this close to Firefall. Numerous ships can be seen around Atalan, but most are crystal ships. There are no Thoric trading vessels to be seen, but a couple of Calidian lanceships and neogi spider-class vessels are usually about.

**Description:** Atalan is not the largest of the three main trading ports, but it is one of the most famous. Atalan is the center of Antilan influence in the Ring,

Brek: A dwarven mercenary port.  
These dwarves have broken off from their race and may be hired as mercenaries for cheap rates.

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and as such has impressive defenses. It is also fondly thought of by most other trading ports for its soldiers. On leave, Antilan soldiers frequent other ports, many of which have come to cater to Antilan tastes in order to attract this clientele.

Atalan itself is a favorite stop for visitors to the Ring, despite the oppressive air given by the numerous crystal ships and masked warriors. Atalan has become known as the premier culinary delight of the Ring, and famous chefs from all over come here to sample dishes and guess at their secret ingredients.

Warriors also frequent Atalan, either seeking mercenary work or admiring the fine weapons of the Antilans. Some have been known to study with Antilan war-masters, but this practice has died down considerably for fear the illithids would discover Antilan warfare secrets.

The other draw to Atalan is the ability to trade in magical goods with the mages of Antila. This is one of the few ports where such trade is sanctioned, and goods and knowledge move briskly. Characters in search of magical knowledge should begin their search here.

## Sharona

**Type:** Sphere, earth

**Size:** 900 miles

**Population:** 1,000,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Calidians (house Lanish)

**Natural Resources:** Wood, vegetables, fruit, crops, livestock

**Exports:** Livestock, wood

**Imports:** Iron, water

**Seen From Orbit:** Sharona is a beautiful jewel of an asteroid, covered with lush forests and rich earth. There is little sign of habitation here, only an occasional marked spaceport. There is surprisingly little free water to be seen around Sharona; the major body of water is Lake Forcry within the Goldwood.

**Description:** This is the largest trading port in all of the Ring, and is also a refuge for many Calidian noble houses. Here the Calidians have found a place where they are not hounded or captured for slave camps, and where they can live in peace. They have pros-

pered in the "hands-off" atmosphere fostered by the neogi and proven that they are more than competent traders.

Most of Sharona is off-limits to those who are not of Calidian descent. The Calidians have established underground refuges for themselves, and limit their visitors to relatively small trading zones.

Traders have found Sharona to be a wonderful place to trade, however, because of the Calidians' reluctance to deal directly with the Antilans. This allows non-Antilan merchants to acquire Calidian goods that can be sold to Antilans for a good profit. The Antilans have grumbled quite a bit about this in the past, but are unable to take any direct action because of the Neogi Agreement.

Sharona has also become the sight of some rather strange goings-on. The Calidians have tunneled extensively in their asteroid home, and have discovered a hidden enclave of apparently sleeping psionics. The beings they found are human, but appear to be very old. While they are alive, all attempts to wake them have failed thus far.

Since their discovery, the psionics have become the focal point of Sharona. Psionics from other races have been hired, and for the first time non-Calidians are in the underground cities of Sharona. The Calidians are desperate to uncover the riddle of the psionics, because their presence seems to be attracting all kinds of strange creatures.

Most recently, three monitors (MC 9) arrived on Sharona and demanded to be taken to the psionics. Monitors are quite rare in Clusterspace, and the sight of three of them in one place alarmed the Calidians to no end. When taken to the psionics, the monitors simply stood in the room for a few seconds, and asked to be taken out again. What they learned is a mystery to the Calidians, as they refused to speak of what they had learned.

What the monitors discovered is this: the psionics were once members of the Astromundi aristocracy, before the First Cataclysm. They locked themselves within a sealed chamber deep underground to escape the growing depravity of their race. There they turned their minds toward the greater good,

Claf: A Thoric port, located just within the Fringe.  
Tradesmen and crews may be hired for cargo hauling here.

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doing what they could to use their powers for law and order.

What they discovered was the strange demi-plane of thought, which has essentially trapped their minds. There they have wandered for millennia, studying the place in an attempt to escape. If they could be freed, they could very well change the balance of power in the Astromundi Cluster. The Calidians do not know any of this, but suspect some of it. Their own psionics have tracked the astral cords of the sleepers (for a distance anyway) and know that they are no longer on this plane. Other than this, they know only that these must be extremely powerful beings to have survived for so long out of their bodies.

DMs are encouraged to keep the sleepers an unexplainable mystery until it suits them to do otherwise. Perhaps they could be revealed if things go badly for the characters and they cannot defeat the illithid or Arcane plots. Or the psionics might be an even worse race of tyrants, driven mad by their stay in the demiplane of mind. If so, they could be a major threat when released.

If the sleepers are ever freed from their imprisonment, they should be assumed to be of nearly god-like powers. They will certainly have all the psionic abilities in the *Complete Psionics Handbook* at a very high level of ability, and likely any more that the DM can come up with.

An even stranger turn of events might link the sleepers to the DARK SUN® world. Perhaps they are prisoners of a sorcerer king, or were trapped by a powerful dragon. This can lead to a very strange campaign, however, so DMs are warned to take care before bringing in this sort of complication.

## Thundazar

**Type:** Sphere, earth

**Size:** 80 miles

**Population:** 20,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Antilans/Calidians

**Natural Resources:** Gold, Gems

**Exports:** Worked jewelry

**Imports:** Food, water, livestock

**Seen From Orbit:** Thundazar was once a dwarven

world that had been mostly mined out. From a distance it is a relatively dead world, covered with old muck piles left over from dwarven tunnels. Ancient smokestacks dot the surface, most of which are no longer active. Antilan crystal ships can be seen floating near Calidian lanceships, a sight rare anywhere in the Cluster.

**Description:** Thundazar is the only place where Calidians and Antilans work together, and the Calidians are not viewed as slaves.

Calidians discovered Thundazar after the dwarves left it, and chose it as a nice place to hide from the many races that sought to enslave them. After they settled here, they discovered that the dwarves had not taken a look at the neighboring asteroids, which turned out to be loaded with mineral wealth. The Calidians at once set about mining these asteroids.

Rather than ship out the gold and jewels in a raw state, the Calidians found they could make more money creating elaborate jewelry. But they had to be careful, and lost quite a bit of money channeling the jewelry through secondary traders so the illithids and Antilans would not find and enslave them.

Eventually, however, a group of Antilans discovered the Calidians' hide out and made plans to plunder it. Only the Neogi Agreement saved the Calidians. The Sun Mages were forced to reconsider their attack plans, and rather than lose the wealth altogether, they elected to partner themselves with the Calidians.

Leery at first, the Calidians decided to give it a try, and if it didn't work out they could always call for neogi arbitration. But it did work out, and today the Antilans and Calidians of Thundazar have a very profitable relationship.

The Antilans are the strong arm of Thundazar, using their crystal ships to patrol the mineral asteroids that have been claimed as property by Thundazar. The Calidians spend their time crafting all manner of fanciful jewelry and ornamentation, most of which is sold to the nobles of Antila or other extremely wealthy individuals. Magical items comprised of precious metals are beginning to enter circulation, but are still quite rare as the Antilans do not

**Driton:** One of the roughest ports in the Inner Ring.

This place is where the scum of the Cluster accumulates: smugglers, pirates, thieves, killers. You know, adventurers.

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want their magical prowess being bought and sold like any other bauble.

Visitors to Thundazar are often surprised by the hospitality of the place. From orbit, Thundazar looks like a world long dead and stripped of its resources. But beneath the surface is a large city. Huge portals carved through the asteroid allow light to enter Thundazar, and in some areas multi-hued crystals hang in the light, showering whole blocks with beautiful colors. The buildings themselves are an interesting mixture of Calidian and Antilan design, most having large, ornate main halls with tall spires rising off of them.

Food and drink are relatively cheap, plentiful, and quite good. The cost of a meal runs anywhere from a few coppers for a plain meal and a tankard of water, to ten or more silvers for a fine meal complete with wine and many courses. For those concerned about their finances, uncooked vegetables and filling breads can be bought from most places for a copper or two. Inns offer rooms for prices that are comparable to the average throughout the Cluster, though the rooms are often quite elegant and the service excellent.

The Calidians here are much more friendly and outgoing than their relatives in other parts of the Cluster, mainly because these people do not have to fear slavery at every turn. Calidians of Thundazar are willing to talk to characters of any race, and to lend whatever help they may without actually leaving Thundazar.

The Hidden also exist here, as might be expected, though they are much less prevalent than one might think. Because of the close alliance between Calidian and Antilan on Thundazar, the Hidden remain in the background, afraid to upset the delicate balance. Still, their subtle presence has earned them a good deal of information about the Antilans and their societal practices.

The Antilans are a more tolerant lot than those of their kind elsewhere. They still wear the masks of their people, but here it is more a matter of pride and honor than the psychological need it is in other Antilan colonies. This is an excellent place to have player

character Antilans come from, because these Antilans are much more aware of the worth of other races. Viewed as somewhat soft by other Antilans, the Thundazar Sun Mages believe themselves to be a more balanced people than others of their kind.

They point to the fact that they have maintained good relations with other races as proof that racial tolerance is a viable alternative to empire-led genocide of outsiders. Thundazar is one of the few trading outposts that has managed to consistently turn a profit without resorting to violent means.

Which is not to say that there is not some friction on Thundazar. A part of the Hidden have begun advocating throwing off the "yoke of oppression" they believe the Antilans are preparing to place upon the Calidians of Thundazar. These Hidden would like to begin a systematic process of assassination, slowly weeding out the Antilan leadership and driving the soldiers off as well. Cooler heads have thus far prevailed, and the Hidden are content to simply watch and make sure the Calidians do not end up enslaved here.

For their part, the Antilans have a larger and much more vocal group that has begun preaching racial hatred in the streets. This group advocates enslaving all non-Antilan races, especially Calidians and illithids. The Antilan leadership on Thundazar is trying to find out who is behind all of this, but has been unable to turn up anything concrete so far. The Hidden are nervous because of this group, and will surely kill its leaders once they are found.

The Antilans have not come right out and said it, but they would probably not be too upset if something happened to the hatemongers among them. They realize that this group has already cost them considerable money, as the Calidians turn some of their people from jewelry-making to security. The Antilans also know that if anything happens to the Calidians of Thundazar, the consequences of violating the Neogi Agreement would virtually destroy the Antilan economy.

Included on Card #16 in this set is a diagram of the Inner Ring. This is, of course, not the whole Ring, but one of the more densely populated sections. Known

**Eglik:** Calidian outpost in the Fringe.  
The Hidden use this as a base of operations.



as the Ring Cradle, this area was among the first to be populated following the Neogi Agreement. Each of the various ports is briefly described below.

1) Graz—This dwarven outpost is known for its excellent weapon-craft. All weapons purchased here cost double the normal price and cause an extra point of damage in combat. This benefit is not magical but the result of fine workmanship, and these weapons will not damage creatures that can only be harmed by enchanted weapons.

2) Pakrill—The Thoric use this lumpy asteroid as a repair base for their Thoric tradesman. The entire asteroid is given over to the care and repair of these vessels, and few other ships are allowed in range. On occasion, the Thoric will allow merchants to pick up trade goods here, but this is not common.

3) Port Slythe—An exciting place even at its most subdued, Port Slythe is the largest tavern in the Clus-

ter. More than 6 square miles of rooms cater to all races and tastes. Humans account for the majority of the Port's business, with dwarves coming in a close second. Neogi and illithids are not uncommon sights here, either, but prefer to keep to the lower areas, which are reserved for their kind.

4) Salango—Known as the Warzone, this hollowed out asteroid is owned by an Antilan/Neogi consortium, and is home to some of the most fantastic gladiatorial games in the Cluster. Surprisingly few of the gladiators are forced to fight; the typical gladiator here is a free man out to make a buck. In most match-ups, humanoid are pitted against each other in one-on-one matches. Once or twice a week, however, there are Grand Melees in which numerous opponents are thrown into the same ring and must fight to the last man.

Combat to the death is not the rule here, as most gladiators will accept an opponent's admission of defeat. Very few fighters will kill an opponent who

**Fadikir:** An Antilan slave market outside the Golden Girdle. Infamous for the savage treatment of the "merchandise."

# THE ALMANAC

yields, knowing that if they do, the same could happen to them in the future.

5) Lojir—The cheapest ship-repair yard in the Ring. All repairs here cost 3/4 of the normal price, but there is a chance that the repairs will not be done properly and will fall apart later. DMs should make a percentile roll for each repair. On a roll of 70 or more, the repairs will fail at a later, dramatically appropriate date. The Thoric here are not shoddy workmen, but try to do the best they can at the lowest price. Many spelljamming crews swear by the repair yards at Lojir, but those who have experienced a failed repair curse them just as loudly.

6) Sulimi—The elves aren't a particularly social race, but they realize the importance of maintaining trade with the other denizens of the Cluster. Sulimi is their most important trading port. Here, spelljamming traders can hire elven ships for trading out of the sphere. The elves are more than happy to do so, on the terms that they will receive 10%—30% of the cargo, depending on the size of ship hired and the amount of work the elves will be required to do.

7) Makasi—The Calidian/Thoric port of Makasi is the place to hire mercenary crews. The personnel here weed out the shirkers and weaklings from those who come looking for work, leaving only the most competent mercenaries. Characters in need of skilled hirelings should come here.

8) Calinok—The tension in this port is almost palpable. Both the Thoric and the Antilans claim this asteroid as their own, but cannot fight over it because of the Neogi Agreement. Now, they exist side by side, but rarely interact with one another.

Adding to the aggravation of the races, the Antilans use Calinok as an auction block for slaves, and the Thoric make no bones about allowing the Calidian Hidden to hide out here. As a result, Calinok has become run-down, and is seldom visited by anyone but neogi and the Hidden.

9) Belgeron—This is mage heaven. The illithids and neogi have pooled their resources to make a research facility that is divided into several separate areas. Each area is fully equipped with all the necessary equipment and staffed by two to four assistants. PC mages can rent out an area within Belgeron (and two assistants) for 100 gp/week, 50 gp/week extra for three or four assistants.

One disadvantage to working within Belgeron is the strange experimentation favored by the illithids. Twice in the past cycle there have been accidents resulting in death and destruction for all involved.

10) Makaz—The dwarves have set up Makaz as a trading area for raw gold, silver, and jewels. Most dwarven mining products are funnelled through Makaz. This allows the dwarves to set their prices as high as the market will bear, and gives them an inordinate amount of power in the trading market.

11) Mangeer—A slave-trading port, Mangeer is avoided by most intelligent races. The Antilans are known to purchase slaves here, as do most neogi spelljamming captains. The Hidden have marked Mangeer as a target for the very near future and will most likely attempt to completely destroy it.

Those areas described above are all on small asteroids, less than 5 miles or so across. Feel free to add as many of these small asteroids in the Inner Ring as you like. There's plenty of room in the Ring for as many ports and strange places as you can possibly imagine, so there's no danger of overpopulating the area.

## The Grim Regions

The Grim Regions of the Inner Ring are among the most dangerous locations to be found within the Cluster. The light of the sun rarely penetrates these areas, as the dense asteroid cover cloaks them in perpetual shadow. Undead are common here, the remnants of explorers who had come seeking treasure. Strange ruins can also be found, holdovers

**Grazkul:** An orc settlement in the Grim Regions of the Inner Ring. This settlement has splintered off from the main goblinoid force, preferring piracy to elf-hunting.

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from the First Age of Man, that are filled with indecipherable artifacts. Creatures both familiar and bizarre, and almost always hostile, call the Grim Regions their home.

Goblinoids also haunt the Grim Regions, using their hit-and-run piracy tactics to harass any who come too near to their hideouts. Elven ships shy away from the Grim Regions entirely, knowing that if they were to be discovered by goblinoids there, they would never see the light of Firefall again.

There are many rumors about the Grim Regions, not all of which are false. Some are listed below and their veracity noted. These can be used as adventure hooks, or simply as background to bring the Inner Ring to life for the players.

1) A powerful lich calls one of the Grim Region asteroids home. The lich has sworn to destroy all intelligent races that do not bow to his will. Some say the lich has constructed a great castle amid the asteroids. Crafted of black iron and manned by undead, the place is a fortress of evil.

(This isn't precisely true. In fact, a rather weak wizard has set up a base of operations in the Grim Regions and started the rumor to keep people away from his tower.)

2) Baatezu war bands have been spotted consorting with goblin pirates. Could an alliance be brewing between the two groups? If so, woe betide the elves of the Astromundi Cluster.

(Absolutely false—for now. If the baatezu locked within the flat worlds of the Golden Girdle are ever released, this rumor could become true.)

3) The neogi are hauling construction materials out to the Grim Regions in massive amounts. Wood, iron, and labor are all being bought or hired at an alarming rate. Some say the neogi are building a massive trade port, similar to Highport, for the use of those hunting shadowstone for the Antilans. Others believe the neogi are constructing a private hold for those of their kind, a place where they can indulge their baser appetites.

(In truth, the neogi are building a resort for all races. The neogi smell a real lack of amusement areas within the Cluster, and are hoping to cash in on this before anyone else gets a chance.)

4) The Calidians have been sending lanceships into the Grim Regions. These ships are carrying no cargo, and only skeleton crews. So far, none have returned. It is suspected that they are amassing at a Hidden outpost, but no one knows the real story.

(In fact, the Calidians are putting together a trade fleet, and using the Grim Regions to cover their association with the dowhar. While out in the Grim Regions, the Calidians are being trained by their dowhar allies to better compete with the neogi.

In addition, the giff are familiarizing themselves with the Calidian lanceship, and pointing out improvements to make the slender craft more battleworthy. In a few months, the Calidians will probably be able to strike against the neogi trade lanes, using their giff allies and quick ships to disrupt shipping schedules.

While it is doubtful they will be able to win over trade lanes outright, they will be a pain the neck for neogi traders. Neogi will likely hire characters as mercenaries to track down and eliminate the source of these attacks, or perhaps the Calidians will hire the characters for protection against the neogi.)

5) Illithid scout ships are reported to be traveling the most distant Grim Regions in large numbers. Isolated skirmishes between Varan and Antilan soldiers are also supposed to be occurring, though the Neogi Agreement has prevented the eruption of any major battles. Some of the illithid ships have disappeared, but more are always sent.

(In truth, the illithids are seeking out a piece of the Sunslayer, which they believe to be out in the Grim Regions. A lead from one of the Varan has led them to this particular area, and they will not leave until they have conducted a thorough search.

Characters who head out that way to see what is going on will likely be attacked by very irate illithids. This is a chance to disrupt the illithid plans for the Sunslayer, but also a very good chance to be dead.)

**Hastu:** An illithid temple asteroid.

This place is hidden deep in the Grim Regions and serves as a home away from home for the illithids.

# THE ALMANAC

## IRONPORT

**Type:** Tetrahedral, earth

**Size:** 3,000' × 1,000' (special)

**Population:** 21,000 (not including visitors)

**Primary Inhabitants:** Neogi

**Natural Resources:** None

**Imports:** All necessities

**Exports:** None, service oriented

**Seen From Orbit:** From orbit, Ironport looks to be a large pyramidal structure made of iron. The surface is dotted with ports and open terraces, as well as weapons such as catapults and ballistae. Ships are always floating about, waiting to land or preparing to leave. Battles are forbidden within a hundred miles of Ironport, and neogi ships patrol constantly to make sure no one breaks that ban.

**Description:** Ironport is an ingeniously designed port that is actually larger on the outside than it is on the inside. The neogi commissioned the structure, and the dwarves constructed it. What the dwarves did not realize is that they were not completing the port, but merely laying down a skeleton for the neogi to finish. The neogi then used the skills of their own mages and a handful of hired mages to create the spells necessary to finish Ironport.

The interior is lined with twisting passageways and huge open-air plazas filled with buyers and sellers of exotic goods. Because of its layout, it is very difficult to tell that the place is impossibly large. The neogi have isolated certain areas as well, further disguising the true size of the structure. Those attuned to such things may notice that tunnels do not match up as they should, but will be hard pressed to pinpoint just what is wrong with Ironport.

The neogi had Ironport built after it became apparent that Highport was going to be a raging success. Neogi merchants scouted out locations that would allow them easiest trade, without the scrutiny from other races they so commonly operated under. They chose a spot just inside the Great Belt, near to Avarien and several other colonized planetoids.

Ironport was built around a large asteroid, which the dwarves shaped and plated with iron. The aster-



**Inimar:** Neogi trading port.

This place is out in the middle of wildspace, and is used exclusively for neogi dealings with the illithids.

# THE ALMANAC

oid is extensively tunnelled out and contains many areas of interest to visitors. The center of the Ironport is especially popular, having been lovingly crafted as a huge tourist trap by the neogi. Good hotels and restaurants are common here, as are theaters and other tourist attractions.

Unlike Highport, with its stratified areas for different classes and races, Ironport is a conglomeration of people from all walks of life. Nobles rub shoulders with commoners and thieves walk side by side with paladins. Ironport has become the place to go if you just want to let your hair down and have a good time.

The neogi have done much to foster Ironport's image as a fun place for everyone to hang out. They have studied the entertainments of various races and designed shows, music, and other entertainments which combine elements of many styles. These mixed-style presentations have done ridiculously well, seeming at once familiar and exotic to most all members of many races.

Ironport is also somewhat infamous for its "lower levels." The neogi adamantly deny the existence of any such places, but those in the know can find their own way there.

The lower levels are the home of illicit merchants. Those who trade here are usually moving either stolen or otherwise illegal goods. Trade is brisk, and items move very quickly from one hand to the next. Thieves who wish to dispose of loot could do no better than to unload it here, where no questions are asked and top dollar is paid.

However, in order to become a "member," there is a one-time fee of a thousand gold bars. This insures those who trade here that the prospective member is neither a law enforcement official (who could never come up with that kind of money) nor a petty thief who endangers them all. Once in, traders can expect near-market value for their stolen items and nearly double the profit on goods not normally available.

The neogi have their own secret here, as befits a race so thoroughly enthralled with intrigues. They use Ironport as a sort of hunting preserve. Visitors here may find themselves on the wrong end of a

neogi hunting party if they stray too far from the beaten path. Such characters are normally captured and taken into the restricted areas, where neogi nobles hunt them. Such hunts are relatively rare, so too many people do not go missing, and the rapid flow of incoming and outgoing visitors helps to hide the neogis' darker activities.

## ILLIMAN

**Type:** Irregular, water

**Size:** 65 miles

**Population:** 33,000

**Natural Resources:** Water, exotic herbs, black pearls

**Imports:** Umber hulks, building materials

**Exports:** Black pearls, exotic herbs

**Seen From Orbit:** Illiman is an irregularly-shaped conglomeration of water globules centered around a few oddly shaped lumps of earth. These lumps form "islands" that protrude both above and below the level of the water and serve as the basis of the neogi cities that have risen here.

The cities are comprised of squat buildings stacked atop one another at odd angles and seemingly without order. A few towers are visible jutting from the cities, but these seem to be abandoned, and may be a hold-over from the lizard men who dwelled here before the neogi bought Illiman.

**Description:** Illiman is the new neogi homeworld. To them, it is a paradise of slightly salty water and humidity, with little land to pollute the water. They live in their cities above the water, but these cities have tunnels that allow the water to enter into the homes of the neogi so they can relax in comfort.

Visitors are not strictly forbidden access to Illiman, but they must provide a valid reason for their presence or be turned away by the fleet that guards this world. Trading is not a valid reason, as this is the only neogi settlement in the Cluster that does not indulge in the races' greatest passion.

Scholars may be allowed to visit Illiman from time to time, though the neogi there will spend more time pumping such visitors for information than giving anything away about themselves. Most scholars will

**Jukka:** The most isolationist lizard man community of all. It split from the other lizard men of the Cluster eons ago. They do not want to be found.

# THE ALMANAC

still accept invitations to come to Illiman, if only to see one or two of the neogi religious rituals.

Of all the mysteries surrounding the neogi, their religion is perhaps the greatest. They don't seem to have a central deity, and their gods don't have "purposes" as do those of other races. There are gods of the hunt or war or love, or even of trading. The gods simply are, great powerful beings that demand worship from the neogi.

And the worship that they demand is incredibly savage. The neogi religious ceremonies are both frightening and exotic, combining strangely stilted singing and regimented chanting with outbreaks of sudden violence directed at the other worshippers. Only one scholar has actually seen one of these ceremonies in progress, and she only barely managed to escape from the temple. There was a presence, she later said, as if the gods of the neogi had actually been in attendance.

Indeed, this is the greatest strength of the neogi religion. Their rituals are so intense and immediately gratifying that their deities must be present to soak up the energy generated. Careful manipulation by a priest of the neogi can force the deity to perform some miracle or other, or to give the neogi the power to perform some dangerous or unlikely feat.

Such direct divine intervention is what made the Neogi Agreement possible in the first place. Though no one knows of this ability, some do have their suspicions, which could prove a major problem for the neogi.

Their religion requires two things: a water world able to hold several thousand neogi, and a plentiful supply of offerings. The first is to insure that enough neogi are in one place to generate the requisite energy to call out to their gods and get what they want. This necessitates the presence of at least 20,000 neogi, the more the better.

The second requirement is to appease the hunger of the gods. Neogi gods are unable to manifest themselves physically, but share the mortal danger of starvation. Therefore, they must be fed through rituals, in which burnt offerings become edible to their immaterial form. Depending on the size of the task

demanding by the neogi, they may need to provide only a single animal or as many as several hundred ritually prepared offerings of animals, gems, and rare herbs.

This savage, primitive religion is one of the most powerful in the Cluster. Though the neogi have very few clerics, they are able to generate tremendous miracles in times of dire need. If someone could destroy their world, or pollute the water of it at least, they would seriously hinder further neogi advancement. Destruction of enough temples could in fact stalemate the future plans of the neogi, forcing the unhumans to focus on rebuilding their religious edifices rather than expansion.

As a fail-safe, the neogi are slowly building up their presence in Shaseogan as they add to the trading base. They hope to have an operational temple within the next couple of cycles, with the necessary population to call upon their gods.

The neogi deities' miracles are usually quite subtle, in keeping with the machinations of the neogi themselves. Their gods will not simply destroy another race, but they will give their worshippers the tools necessary to enslave or ruin their enemy.

The umber hulks are a classic example of this. Though at first unaware of the possibilities, with the aid of their gods the neogi discovered the key of enslaving the race and have had umber hulk servitors ever since.

The Neogi Agreement was another divinely inspired event. Since the Agreement was forged, the neogi have let their gods lie, but they will certainly call upon them once they become aware of the Calidians' new allies, the dowhar.

Illiman herbs are one of the most profitable items the neogi sell, but the most dangerous to obtain. The herbs grow beneath the water of Illiman, clinging to the scaly earth that their cities are built upon. The danger of harvesting the herbs is their extreme toxicity to neogi and umber hulk alike. When the herbs are picked underwater, they exude a sticky, resinous cloud which is almost universally fatal to the neogi and their servitors.

This is a handy way to motivate characters to jour-

**Kih:** A Calidian outpost on Calimar.

This small area has managed to avoid illithid detection, but is also separated from the rest of the Calidians here.

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ney to Illiman. The neogi occasionally hire outsiders to come in and take care of a large harvest. Such workers are not well paid, but will be able to find out quite a bit about the neogi.

Characters who are traders in competition with the neogi may be able to pick up valuable information here, and those that aren't traders themselves can most likely sell the information they gather to the Calidians for a large sum.

The black pearls to be found here are also sure to fetch a handsome sum, as they can be powdered and made to serve as a sort of universal spell component. There aren't many of these pearls to be found, but each one can give 10–100 uses, depending on size. Used as a spell component, the black pearls can replace any item (of up to 100 gp value) a mage doesn't have at hand. A spell cannot have more than one component replaced in this way without failing. Prices for pearls vary, but most often the charge is 100 gold bars for every "charge" the pearl has.

Illiman originally belonged to a tribe of lizard men. The neogi convinced the naive creatures to sell their world to them for a tiny sum. The neogi then offered to relocate the lizard men, sailing them out into the phlogiston. The lizard men were dumped into the Flow, and left there to die. Unfortunately for the neogi, these creatures did not die, but became survivors (MC 7), placed in suspended animation by the power of the Flow. Should anyone awaken them, the lizard men from Illiman are sure to be fighting mad to reclaim their homeland.

## ISLE OF BANSHEES

**Type:** Irregular, earth

**Size:** 3 miles

**Population:** varies

**Primary Inhabitants:** Zombies, skeletons, stellar undead

**Natural Resources:** Shadowstone and items from before the First Cataclysm

**Imports:** none

**Exports:** none

**Seen From Orbit:** The Isle of Banshees is a cold, dark asteroid littered with tottering structures and

ancient ruins. Glints of metal are visible from quite a distance. As one draws closer, the glints resolve themselves into shattered towers, four in all. The towers are all of one piece, made of some strange, silver-black metal. They are roughly 100' tall, and the tops of each are shattered with spires of jagged metal jutting upward.

It is not until a ship is near to touching down that the corpses, half-buried in the moist earth, can be seen. They are scattered about in small groups, most of them half-buried or lightly covered with small stones. The bodies all appear to be in advanced stages of decay, and have obviously been extensively chewed.

**Description:** The Isle of Banshees is the largest concentration of undead in the Cluster. Countless hundreds of spelljamming crews have been lost on or near this asteroid, victims of the undead creatures that populate the Isle.

The Isle was originally inhabited by renegade Antilans, who wished to be free from the politics of their race and to find a place where they could indulge their penchant for pure magical study. Before the Isle became infested with undead, it was an exploratory research station. Still housed within the asteroid are mammoth spelljamming helms that once propelled the Isle through wildspace in search of colonizable asteroids far from well traveled and populated trade lanes.

The Isle's downfall was a direct result of one of its founders. Azahn Kyli was the most powerful of the four Sun Mages who created the Isle, and the most ambitious. After years of wandering, Azahn decided to do away with the others, claim the Isle for his own and reach the greatest level of magical prowess: he would become a lich.

Azahn performed all the necessary rites, planning to use the life force of his companions to power his own rise to lichdom. Unfortunately, he was not able to do all of this as cleanly as he'd have liked. The other mages became aware of his plans and prepared their own counterspells. While Azahn was able to become a lich, the curse of his fellows chained him to the Isle and sealed him within his tower. The spells

**Langos:** An elven settlement near the edge of the sphere.

These elves are identical to those found in other spheres, but have fallen into a meditative trance from which they cannot wake.

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cast by the other wizards also crippled the Isle's spelljamming engines, leaving Azahn adrift in wild-space.

Since that time, several hundred years past, the peculiar nature of Azahn's spell and those of his companions—turned—enemies have merged to turn any nearby corpses into undead. Battles near the Isle generally result in the creation of several undead, which fall under the sway of the lich Azahn and reinforce the already formidable army of undead.

This has given the Isle a deservedly evil name among those who frequent the space lanes anywhere near the Isle. Occasionally, the Antilans will plant a Beacon Arcane near the Isle to warn away travelers, but these are quickly disposed of by Azahn.

Azahn is now trying to get the spelljamming engines of the Isle back into operation. If successful, he will use the Isle as a great pirate ship, gliding through asteroid fields and attacking lone ships. When he has added enough undead to his army, Azahn will return to the Antilan Empire, through which he hopes to cut a swath of destruction. Revenge is his driving force now, and Azahn will attack Antilans before any other available targets.

Though Azhan is extremely touchy about his privacy, he often allows spelljammers to land on the Isle. This allows him to capture the crew for experiments (or to simply add to the ranks of undead he controls) or information and use the ship to explore the workings of functioning spelljamming helms in the hopes of repairing the Isle's engines.

Characters who find themselves on the Isle will need to be extremely clever in order to escape with their lives. There are literally thousands of undead in and on the Isle, all of them ready to do battle at Azhan's command. Brute force will not be able to overcome these numbers, but resourceful characters might be able to get to Azhan's chamber. If the lich is destroyed, the other undead will lose much of their initiative because of their link to him.

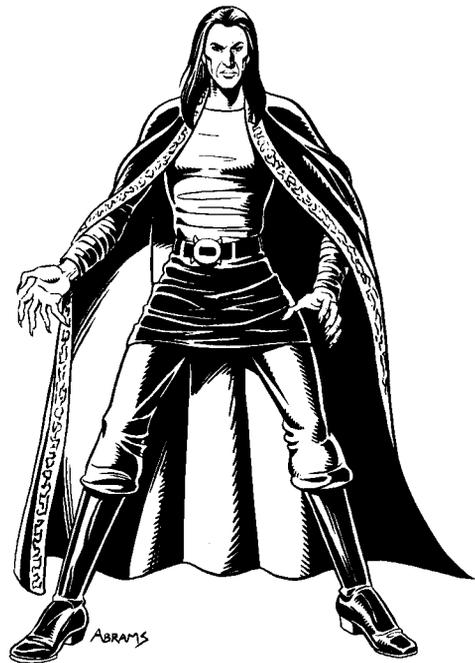
Of course, the Isle is also a fantastic treasure trove of magical items and information gathered by Azhan and the other mages during their travels. Such items and knowledge could bring a high price for charac-

ters who can bring it back to civilization. Escaping alive with the treasures to sell them is, naturally, an incredible challenge.

## Key to Isle of Banshees Map

All buildings and important, inanimate features are keyed with letters. Numbers show the amount of undead in a given area. Undead groups are usually comprised of skeletons and zombies, with the occasional stellar undead thrown in. There are twice as many skeletons as zombies in a group, and ten times as many zombies as stellar undead.

There are also a few banshees here, but these are typically encountered before touchdown and are always alone. The banshees are scouts for Azhan, and are also used to scare off crews attempting to put warning beacons near the Isle. A vampire roams the asteroid, too, though he is not controlled by Azhan (see Amroch the Pale, below) and is in fact trying to find a way to take control of the asteroid for his own master.

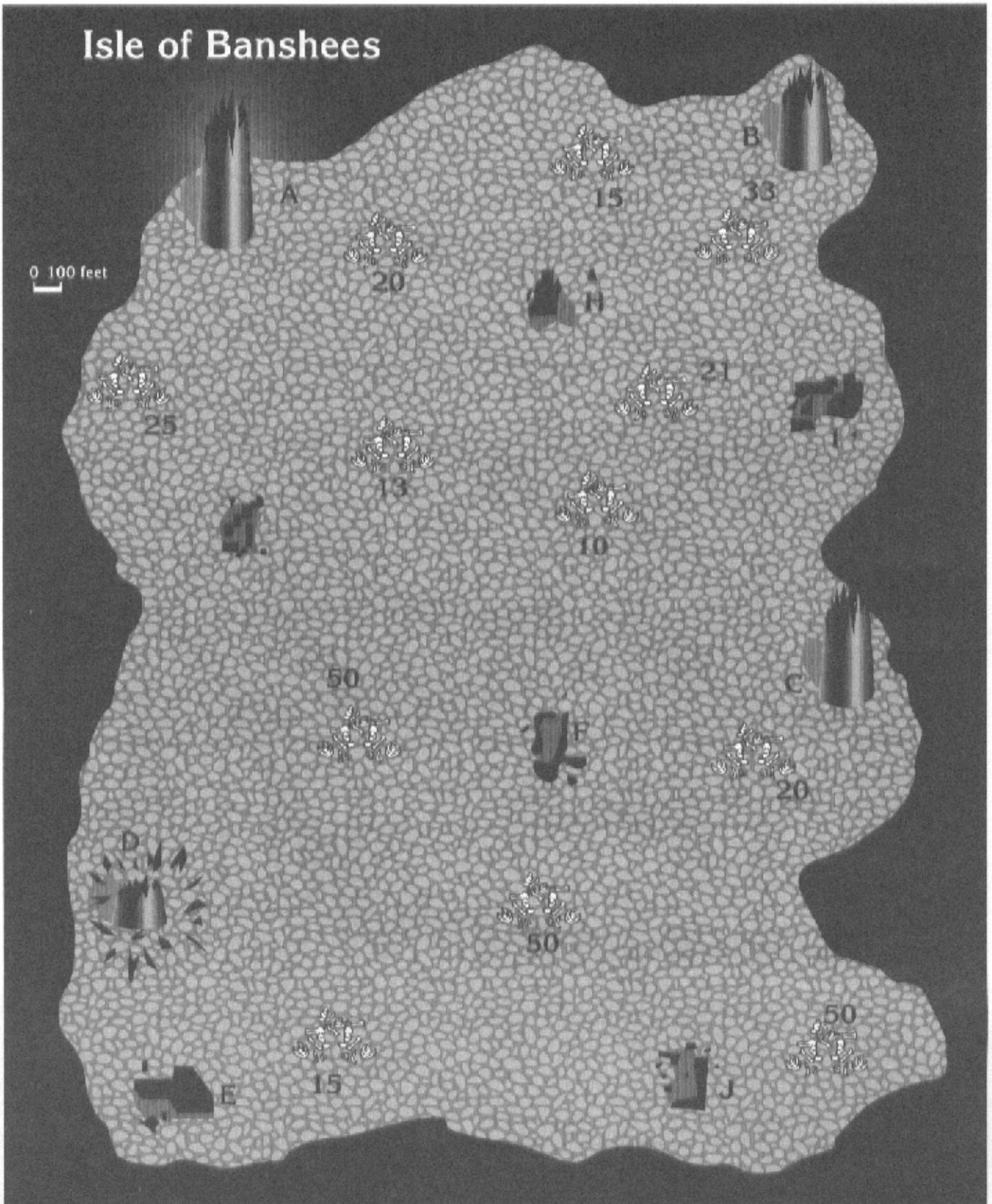


**Mamista:** A lost city locked within the Glacier. The ruins predate the First Cataclysm and would prove invaluable to historians and treasure hunters. They're also buried under fifty feet of ice.

# THE ALMANAC

## Isle of Banshees

0 100 feet



# THE ALMANAC

## A. The High Tower

This tower is the tallest still standing on the Isle, and appears to be the least damaged of them all. It is here that the other mages made their fateful stand against Azhan, and here they died. Because of the protective spells woven about the place, undead may not enter here. Characters may find this a handy area in which to rest, though staying here too long will result in a siege. Azhan knows when anyone enters this tower (through his banshee scouts) and will send hordes of undead to surround the High Tower, ensuring that no one leaves it alive.

The mages who died here left behind a legacy of information that may reveal any number of secrets about the Astromundi Cluster. Perhaps these mages discovered the plots of the illithids in their travels, as well as the means to disrupt the creation of the Sun-slayer. Devious DMs could put a piece of the Sun-slayer or Darkgate on the Isle. This could result in a perilous battle with the characters racing to retrieve the piece before illithid or Antilan forces can clear out the undead and claim it for their own.

DMs can also feel free to hide an item of great power for good within the walls of the High Tower. The mages here could have found a way to destroy Azhan, but were annihilated before they could bring their weapon into play.

## B. The Tower of Light

This is Azhan's prison. At first glance it looks like any of the other towers: a fractured spire of silver-black metal. Upon closer examination, however, it can be seen to pulse with an irritating purplish light. The light comes through the windows that ring the tower at various levels, and also spills from the battered crown of the structure. It seems to course through the metal walls of the tower, and to roll in waves across the Isle.

A *detect evil* spell cast anywhere on the Isle will be overwhelmed by the sheer force of Azhan's evil, and characters of good alignment will feel a shivering dread at approaching the tower. Paladins and clerics of lawful good deities will feel watched while in the Tower of Light, a feeling that they cannot shake.

In fact, such powerful forces of good will not be able to escape the scrutiny of the lich. Azhan has developed an affinity for his tower, effectively joining his spirit to the essence of the tower. Though his senses are limited, he will always know where the forces of good are, as long as they remain within the tower. Aside of what his banshee scouts tell him, Azhan is blind to the world outside his tower.

The tower itself is full of traps that trigger at the most inopportune moments, often spilling their victims into holding cells where they can be interrogated by Azhan later. There are also countless undead within the tower, all of which will protect Azhan to the best of their ability. Characters will be hard pressed to cut through the mass of undead fighters, and will have to use stealth if they want to reach the crypt to destroy Azhan.

The one hole in the tower's defense was created by those mages who attempted to kill Azhan. A tunnel from the Rose Tower (see below) leads into a small chamber just a few feet from the crypt. Because the chamber is not a part of the tower (it is separated by stone from the crypt), characters can enter here without attracting Azhan's attention. From here it's just a small step with a *passwall* spell, or a few hours with a pick and shovel. The latter method will probably alert Azhan to the characters' coming, but probably too late for him to call too many undead to his aid.

Azhan's Crypt is a terrible place, full of horrific tapestries and art depicting scenes of great evil. Torture devices are the only other furnishings. There are any number of profaned holy symbols within the walls of the Crypt; these are trophies of Azhan's victory over clerics who have faced off against him.

Azhan himself is fused onto a great throne, his bones surrounded by the metal of the throne, the legacy of his enemies' pyrrhic victory. His arms are still free from the elbows down, which allows him to cast spells. His head and neck are also free, allowing him to see into the chamber, but not to either side or behind the throne. The walls of the Crypt seem to lean toward the throne, and several organic-looking stalactites descend from the ceiling to actually touch

**Nokolo:** A small asteroid belt inhabited solely by gromman.

These primitive humanoids want no trouble with other races, and are willing to help travelers.

# THE ALMANAC

the throne itself. These are the means by which Azhan keeps in touch with the rest of the tower.

Azhan's phylactery was broken into three pieces during his last battle, and these pieces are mounted equidistant around the inside of the tower's ground level. This has served to keep the lich within the tower, as well as making it easier for characters to get the phylactery. However, in order to kill Azhan, the phylactery must be reassembled and destroyed within 10' of the lich. This was a special provision worked into Azhan's transformation which he believed would make it more difficult to destroy him.

## C. The Rose Tower

This tower is carved over with the repeating device of thorny, long stemmed roses. Its entire surface is done in this style, with the stems of the roses forming intricate patterns that defy the eye. There are no visible means of entrance to the Rose Tower. In order to enter the tower, the characters must each follow the entire length of one rose stem with their fingers. After they have done this, a portal opens, allowing all those who traced the pattern to enter.

The interior of the tower is filled with a gargantuan rose bush that has grown completely out of control. There are no floors within the tower, as the structure was long ago destroyed by the growth of the rose bush and its twisting limbs. The scent of the roses is nearly intoxicating, making all characters who stay in here more than an hour quite dizzy. These characters will have a -1 on all rolls that have anything to do with physical action, including combat. Spell casting involving a somatic component is more difficult as well. Characters attempting to cast such spells must make a Dexterity check at -1.

Any good character within the tower will notice that the vines of the rose bush, though twined about everywhere and leaving little room to walk, never touch them and no thorn snags their clothes. Those of any evil alignment find themselves becoming entangled within the vines, and will constantly be forced to stop and get themselves free from the tangled mess of vines. This is a function of the tower's magic, and cannot be counteracted by any magic or



**Oglar:** Ruins of a nonhuman civilization within the Golden Girdle.  
The Antilans have yet to discover these ancient artifacts.

# THE ALMANAC

magical item. Characters of neutral alignment are not actively hampered by the vines, but have their movement reduced by 1/4 because of the abundance of foliage which impedes movement.

The tower originally belonged to one of the mages who opposed Azhan and was destroyed. She was a master of botanical magic, perfecting the fusion of magic and vegetation to create hybrid constructs. The rose bush within the tower is a prototypical plant-golem, with rudimentary intelligence and the ability to *detect good and evil*.

There are probably quite a few items of value within the rose bush's thorny entrails, but characters will have a hard time getting at them. Any attempt to hack at the plant will be roughly dealt with (see below for more information). Destroying the plant-golem is more a measure of determination than skill, as no to-hit roll is required to do damage.

However, because of the thing's size and nature, it will require 500 points of damage to kill the thing. When down to half of its hit points, the plant-golem will simply go inert, hoping the characters will leave it alone. If they continue to assault it, the golem will defend itself to the bitter end.

Good aligned characters who attempt to communicate with the plant (it understands most languages), or gently move aside the branches of the rose-bush, will find a passageway that leads very near to the Crypt of Azhan, as well as any magical items that the DM wants to throw in for the good of the characters.

It should be noted that there are no undead in the Rose Tower, though there is ample evidence of their existence, as the plant-golem occasionally destroys those that come too near. They make excellent fertilizer, you know.

## Plant Golem

AL N; AC na (automatic hit); MV na; hp 500; THACO 13; # AT 1d4/opponent; Dmg 1d10; SZ L

The plant golem was an attempt to imbue a common plant with intelligence and a modicum of mobility. The experiment was somewhat successful, but

the side effect was a massive increase in growth, so that a common rose bush has grown to fill many rooms within the tower. The plant is not a true golem, in that it has no master and was not built.

The thing is slightly intelligent, and able to detect alignment automatically, reacting as detailed above.

If attacked, the plant reacts instantly and attacks each opponent with 1d4 thorned vines. No attack roll is needed to strike the plant golem; attackers need only roll for damage. The plant golem can sustain 500 points of damage before being destroyed, though it will stop fighting and go inert after taking 250 points of damage.

## D. The Fallen Tower

This is the most heavily damaged of all the towers, really no more than a 20' high stub of shattered metal. Debris litters the area around the tower, and the large chunks have formed small caves that are home to a large swarm of albino bats. These are harmless creatures which fly out at anyone who comes too close to their roost. Though they do no damage, they are irritating, and cause a -2 penalty to combat in their area (the undead are not distracted by them, and so ignore this penalty).

The tower itself is home to Amroch the Pale, a vampire spy sent from Ushathrandra by Kyrn (see below). He has so far managed to avoid detection by Azhan, though he has discovered the lich's presence. Amroch has lived on the Isle for several years, living off those unfortunates Azhan's undead do not destroy, as well as the prolific bats outside of his tower. Though hardly a satisfying meal, they have kept the vampire alive.

Amroch's tower is quite tidy, despite the outward appearance of disarray. There are five or six rooms still relatively intact, and these have been furnished with whatever items could be found or stolen from the other towers.

Amroch's tower is heavily trapped with spells and magic items. Without the undead cannon-fodder available to Azhan, Amroch must rely on his own vampiric abilities.

Nothing would make the vampire happier than to

**Pridain:** A prosperous trading post near the edge of the Clusterspace sphere. It is run by the Thoric, and serves those just entering the sphere.

# THE ALMANAC

put an end to Azhan and take control of the Isle for his mistress, Kyrn. But Amroch knows his power is nowhere near great enough to pull off this trick. He is quite likely to approach powerful character groups that land on the Isle, in the hopes of enlisting their aid in a fight with the lich. If successful, Amroch will later betray the characters and feast on them. Or at least that's his plan.

Amroch has a number of low-level magic items, and probably a few scrolls of impressive power level. DMs should assign treasure as they see fit, allowing for the fact that this vampire has had a chance to prey on passing starfarers, but has also had to defend his home from the occasional undead incursion, which has depleted his stock of scrolls and items considerably.

## Ruins (E, F, G, H, I, J)

The Isle is dotted with the ruins of buildings left behind when Azhan destroyed the other mages of the Isle. These areas can be as simple or complex as the DM likes, perhaps hiding groups of Varans working for the illithids. Perhaps there are a couple more vampires like Amroch, all eager to take their place as ruler of the Isle. A fallen temple could be a passageway for baatezu if the proper ceremonies are conducted. Let your imagination run wild here. The Isle is the one of the nastiest places in the Cluster, clotted with undead and ruled by a powerful lich bent on conquest.

## The Underlaboratory

When the Isle was first put together, the Underlaboratory was set up as a research station for dangerous experiments. Encased in a mile of rock on every side, the Underlab can be reached through the ruins at H, via a long, winding staircase.

The Underlab can be full of anything the DM chooses, with some options listed below:

- The Lab is filled with experimental lifeforms created at the height of the Isles' power. These creatures have mutated over the years, becoming feral and quite dangerous.

- An archlich (one of the three mages who opposed Azhan) could be trapped here, too weak to escape.

Characters might be able to retrieve an item that it needs to return to full strength. This would give them a powerful ally in the battle against Azhan.

- The Underlaboratory might have a bunch of experimental magical items stored in it. These should have unpredictable effects at best, and be downright dangerous at worst. The characters might not be able to use them effectively, but they could probably sell them to an Antilan or illithid mage for a hefty profit.

- A group of tanar'ri may have been imprisoned here for ages. They are liable to be quite angry and not at all happy to see the characters. After eating the hapless adventurers, they'll escape and seek out the Antilans.

- A piece of the Sunslayer or Darkgate could very well have been stolen by the mages of the Isle and hidden here. If this is the case, there should be a considerable amount of resistance in the form of mutated critters and undead. It is also possible that some of the Varan could arrive (maybe with their illithid masters) to claim the item for their own.

These are just some suggestions, and DMs are encouraged to create their own unique environment within the Underlaboratories.

## The Engine Room

Below the Underlaboratories is massive cavern filled with complicated machinery. These are the spelljamming engines of the Isle, rendered inoperable by the mages who warred against Azhan. When activated, they allow a single mage to move the Isle with an SR of 5. This amazing feat is made possible by the unique configuration of the engines, and the fact that they are composed at least somewhat of shadowstone, which amplifies their output considerably. Unfortunately, the damage done to the machinery is irreparable, outside of a *wish* spell, or the direct intervention of a deity (not likely, unless the neogi are involved; see Illiman, above).

Obviously this is not an exhaustive description of the Isle of Banshees, but it is certainly a strong jumping-off point for DMs who wish to use this as an extended adventure locale.

**Quist:** A powerful Varan outpost near to the Inner Ring.

Owned by the illithids, this military base will serve as an attack platform should the need arise.

# THE ALMANAC

It should be noted that there is a lot of shadowstone on the Isle. The gem was used in creating the tower, and pounds and pounds of it can be found in the engine room.

The Antilans know of the shadowstone's presence, and may hire characters to go get the stuff. The Antilans have not organized a massive assault on the Isle, because they have no idea how much of the gem is lying around. Once characters return with the information, the Sun Mages just might attempt to "purge" the Isle, if they are comfortable diverting attention away from their conflict with the illithids.

## KHALZAN

**Type:** Irregular, water

**Size:** 290 miles

**Population:** 49,000

**Natural Resources:** Water, some shadowstone, glowwood, meat, animals

**Imports:** none

**Exports:** Some finished crafts

**Seen From Orbit:** From orbit, Khalzan looks like a wobbly sphere of water with chunks of silvery-black stone floating across its surface. There is no evidence of cities, though there may be a neogi craft or two skimming across the surface of the water. Closer examination reveals a number of ruined cities floating within the sphere of water, as well as a few crude dwellings scattered across the clumps of earth.

**Description:** Khalzan is the last home of a truly xenophobic race of lizard men. For centuries they managed to avoid contact with all other races, cloaking themselves in a veil of secrecy. A few races have made landfall on Khalzan over the centuries, but have been able to get very little out of the lizard men that live there and some have even been killed after becoming too pushy.

The neogi managed to fix a trading agreement with the lizard men, a task which required some very smooth talking by the neogi. The traders promised to spread the word of the lizard men's god to other races that they traded with, and to keep an eye out for any other groups of lizard men they might come across. Of course, the neogi have not kept their end

of the bargain, knowing that the lizard men have no outside contact save through them.

What the neogi do not know is the far-reaching knowledge of the lizard men of Khalzan. The reason these creatures have been so xenophobic is their mystical visions, which have shown them what life in the Cluster is really like. These visions are actually the rise of nascent psionic powers within the lizard man society. While they are not controllable, they are quite powerful, allowing the lizard men occasional glimpses of the far corners of the Astromundi Cluster.

And what they've seen so far frightens them terribly. Their fear has led them to trading with the neogi. While the neogi believe them to be foolish and simple creatures, the lizard men actually gain much more from their trading than do the neogi. The items the lizard men have traded to the neogi are actually religious icons to them, icons that serve as focuses for their visions.

Before these items are given over for trading, each one is "sealed" to a lizard man through a powerful ritual. These "seals" allow the lizard men to see the area surrounding the icon wherever it may be. Were they a more devious race, they would surely be a great power.

As it is, they are content to watch what they can, and to use their knowledge to protect themselves. The lizard men know the neogi are cheating them, but are still getting the best end of the deal, so they allow it to continue.

Some of the lizard men of Khalzan have begun advocating the recruitment of non-lizard men mystics to help them refine their powers. The older lizard men are opposed to this in the strongest possible way, but the younger generations believe it could help them greatly.

For now, those in favor of the plan are obeying the elders, but there is a very good chance that this won't last for long. If a serious threat is ever posed to Khalzan, the younger lizard men will surely send out the call for help. This is likely to take the form of a neogi-borne message to Ssthkhal, or perhaps an ambassador sent to that same settlement.

**Rast:** Home to the reclusive xixchil, this asteroid is secreted within the Grim Regions of the Inner Ring.

# THE ALMANAC

Khalzani lizard men are trying to keep another secret from the outside, which is one of the checks kept on the younger lizard men. There is shadowstone here. Though not evident in large quantities, there is enough of the gem that the Antilans would surely become interested in the area. Such an interest would doubtless be fatal to the lizard men, who regard the shadowstone as holy and would be compelled to oppose the Antilans for religious reasons.

Glowwood is another natural resource the lizard men of Khalzan have hidden from the Cluster. Glowwood grows as a small shrub that is unremarkable in appearance. If soaked in water, there is a sudden and radical change in the appearance of this plant. It begins to glow with a steady light and will continue to glow as long as it remains submerged. A 1' x 10' piece of glowwood will glow approximately as bright as a torch for 1d4 hours, as long as it is kept submerged.

Once it contacts air after submersion, it begins to glow brightly (equal to a *continual light* spell) and in 1d4 rounds explodes in a 5' ball of flame. Anyone holding the glowwood when it explodes is subject to 1d10 points of damage. The glowwood can be used as a person-to-person weapon, but is rather clumsy because of its variable explosion time.

As a ship-to-ship weapon it could become invaluable, especially in the phlogiston. These weapons would be soaked in water until need, then fired across at other ships. At the very least it might cause confusion among the other ship's crew, and in the phlogiston would create huge explosions.

So far, the glowwood remains an untested weapon as the only people aware of its existence are the peace-loving lizard men of Khalzan. Should its existence become well known, there will be a race to colonize Khalzan and force out the lizard men defenders in order to exploit the colony's natural resources.



## PHALANGILON

**Type:** Living asteroid

**Size:** 1 mile

**Population:** 100

**Natural Resources:** None

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

**Seen From Orbit:** Phalangilon appears to be a large asteroid covered with spiny protrusions and the occasional piece of ship wreckage. Psionic characters who come near to it will always feel a very strong presence of psionic ability radiating from within the asteroid.

**Description:** Phalangilon is one of a handful of living asteroids within the Astromundi Cluster. As the oldest living asteroid, it is also the most powerful and the most likely to be detected accidentally by psionic characters. Such accidental detection will occur automatically if the character is within fifty miles of Phalangilon, and decreases gradually with distance. If it would further the story for the characters to find

**Sulipa:** A secret enclave of elven military personnel, hidden within the Inner Ring. This small base is designed as a first strike/terrorist headquarters should the elves ever go to war with the rest of the Cluster.

# THE ALMANAC

Phalangilon, then by all means let them do so.

Phalangilon was named for its founder, Jonas Phalangil, a powerful psionist. Jonas began gathering psionists to join his enclave hundreds of cycles ago. At the time, psionics were a barely understood phenomenon and many who had the power were persecuted by those who didn't. This drove a great many psionists into hiding, and these were more than eager to hook up with Jonas.

Jonas promised a new age of peace and prosperity to those who joined him. His philosophy centered around creating a realm of the mind, a consensual reality created through psionics. He didn't tell his companions that their new world would exist only in their minds, sure that they would understand when the time came and that they would be prepared to accept their new reality.

At last, Jonas believed that he was ready to take his psionic enclave into wildspace. He had used the forces of his mind and the magical assistance of a powerful mage to capture an free-floating asteroid, which he'd had hollowed out and outfitted for his people. The result was a large, enclosed craft capable of comfortably holding a few hundred people and their supplies.

The psionists were ushered aboard the Phalangilon and shown around. Their various duties were assigned to them, and the general functioning of their asteroid detailed. All in all it seemed to be a decent enough place to live, at least until they found a new world for themselves.

Jonas, aided by his magic-using associate, lifted the asteroid into orbit. From there, he guided the psionists in the use of their mental powers to push the asteroid out into wildspace. Once Phalangilon was hurtling through wildspace, he revealed his plans to them.

Chaos ensued. The majority of the psionists felt used and cheated. Many wanted to return home. The majority, however, were intrigued by Jonas' plan, and decided to support him. They convinced the other newcomers to settle down and listen, and things began to stabilize. Phalangilon had overcome its first obstacle.

Over the next few weeks, Jonas helped the others to expand their minds. They learned quickly, and their powers grew by leaps and bounds. At last, they were ready to take the final step. Jonas led them through a complex meditation cycle designed to bring their minds into harmony. Which it did, but the cycle also produced another, more dangerous effect.

Their minds were not just brought into sync with one another, they were very nearly fused together. Only the strongest individuals were able to survive, walling their personality off from the mass mind that had suddenly sprung into existence. Jonas himself was nearly overwhelmed by the unexpected turn of events, and exhausted himself in defense.

The damage did not end with that done to the minds of those aboard Phalangilon. Their bodies, too, had become melded together. Powerful mental energies had broken down the bonds separating them, and rebuilt them in the image of the mass-mind. A few individuals were mostly free, but still attached to the main body by skeletal or circulatory necessity. At a stroke, the people of Phalangilon had become a single, powerful entity.

The consensual reality that Jonas had hoped would come about was not to be. Instead, the organism was wracked with violent mental battles. First one personality, then another, would become dominant. There was no time to create the necessary mental landscape or to engineer a lasting, unified reality. As the battle for dominance proceeded, the body grew weak and neared death.

Finally, cooperation was forced. The individuals were repressed by the need of the body to feed itself. Their combined energies were subverted by the body and forced to procure food for it. Ships were lured off course by the powerful suggestions of Phalangilon. The body managed to feed itself, and in so doing also attracted a number of new psionists. These were added to the body, and their mental energies added to the mass mind. A few of these new members were able to imprint their own personality before being consumed, adding to the number of those struggling for dominance.

Jonas, as creator of Phalangilon, managed to

**Tyl:** A secret Antilan magical research lab.  
Located near the Islands of the Sun,  
this place is where the Darkgate will probably be assembled.

# THE ALMANAC

siphon off a large portion of the new psionic energy for himself. This helped him to become the dominant aspect of the mass-mind, effectively forcing the others to cooperate with his plans. It was only through this strong-arm tactic that his dream became a reality. The various minds worked together to create their world of the mind. Each was given his own section to work with, a portion of the mental landscape to use as his or her canvas.

Now, these great minds cooperate with one another, trading techniques and tips for the increase of their energies. No other group of psionics even comes close to rivalling Phalangilon in power. Phalangilon's residents now spend their time exploring the more difficult turnings and twistings of the human mind. In many areas they are approaching near-divine ability; they can scan any mind in the Cluster and send their senses to the furthest reaches of the sphere.

This has made them the most powerful information source in the Cluster. If they can be convinced to help a supplicant, the denizens of Phalangilon can find out virtually anything. Fortunately, they are reluctant to work with those in whom they can detect the taint of evil. This has led them to avoid contact with the Antilans and illithids, and the vast majority of the neogi.

Unfortunately, Phalangilon does not actively seek out the good-aligned, either. The living asteroid is quite reasonably wary of contact with other beings. The mass-mind is already burgeoning, its growth has pushed the edges of its enclosure, and it fears the addition of more minds and bodies will overstrain it. This fear keeps Phalangilon at a distance from those with psionic abilities.

Phalangilon is also leery of giving away too much information. They know the danger of corrupting those they advise with their own near-omniscience, and attempt to avoid this at all costs.

If one were to actually enter the asteroid Phalangilon, the sight of the mass-mind would endanger the explorer's sanity. Within the crusty exterior of the asteroid is a fleshy body of immense proportions. At least one hundred identifiable bodies are joined in a single mass, and as many as two hundred more have



**Uyar:** The hidden base of the goblinoids within the Cluster. This asteroid is extensively tunneled out and rests on the edge of a wrinkle network. From time to time, it shifts position, often moving thousands of miles.

# THE ALMANAC

been agglomerated in the amorphous mass as shapeless tissues. The ascendant personality is usually the one to face those who enter Phalangilon, its face bloated though still recognizably human.

Characters who come to Phalangilon looking for answers will surely find them—if they can complete the Task set before them.

Such Tasks are usually quite dangerous, involving considerable personal risk and expense to complete. This is the only manner the Phalangilon has found to separate the true seekers of knowledge from mere opportunists. Those that complete the task may have as many as five questions answered, as long as such answers do not “endanger the sphere.” This rather loose category of forbidden knowledge is decided upon by the mass-mind, which can be particularly capricious in dispensing its vast stores of information.

It should be noted that Phalangilon is an incredibly old living asteroid, and as such is much more eccentric than a younger living asteroid might be. Younger living asteroids are much less likely to hide themselves, preferring to flaunt their knowledge whenever possible. They are also greedier, making a return exchange of esoteric knowledge the primary requisite for information. Characters who find a young living asteroid must also be more careful, as these asteroids are much more likely to simply kill “lesser beings” who annoy them.

In any case, living asteroids should be an enigma in your campaign. Perhaps they are actively mobilizing forces against the Antilans, the illithids, or both. If this is the case, they are likely to ask experienced characters for help. Or they could be convinced to work for the Antilans or illithids (though Phalangilon could never be subverted in this manner), and be mortal enemies of the characters. Imagine the fear on the face of your players as they realize that the greatest foe of their characters can read the characters' minds from across the Cluster!

## THE SHAKALMAN GROUP

**Type:** Cluster, earth

**Size:** 800 miles

**Population:** 260,000

**Primary Inhabitants:** Antilans, slaves

**Natural Resources:** Minerals, crystals

**Imports:** Food, water, building materials

**Exports:** Crystal ships, crystal citadels

**Seen From Orbit:** From a distance, the Shakalman Group appears to be a lifeless mass of whirling asteroids. As one draws closer, signs of life become more apparent: flashes of light reflected off glass and metal, the occasional glimpse of a crystal ship flitting between asteroids, and the presence of half-visible structures on the surface of several asteroids all betray their inhabitants existence.

The closer the viewer gets to the Shakalman Group, the more obvious the presence of intelligent life becomes. Great structures can be seen in the heart of the cluster, and the presence of crystal ships becomes very apparent. There are several colonized areas that appear heavily fortified, and numerous crystal ships can be seen flying through this area.

Getting closer than this is impossible without drawing the attention of the Antilans, who will not be at all pleased to discover possible spies in their territory. Ships that try to fly unannounced into the Shakalman Group can expect to encounter heavy resistance.

**Description:** The Shakalman Group is the single greatest shipyard and docking facility in the Astromundi Cluster. The closest such workshop of this size is the elven colony of Avarien, and even that shipyard pales in comparison.

It is here that the crystal ships and fantastic crystal citadels are built and repaired. Descriptions are keyed to the map on the following page.

**Vit:** An ancient hulkship that is home to a powerful wizshade. This creature is capable of lending a hand to adventurers, but will demand heavy favors in return.



# THE ALMANAC

## A. The Forge

This massive structure is some 8,000 feet on each side and nearly 6,000 feet tall. Shaped like a great, tiered pyramid, the Forge is the only operational crystal ship/crystal citadel creation point in the Cluster. The Antilans have put literally billions of gold bars into the creation of this massively fortified base, knowing that if it were to fall their plans for conquest would be seriously damaged.

The Forge holds some 3,000 full time personnel, most of whom are responsible for creating ships. A tenth of the standing personnel are soldiers, and they spend most of their time watching for sabotage from within. The defense of the Forge is left to the orbiting encampments that are scattered throughout the Shakalman Group.

The Forge itself is made up of four levels. The lowest level is the docking bay and repair facility for crystal ships. There are normally a hundred or more ships inside this area or floating just outside, and nearly thousand of the repair personnel are always here. Like all levels of the Forge, the center of the crystal ship dock is open to space, allowing the crystal citadels to enter and leave the interior of the Forge. The area immediately surrounding the opening is dedicated to the manufacture and repair of the citadels, and is the only part of this level not used for the repair and construction of crystal ships.

The second level is mostly used for housing full-time personnel. The apartments are not spartan by any measure, but they fall quite short of the normal opulence of Antilan living areas. There are some small recreational areas here, most of them given over to gladiatorial combats between slaves. Other areas serve as dining and lounge facilities, giving the workers a chance to socialize and unwind after their work shifts. Like the first level, the second level has a hollow center, through which crystal citadels float to be repaired. This section is never actually used for repair; the center is walled off from the apartments and used as docking space during busy periods.

Crystal citadels that float up into the middle of the third level will be repaired very quickly. This entire section is devoted to working on crystal citadels,

either repairing or building them. Huge cranes and tow-lines hold the massive citadels in place within the hollow core of the Forge. A combination of ingenious engineering and magic serves to keep the citadels in a free-floating environment; weightless citadels are far easier to move around than those under the effects of gravity.

Watching the repair crews crawl over the hull of a citadel is like watching a slow-motion ballet. They kick off the craft and swing around it on safety-lines, narrowly avoiding one another in the intricate dance of repair. It is this ability to move quickly and surely without colliding with another technician that is most valued, an almost anyone can be trained to perform repairs to the hulls of these crafts.

Passing from the third level up to the fourth is quite a shocking transition. The topmost level is the domain of the Antilan warriors. The decor changes from modern and comfortable to a stark view of ancient warrior-lodges. The walls are lined with weapons, many of them old enough to be those wielded by heroes from before the First Cataclysm. The hallways have no ornamentation outside the weaponry, and the floors are bare planks.

The rooms that the warriors use are temples to their doctrine of hard body, hard soul. There are no beds; the warriors sleep on the hard floor without sheet, blanket, or pillow. The rooms themselves are small cubicles large enough for a human to lay flat in, with enough extra space for a small chest and a few personal belongings. The warriors do not seem to be bothered by this stark existence, and in fact they have benefited from it.

The warriors are divided into three shifts. Each shift must take its 8-hour turn at each of the three time periods: guard duty, training, and sleep.

Guard duty is fairly self-explanatory. The warriors circulate among the technicians, ostensibly to protect them from abduction or other outside threats. In reality, the Antilans are more fearful of inside sabotage than any exterior threat. The technicians are all assumed to be loyal, but the warriors are there just to make sure.

Training is brutally rigorous. The warriors spend

**X:** A name whispered only in terror,  
X is the mysterious asteroid training base of the Antilan warlocks.

# THE ALMANAC

their time alternating between sparring (with weapons and without) and a regimen of exercises. They run laps through the halls of the Forge, lift weights to improve their strength, and spend their training time pushing their bodies to the limits of physical endurance.

This tradition of training has been perfected in use over a thousand years, and the Antilan warriors live and die by their creed of physical perfection. Antilan warriors are the epitome of the fighting soldier, and one look at them in training will show why.

## B. The Resort

Even Antilans, as loyal as they are, must have a place to blow off steam and escape from the societal pressures of their lifestyle. The Resort within the Shakalman Group serves this purpose.

Part tavern, part inn, and part park, the resort is designed for relaxation and luxury. The tavern serves free drinks (though ration cards are used to moderate their use by individuals) and the serving men and women are more than attractive.

The inn's rooms are luxurious as any mansion back in the Golden Girdle. Spending a night or three here does much to restore an Antilan's composure and improve his or her temper. Rooms are always in demand, and reservations must be made long weeks in advance. For the few days when Firefall and Denaeb are in conjunction, the peak season, a room here will have to be reserved cycles in advance. The Antilans are patient, however, and just knowing their time will come around again is enough to keep the residents of the Shakalman Group in a relatively good mood.

The Park is an incredibly expensive piece of property. Though it is entirely contained within the Resort, it is far too large to fit within the Resort's walls. Thanks to the Sun Mages, the Park is several miles square, a magically created space filled with all manner of flora and fauna. It is designed to mimic the ecology of the Golden Girdle, and does so quite well. There are several small asteroids, each of which carefully recreates a famous portion of the Golden Girdle. Antilans are encouraged to visit the Park as

often as they like, as long as it doesn't interfere with their duties. Even the warriors are occasionally seen here, and despite their avoidance of most luxuries the Park seems to be popular with them.

## C. The Noble House

Antilan society is rigidly controlled, with the function and rank of each member determined by the rigid societal hierarchy. Things are no different in the Shakalman Group.

The Noble House is the most luxuriously appointed structure within the Group. Though it is only one building, it is a mansion done up in the grandest possible style. Visiting dignitaries and the current Commander-in-Chief of the area stay here, as do privileged residents of the Shakalman Group. Needless to say, security here is very, very tight.

## D. The Dungeon

Despite the strict Antilan principle of loyalty, someone does occasionally step out of line. Those who do, are sent here to think upon the error of their ways and repent. Prisoners captured in or near the Shakalman Group are also brought here until they can be dealt with.

The Dungeon is very secure but, like most prisons, has very little defense against someone trying to break in rather than out. This has allowed the elves of Avarien to stage two jailbreaks in recent memory; they managed to liberate two of their most famous pirates during these raids.

## E. Hazardous Storage

The Sun Mages sometimes end up with very dangerous by-products to their magical research. While these can be quite hazardous, they also are of intense informational value. For this reason, they are stored here, in a tightly sealed magical pyramid. Their proximity allows them to be studied easily, while the magical wards keep them from wreaking havoc throughout the Shakalman Group.

Some of the more interesting things stored here include: a *sphere of annihilation* that only affects flesh, a *ring of wishes* that always works in reverse,

**Ygard:** A Thoric base where tradesmen are constructed.  
It is hidden deep within the Fringe.

# THE ALMANAC

and a magical dust that places victims in suspended animation similar to the effect of the phlogiston.

## F. Slave Tower

The slaves kept here are those who directly serve the nobility of the Antilan Empire. They are kept in fairly comfortable surroundings, and allowed free run of their tower. They may not leave without being called for, of course, but still enjoy more freedom than slaves elsewhere.

Rumor has it that several of the Hidden have managed to infiltrate this place and are currently working towards a slave revolt. If this is true, they will certainly have their work cut out for them. The slaves here are quite comfortable and most are too lazy and self-centered to make the sort of sacrifices necessary for a "revolution."

## G. The Mines

The Antilans have moved several mineral-rich and gem-laden asteroids into close orbit here. This allows them to mine the asteroids at their leisure, without having to worry about protection or lengthy transportation. The slaves that work these mines are kept within the mines under terrible conditions. Antilan slave masters see nothing wrong with working their "property" to death, as they can always get new slaves to replace those they wear out.

Some of these asteroids have been found to hold all manner of unusual artifacts, many dating back to before the First Cataclysm. The Antilans are trying their best to keep their finds secret, but rumors have already found their way into the higher echelons of the magical grapevine outside of the Shakalman Group. It's only a matter of time before inquisitive mages of other races will be trying to sneak into the Group for a quick peek.

## H. The Watchtower

The Antilans use great crystals to communicate with one another and with approaching ships. The watchtower has such a crystal mounted within it, and also serves as a distant early warning system. The crew in the tower is equipped with a variety of vision-

enhancing magical items which they use to scour the asteroid field for signs of intruders.

If an unidentified or hostile ship approaches, the tower immediately sends out a magical warning that is perfectly audible to all Sun Mages within several miles. Then it flashes the warning signal to all Antilan ships within range.

It is this rapid message system that keeps the Shakalman Group so secure. Were the tower to fall, it would be much easier for invaders to work their way into the Group.

## SHASEOGAN

**Type:** Irregular, earth

**Size:** 8 miles

**Population:** 8,000

**Natural Resources:** None

**Imports:** Food, water, Inner Ring goods, raw materials

**Exports:** Antilan goods, finished products

**Seen From Orbit:** Shaseogan is a fairly large asteroid ringed by floating platforms which are tethered to the asteroid itself. Ships fly to and from the platforms, but avoid the asteroid. Most prominent are the Antilan crystal ships, with neogi mindspiders flitting about between them.

There are towers scattered across the surface of the asteroid, and these have huge mirrors atop them. The mirrors are obviously used as signalling devices, reflecting the light of Firefall in response to similar flashes from the Antilan ships. The asteroid itself is a dull grey color, and the platforms seem to be made of the same sort of material.

**Description:** Shaseogan was established as a gutsy trading maneuver by the neogi. Using the "preferred trader status" they earned with the Neogi Agreement, these strange traders have long been able to buy large quantities of Inner Ring goods at a sizeable discount. In the past, these goods were traded far away, usually among the Thoric or dwarves.

Ten cycles ago, the neogi grabbed an asteroid out of the Inner Ring and hauled it out of its orbital path. Through the use of powerful spelljamming helms, the neogi were able to stabilize the orbit of Shaseogan

**Zar:** A floating bandit enclave.

This is never in the same place twice, and is the place where the serious outlaws hang out.



more than a million miles inside the Ring. Once the asteroid was in an stable, established orbit, the neogi set up shop.

Using their “preferred status,” they bought massive quantities of Inner Ring goods. But instead of taking the goods to the outer asteroids and the Fringe, they went instead to Shaseogan where they offered the goods to Antilan traders at great discounts over standard Inner Ring prices.

The profits gained from this clever maneuver allowed the neogi to expand Shaseogan, adding the floating platforms and a ship-repair and building facility. Since that time, Shaseogan has become the most profitable of the neogi trading ports, and neogi here are the least irritating to other races. Trips into the Inner Ring to gather up goods take less than a week, round trip, and the Antilans constantly flock to get the excellent deals available at Shaseogan.

The other Inner Ring traders are not at all amused by this, naturally. They are angered that the neogi would take advantage of them this way, and several

have actually been forced out of business by the loss of their Antilan customers. The neogi counter-argument is always the same: without us you’d be under the heel of the Antilans or illithids. This has kept most of the Inner Ring merchants quiet, and has actually improved the traffic within the Inner Ring.

Now that the Antilans are spending less time within the Ring, more outside traders are coming in to do business. Some merchants have also created their own trade routes after having been forced to expand their operations.

Shaseogan is a mixed curse for the Inner Ring. It does deprive the traders of the Ring of Antilan money, but it has created some indirect benefits as well. For now, the Inner Ring merchants are willing to leave Shaseogan alone. They know that messing with the neogi is a good way to disrupt their own business; the neogi could always dissolve the Neogi Agreement and plunge the Inner Ring back into the war between the Antilans and the illithids.

Since the creation of the platforms that surround

The following are some rumors to keep your players on their toes.  
They may be true or false as your campaign demands.

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the asteroid, the asteroid itself has become off-limits to non-neogi. Inside the asteroid, the neogi have created their ideal habitat. The caverns are warm and moist (stiflingly so to humanoids) and dotted with deep pools of salty water in which the neogi spend as much time as possible.

Umber hulk servitors constantly improve the surroundings and keep the water pipes that create the humidity free of clogs and filled with liquid. In order to keep their habitat at the proper humidity the neogi have designed a sophisticated filtration system that re-uses the water and removes the salt, which is later added back into the "relaxation pools."

The asteroid is also home to the second largest neogi temple in the sphere. The neogi gods are very strange and their religion hopelessly convoluted to those outside their race. How many gods the neogi actually worship is indeterminable; several of their gods seem to share a common name, while some individual deities have several titles and names. Those scholars that have engaged in the deciphering of the neogi religion have discovered one common thread among these deities: they are savage beings who demand savage worship. More information regarding the neogi and their deities can be found under the description of Illiman.

Traders that come to Shaseogan must first sign up with a neogi trader in the Inner Ring. After paying their entry fee, the traders will be given the current code that they must use to get onto Shaseogan. The code is given by the use of signalling mirrors which are read by the watchtowers. A quick course given by the neogi will also tell the trader the various reflector signals that will help steer the ship into the proper landing area.

The usual fee for the privilege of trading at Shaseogan is 500 to 1,000 gold bars, depending on the size of the trader's ship and the amount of trading that will be done. The larger the ship and amount of merchandise, the larger the fee.

This entry fee is totally offset by the amount saved over Inner Ring prices: typically 30% to 40%. Of course, the added travel time may not make this reduction worthwhile for traders bound for distant

areas. Also, some Inner Ring merchants will offer good discounts to traders, if the trader threatens to go on to Shaseogan. The merchants will gripe and moan about lost profits, but they'd rather cut a smaller deal than lose a deal altogether.

The Inner Ring merchants may hire characters to cause trouble in or around Shaseogan, making it less profitable for traders to move their goods. The opposite is also true, as the neogi often hire guards to protect them from attacks by the Inner Ring merchants. In either case, characters will have to be very discreet and very professional to avoid the possibility of a bounty being placed on their heads by one side or the other.

## USHATHRANDRA AND MOONS

**Type:** Ushathrandra, gas giant; Darkwatch, earth sphere; Illimandra, earth sphere; Talos, water sphere

**Size:** Ushathrandra, 40,000 miles; Darkwatch, Talos 1,000 miles; Illimandra 15,000 miles

**Population:** 3,000,000+

**Primary Inhabitants:** Illithids, Varan

**Natural Resources:** Water, shadowstone, marble, fungal vegetation, precious metals

**Imports:** Slaves, food, finished goods, artisans and craftsmen

**Exports:** None

**Seen From Orbit:** Ushathrandra is a sinister purple gas giant. As one draws near, pockets of red gases can be seen swirling within its interior. Approaching from the sunward side, none of Ushathrandra's moons are visible. The illithids long ago froze this gas giant and its satellites in their orbit. From the "dark side" of Ushathrandra, the moons are dimly visible, extending in a straight line out from the gas giant. Illimandra is closest to the gas giant, its surface covered with a layer of pale-blue ice. Talos is next out from Ushathrandra and, like Darkwatch, is a shimmering silvery-black in color.

As one draws closer to the moons, great cities can be seen upon their surface. These are strangely designed places, with few straight streets, and no lights visible. The buildings themselves are all constructed of the same, shiny black material and rise

The Constellations are moving out of alignment.  
It is a sure sign that the gods are displeased.

# THE ALMANAC

into the sky in twisted spires. Simply looking at the cities is disorienting; the patterns of the streets draw the eyes in ever-tightening spirals and the darkly shining towers pierce the imagination with their alien architecture.

Travelers who draw in close to the surface of Ushathrandra may catch a glimpse of the ruined cities that litter the interior of the gas giant. Most of these cities are encapsulated within the pockets of red gas that swirl within Ushathrandra, but a few are closer to the surface. Most of the exterior ruins have illithid craft drifting in and around them. Intelligent travelers will steer well clear of these haunted places.

**Description:** Ushathrandra is a gas giant inside which races of humans once lived. It was during the Second Cataclysm that these cities were cast into ruin, allowing the illithids to set up camp on Ushathrandra's moons. But these ruins are still sources of great power, and the illithids consistently brave the dangers of these ruins to explore them.

Often, entire ships and their crews go missing, swallowed up by the evils that live within the ruins. But on occasion, a ship of explorers will return to Illimandra, laden with strange artifacts that the illithids believe can help them cement their power in the Cluster.

The ruins of Ushathrandra are home to all manner of strange creatures, undead chief among them. DMs can feel free to populate these shattered cities however they like, but the following should be noted.

A powerful coterie of vampires has taken up residence within the walls of one such ruin. There are three of these dread creatures, all old and incredibly powerful. Before the coming of the illithids these great undead had lain dormant, torpid from lack of blood. But when the first explorers found their crypt, the vampires managed to rouse themselves enough to feed. Since that time, they have accounted for many Varan and illithid deaths.

The three vampires are, in order of importance and power, Kyrn, Loq, and Vax. Statistics and descriptions of these creatures can be found at the end of this section, but a discussion of their motives is necessary here.

Kyrn was a powerful sorceress in her day, and still is quite dangerous. She used her powerful magics to examine the mysterious Isle of Banshees (see above), and was able to *teleport* her lover, Amroch the Pale, to the Isle. Since that time she has nearly forgotten about Amroch, her attentions consumed by the incursions of more and more powerful illithids into her domain. Kyrn has so far been able to keep the illithids unaware of her presence, but is considering revealing herself and offering her aid in searching the ruins to the mind flayers.

Loq is radically opposed to this idea, preferring their existence to remain as secretive as possible. The illithids are clever and powerful, but even their great minds cannot affect or detect those who have been undead for centuries. If Loq has his way, the vampires will begin capturing illithids and interrogating them. The illithids have to be looking for something in particular, and Loq is determined to find out what it is.

He believes that they should not reveal themselves to the illithids until they have procured the item(s). At that point, the vampires will have a strong bargaining chip and be able to make the best deal with the illithids. Loq is afraid that revealing themselves too soon will simply end in their destruction by hordes of angry illithids.

Vax is the most openly warlike of the vampires. He wants to keep on feeding on the illithids until the Isle of Banshees belongs to Amroch. Once that happens, the massive armies of the undead could be used to enslave the intelligent races of human and humanoids. The vampires would rule, of course, becoming god-like creatures with terrible powers.

Both vampires bow to Kyrn's will and obey her orders. This is not precisely respect, just the knowledge that if they botch Kyrn's plans they are likely to find themselves destroyed. For now, Kyrn has commanded them to stay hidden, feeding only when illithids or other creatures enter their domain.

If Amroch does gain control of the Isle of Banshees, Kyrn will attempt to move her minions and herself to the Isle. Once there they will do what they can to bring the engines back on-line and begin building their power base, slowly but surely.

**Neogi mindspiders have been spotted leaving the Cluster, exiting the crystal sphere and heading into the phlogiston.**

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Illimandra is the true seat of illithid power. This earthen moon is the coldest of the three and covered with a thin layer of ice, from which the illithids distil water and potions used in their religious ceremonies. The cities that dot the surface of Illimandra are used for keeping slaves, and very few illithids live in these cities. Some of the more dangerous magical research is conducted here, especially that involving the creating or summoning powerful magical creatures.

The interior of Illimandra is honeycombed with passageways that twist and turn and cross in patterns hopelessly bewildering to non-illithids. These tunnels open into large open areas that serve as meeting places, markets, housing areas, gladiatorial arenas, and temples. Such plazas are lavishly decorated, the walls carved with strange images that seem to leer in the uncertain lighting. All in all, a very sinister place indeed.

The central chamber of Illimandra's tunnel complex is reserved for the use of the priesthood and their slaves. Tunnels radiate out from this spherical area, tunnels laden with traps and peopled with slaves mind-controlled to fight to the death to bar invaders. These precautions protect the avatar of the illithid's god, who dwells at the heart of Illimandra.

The avatar is still quite weak and able to retain consciousness for no more than an hour at a time. During its lucid periods, the avatar relays the words of the god to the priesthood. Because no one is sure when the messages will be delivered or how long they will last, at least two priests are present within the chamber of the avatar at all times. These priests are trained to write very quickly, and both will take down every word the avatar speaks. Discrepancies between the manuscripts are worked out by the High Priests, who do their best to puzzle out the often cryptic messages from their god.

Illimandra is the most heavily populated of Ushathrandra's moons, the home to more than two million illithids. Only the most powerful illithids are allowed to stay in Illimandra permanently, making this illithid stronghold the most formidable colony in the Cluster (other than those enclaves found in the Golden Girdle).

Talos is the next satellite out from Ushathrandra and the least populated of the three moons. Though the surface of the planet is covered in a fairly thick scattering of shadowstone, the interior of the world is filled with water. This has forced the illithids who live on Talos to remain on the moon's surface, something they are not at all comfortable with.

This moon serves as a watering base for Darkwatch and Illimandra, using its natural water supply to fill huge carrier ships for use by these other moons. Without Talos, Illimandra and Darkwatch would quickly find themselves in dire straits indeed; neither moon has a sufficient quantity of fresh water to support their populations.

And this is the weakest link in the illithid power structure. Without the water of Talos, the colonies around Ushathrandra will choke to death on their own dust. But none of the illithid leaders view Talos as an important moon, regarding it as little more than a light-duty penal colony for those who have fallen out of political favor. For this reason, Talos is not at all well guarded. A concerted attack by well-trained forces could do severe damage to the moon's major city and create major difficulties for the illithids. Of course, those involved in the attack would find themselves quickly hunted down by illithid slavers and Varan assassins.

Unknown to the illithids, Talos is also home to a monstrous society of aboleths. These creatures have been "sleeping" for thousands of years, and are only now starting to wake. Though they are incredibly intelligent, the aboleths are only dimly aware of the society above them. They do know, however, of several other aboleth societies that are coming awake now too. Most of these aboleth "cities" are not on Talos, but scattered throughout the Cluster.

What mischief these creatures get up to, or who they decide to side with, is entirely up to the DM. Perhaps they'll lay low until the whole Sun Mage/mind flayer war blows over, then rise up to seize control. Or they may chose to build vast spelljamming vessels filled with water and take to the stars, seeking out knowledge about where they came from and why. The options are limitless!

**Illithid vessels have been spotted with Antilan craft in wildspace.  
It appears that the two groups are conspiring,  
or at least members of the two groups are conspiring.**

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Darkwatch is the moon of death. Even the illithids regard it with superstitious awe, and few that do not have to will travel to this dreaded moon.

The mage-caste of the illithids has taken this place as their own, dwelling here in solitude and relative peace. They are actively involved with the politics of illithid society, but in social situations remain somewhat aloof from others of their kind, and coldly indifferent to all other races.

The mage-caste is currently attempting to synthesize the magical devices that make up the Sunslayer. So far they have been unsuccessful, but several powerful magical items have been constructed as a side result of their studies. Most of their studies have focused around the use of shadowstone, but they have yet to find a use for the stuff that will help them with the Sunslayer.

The magical laboratories of Darkwatch are among the most elaborate and comprehensive of any to be found in the Cluster. Magic-using characters could spend years roaming the laboratories and testing grounds on Darkwatch and still never see half of the magic that the cold moon holds.

Darkwatch is not only the magical center of the illithids empire, but also the first line of defense against invaders. Furthest from Ushathrandra, Darkwatch acts as a magical watchtower charged with the responsibility of warning the other two moons in the event of an attack. To this end, Darkwatch has several mile-high towers that house powerful mages and psionics. These listeners probe wildspace around Darkwatch, using their abilities to search out things and/or beings dangerous to the illithids.

When detected, these threats are either eliminated through magic or brute force, or mind-controlled and sent back from where they came. The latter method is preferred, because it preserves the secrecy of the illithid strongholds, and gives the mind flayers spies among their enemies. Mind-controlled spies are a valuable commodity among the illithids; other races are so psionically limited they almost never detect these psi-slaves.

A rebellious sect has arisen in the cold streets of Darkwatch. The slaves of the mages have a greater

degree of autonomy here than in any other area of the illithid empire. The mage-caste has little time to bother with the day-to-day running of their estates (or their city for that matter) and the slaves are trusted with many important duties.

The illithids' greatest mistake in this area is in underestimating their slaves. This is an understandable error, as most of the denizens of Darkwatch have never seen a human outside of their normally controlled and docile slaves.

The humans of Darkwatch have formed an illicit alliance among themselves. They have put together all manner of grandiose plans involving the overthrow of their illithid masters, but most of these schemes have come to nothing. Inevitably, one of the slaves lets a dangerous thought slip at an inopportune moment, and an illithid is made aware of the plot. This of course results in the death of all involved (or as many as the illithids believe involved). Seven great purges of rebels have occurred in the past six years, killing off most of the original plotters and planners.

But a new force has arisen within the ranks of the slaves. One of their number is actually a member of the Hidden, captured by illithid slavers. She has managed to avoid attention so far, because of her own powerful abilities of the mind. Shaleena Seerna possesses a virtually unreadable mind. A constant stream of "mind static" plays across her subconscious, foiling any attempts to read her mind while not actually "blocking" the attempt. This leads her captors to believe she is actually easily readable, so they don't probe deeply into her thoughts.

Shaleena is gathering about her a core of loyal slaves. She is teaching them the secrets of her mental abilities. Though this will lead to a number of unreadable minds such as her own, this plan is not without its dangers. If just one of those being trained is successfully mind-probed before they become unreadable, the entire plot will be laid open for the illithids. Worse, it is likely that Shaleena's identity and powers will also be revealed by such a slip. A desperate tactic, but these are desperate times.

**The Hidden have declared war on the Thoric.  
It has something to do with the Thoric trading ice asteroids with the illithids.**

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Characters who can find Shaleena may be able to help her cause, but only if they are very careful. As long as they remain outside the cities of Darkwatch, they should be able to avoid detection. Coming into contact with any slaves that are not unreadable will surely be fatal however, as their presence will be detectable by the illithids.

All of the illithid moons are dangerous places. Besides the imminent danger of detection by the illithids, there are a number of nasty beasties that dwell on the moons of Ushathrandra. Most of these creatures have evolved with the illithids, and avoid the mind-flayers at all times. There are some highly psionic creatures (those listed in the back of *The Complete Psionics Handbook*) that prey on the illithids and the powers of their minds, but these have been nearly hunted to extinction by illithid slaves led by their masters.

The other creatures that dwell on Ushathrandra are deadly things that prey upon one another and unlucky slaves. These beasts are hideous by any standard and many are deviously intelligent. DMs should come up with as many strange and terrible things to place in and around the moons of Ushathrandra. The key to creating these sorts of creatures is to remember their utter repulsiveness. These creatures aren't just vile, they are imminently despicable. Characters should fear them on sight, and feel compelled to flee or attempt to destroy them. Destroying these creatures can have one of two consequences, both of which involve the discovery of the characters by the illithids.

First, destroying a great beast could be of benefit to the illithids. In this case, the mind flayers will let the characters live—for the moment. They will keep very careful tabs on the characters as long as they remain on Ushathrandra, and will do away with them at the first whiff of trouble from the PCs.

The second option is both more gratifying and more dangerous for the characters. In this case, the beast destroyed was an ecological linchpin. Its destruction has led to a rampaging population of other nasty creatures. This will lead to all sorts of problems for the illithids. Maybe the big beast hunted

smaller, more psionically predatory monsters. The illithids now have to contend with a larger population of psionic critters that seek to feed on them.

As another example, perhaps the big creature ate a certain fast growing fungus that only grew around its lair. As soon as the creature is destroyed, the fungus explodes into rapid growth. If the fungus is actually memory moss, the illithids have an entirely new problem to deal with; the dread obliviax poses a grave danger to the illithids, who must now find a solution to their dilemma.

This option lets the characters inflict a great deal of discomfort on the illithids, but it will also irritate the mind flayers. They will know that something has changed on their world, and that it is destroying the balance of nature that has so long favored them. Their reaction is as predictable as it is deadly: find the aberration and destroy it or them. Characters will have to get off-moon as quickly as possible while at the same time avoiding the dreaded nautiloid ships of the mind flayers.

This brings up a serious danger of making landfall on the illithid-held territory of Ushathrandra. The mind flayers may suffer small groups to enter their territory, but they won't let them leave. Trespassers will be hunted down and enslaved, and there is very little chance of escaping from an illithid slave pit.

## The Vampires

### Kyrn

Int Genius; AL LE; AC 1; MV 12, Fl 18 (C); HD 8 + 3; hp 63; THAC0 13; # AT 1; Dmg 5-10; SA Energy Drain; SD only hit by +1 or better magical weapons; MR *sleep, charm, hold* spells do not affect vampires; immune to paralysis; cold or electricity based spells do 1/2 damage; ML 16; XP 5,000

**Spells:** Kyrn is an ancient creature, and one very well versed in the use of magic of all kinds. Though she has access to almost any spell that exists within the Cluster, she does tend toward spells that confine or immobilize a target without causing actual damage. Illusions and phantasms are also favorites, but she is far from reckless and in a pinch she is most likely to use *chain lightning* to do away with danger-

**A strange looking race of warriors has been spotted with some of the more prosperous Calidian merchants. Could be supernatural bodyguards.**

(DM Note: This rumor refers to the giff who work with the dowhar).

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ous opponents. Kyrn can have memorized whatever spells are necessary to challenge the PCs. Due to her age and magical aptitude, she can have as many spells memorized and magical items available as are deemed necessary.

## Loq

Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC 1; MV 12, FI 18 (C); HD 8 + 3; hp 45; THAC0 13; # AT 1; Dmg 5-10; SA Energy Drain; SD only hit by +1 or better magical weapons; MR *sleep, charm, hold* spells do not affect vampires, immune to paralysis, cold or electricity based spells do 1/2 damage; ML 16; XP 3,000

**Special Abilities:** Loq is an extremely sneaky vampire, prone to hiding in shadows and striking from behind. Loq has a 75% to hide in shadows (as the thief skill of the same name) and receives a x3 damage bonus when making a backstab attack.

## Vax

Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC1; MV 12, FI 18 (C); HD 8 + 3; hp 67; THAC0 13; # AT 1; Dmg 5-10 (or by weapon type + 4); SA Energy Drain; SD only hit by +1 or better magical weapons; MR *sleep, charm, hold* spells do not affect vampires, immune to paralysis, cold or electricity based spells do 1/2 damage; ML 16; XP 3,000

**Weapons:** Vax is versed in the use of virtually all hand-held weapons, and will always have at least two swords on his person at all times. Vax is also something of a braggart and a bully, and whenever he thinks he has the upper hand he will try to pick a fight. Vax is the most warlike of the three vampires, and the one that that PCs will most likely have to deal with first.

The other vampires view Vax as an expendable first line of defense and a gauge of potential opposition. If vampire hunters manage to defeat Vax they are a formidable threat indeed, and one that Kyrn and Loq will try to do away with as soon as possible.



Antilans are paying 10,000 gold bars for a pound of shadowstone.

# MAGIC AND MISCELLANY

## Sunmagic

The greatest advantage that the Sun Mages of the Antilan Empire possess is their knowledge of sunmagic. It is this mastery that has allowed them to gain the advantage over all other races, and to put down the illithid uprisings that constantly threaten Sun Mage territory.

Exactly how sunmagic works is something of a mystery, even to those who use it. The mages know that the power of sunmagic is linked directly to the central sun Firefall, but whether this has to do with the light put out by that sun, or some magical energies that it emits is unknown.

DMs must note that sunmagic should never fall into the hands of player characters. Even if a character is an Antilan mage, that character will never become a part of the inner circle that knows the secrets of sunmagic!

There are two parts to sunmagic. The first is the amplification of power that Sun Mages receive, and the second are the new and dangerously powerful spells they may learn.

The power amplification is directly linked to the distance a mage is from the central sun. Within the Inner Ring Sun Mages are at their most powerful, and there are a number of enhancements to their spells. These benefits are:

- Spells have their damage increased by 1 die.
- Spell duration is increased by 50%.
- Spell range is increased by 50%.
- Fire and light-based spells have their damage increased by 3 dice. The duration of these spells can also be increased by 100%.

Outside of the Inner Ring, but within the distance of the Fringe, sunmagic is much weaker. The spellcaster can only increase the damage of fire and light-based spells by one die. In addition, Sun Mages cannot access their specialty sunmagic spells (see below) outside of the Inner Ring. A Sun Mage in magical darkness or at night is also reduced to this limit regardless of his or her location. The mage will be unable to use his or her most potent abilities and becomes easy prey for those who dislike Antilans.

## Spells

Sunmagic also provides a few new spells that the Sun Mage may learn. These are all quite powerful, and are all of 8th or 9th level. The mage must be standing in full sunlight to cast any of these spells.

### Eighth-Level Spells

**Sunflare** (Conjuration, Evocation)

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 9

Area of Effect: 1 Spelljamming Vessel

Saving Throw: Special

This spell envelops an opposing spelljamming vessel in flames that appear to erupt directly from Firefall. The effect is very brief, but devastating.

The spell will damage all the ship's rigging and sails, reducing its Maneuver Class and SR by 1. Non-wooden ships do not burn as readily as other types, and will have only rigging or sails burnt by a casting of this spell, not both. External weapons will also be damaged, with a 1 in 6 chance that any such weapon is destroyed. Wooden ships may also burst into flame. On a roll of 1 or 2 on 1d6, the ship's hull and deck have caught fire and will suffer 1 Hull Point of damage per round, and will suffer the appropriate deterioration of its air quality. The spell itself causes 1d4 points of Hull Damage.

Crew members on the ship within the spell effect take 5d6 points of fire damage, with saving throws reducing this damage by half. No normal or magical effects (other than *wishes*) will reduce the amount of fire damage. Crew members will also be stunned for 1-4 rounds by the sudden combustion of the air and all flammable materials.

The helmsman can try to make a saving throw for the ship and its inanimate contents. If successful, the ship will not lose its rigging or catch fire, but will still suffer 2 points of Hull Damage.

This spell cannot be cast if the mage and the target ship are farther from Firefall than the orbital paths of the Antilan flatworlds.

**An asteroid packed with undead has been spotted attacking spelljamming vessels.  
The asteroid is obviously magical in nature,  
because it has the ability to move at spelljamming speeds.**

# MAGIC AND MISCELLANY

## Sunstrike (Evocation)

Range: 40 feet + 10 feet/level

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 9

Area of Effect: One creature or object

Saving Throw: 1/2

The *sunstrike* is one of the Sun Mages' most deadly attacks. It causes a fiery line of magical energy to shoot from the hand of the caster to a designated single target within visual range. This line is 1' wide and can go around corners, through windows and doors, over walls, and under or around any obstacles between the caster and the target.

This spell automatically hits any one opponent the mage wishes and causes 8d8 points of damage (1/2 damage if a successful saving throw is made) to the target. Like *sunflare*, normal or magical flame protection does not defend against this spell.

The *sunstrike* also causes any flammable items to burst into flame on contact (only magical items are entitled to a saving throw).

This spell is a favorite among Antilan Warlocks, who channel the spell through their *soulblades* for an additional 1d8 of damage (for 9d8 total).

## Ninth-Level Spells

### Sungate (Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (crystal portal)/V,S

Duration: 1 year/level of the caster/instantaneous

Casting Time: 1 month/9

Area of Effect: 1 crystal portal 5' × 5' × 5'/caster

Saving Throw: None

The *sungate* is a powerful teleportation device used by the Sun Mages to achieve secret movement from one point in the Astromundi Cluster to another.

The spell must be cast upon a crystal portal, usually in the shape of a door. The portal may be no more than 5' × 5' × 5' in area, and must be worth at least 5,000 gold bars. The spell takes one month of preparation to cast, and, once cast, lasts for one year for each level of the caster.

Once a *sungate* has been created, its magic will work without fail so long as it is kept in the light of Firefall. *Sungates* that are not illuminated by the rays of that sun will not function, as it requires that sun's energy (in conjunction with the magic of this spell) to power it. Mages may pass from one *sungate* to another that they are aware of, anywhere within the sphere. There is no chance for failure, and the mage always arrives at the portal he desires, as long as that portal is functioning. If it is not functioning, the mage will remain at his starting point.

### Sunscream (Evocation)

Range: Within the Astromundi Cluster

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: The Astromundi Cluster

Saving Throw: None

This spell provides a means by which a Sun Mage near death can contact his or her peers. It creates a magical shout that can be heard by all Sun Mages within the Astromundi Cluster, and directs these mages to the one who cast the *sunscream*. In casting this spell, the Sun Mage permanently loses 10 hit points due to its powerful effect on the caster.

The main effect of this spell is focused on sending this sound throughout the Astromundi Cluster, and thus anyone within one mile of the caster's location is affected as per the deafening effects of a *shout* spell. In addition, creatures within a five mile radius see a radiant, fiery image that resembles the caster's masked features expanding from the spell's point of origin. This image is immaterial and does not radiate heat, and swiftly expands into nothingness.

Sun Mages rarely ignore this call, as it is only used in times of direst emergency, when a Sun Mage is about to fall. A side effect of the spell is the identification of the mage in trouble. If a mage cries wolf, it is very likely that he or she will be ignored in the future, or at the very least response to the call will be slow.

A group of adventurers claims to have found a quick path  
from the Fringe to the Inner Ring—  
a path that takes less than a day to traverse.

# MAGIC AND MISCELLANY

## Sunshield (Abjuration, Evocation)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent until triggered

Casting Time: 1 day

Area of Effect: Self, special

Saving Throw: 1/2

This is the most fearsome of the defensive spells used by Sun Mages. It is cast into a specially-prepared shadowstone gem of at least 1,000 gp worth. This gem is worn at all times by the mage casting the spell. At the time of the casting, the Sun Mage establishes a command word that will activate the gem's power.

The first effect of the *sunshield* is to enhance the wearer's AC by 3 points, lowering an AC of 9 to an AC of 6, for example. This effect is permanent and always accessible, regardless of the status of the secondary effects; the wearer does not need to speak the command word to keep this power active. This gem's armor class bonuses can operate with both *bracers of defense* and *rings of protection*. However, after the secondary effects of the spell has been activated, the gem shatters into useless shards.

The second, and by far more dangerous effect, is the sudden explosion of flame that engulfs the Sun Mage wearing the *sunshield* stone. These flames are extremely hot, and seem to explode from the caster, enveloping everyone within a 30' radius. With the exception of the Sun Mage who activated the spell, those caught in the expanding flames suffer 10d6 points of fire damage; victims can attempt a saving throw vs. spell for half damage. As with all offensive sunmagical spells, no natural or magical resistances to fire has any effect against the *sunshield*.

## Magical Items

The Antilans possess two unique magical items that can be found only in their care. The first is a magical mask that is worn only by Sun Mages, and increases their ability to memorize spells, and the second is a deadly mystical sword used by the dread Warlocks of the Antilan military.



Antilan crystal ships have been disappearing in the Grim Regions.  
Some say it has to do with a coming goblinoid invasion.

# MAGIC AND MISCELLANY

## Mask of Memory

There are a wide variety of *masks of memory* in existence. All of them share some similar characteristics, but they all have some unique powers as well. A *Mask of Memory* is always a golden-red in color, as a reflection of the flames of Firefall. It has no visible eye holes, though there are always two fire opals located where the eye holes are normally found. The *mask* has no house or ranking markings, leaving the wearer's identity a mystery.

The *mask* wearer incurs no penalties for the lack of eye holes; the mask allows normal vision and even grants its wearer magical infravision (60' range). The mask also provides protection against intense bursts of light that would otherwise blind the character. 20% of all *masks of memory* also provide the ability to see through magical illusions created by first through third level spells.

Each *mask* has a variable number of gems present on its face, usually a mixture of fire opals, diamonds, and other various precious gems. Masks may have up to 25 large gems or 100 smaller gems on them; the fire opals are always configured to be the most prominent gems in the design of the *mask*.

The number of fire opals is equal to the number of extra spells the wearer may memorize each day. These extra spells are of first to fifth level; the contained magics do not allow extra access to higher level spells. *Masks of memory* always have from two to twelve fire opals in them, with their rarity increasing with the number of opals. They will never have more than twelve fire opals per mask, as the magics involved are too powerful to contain more than that number.

In recent memory, *masks of memory* have been used only by the Sun Mages, though they can be used by any magic-user (the Sun Mages do not wish this to become common knowledge). Possession of one of these *masks* by lower class Antilans is a crime punishable by death. If a *mask* are found in the hands of non-Antilans, the Sun Mages will do whatever is necessary to retrieve it, offering as much as 100,000 gold bars for its return (though they are more likely to destroy offenders for their presumption).

## Soulblade

The *soulblade* is a dreadful weapon, more feared than any other hand-held weapon in the Astromundi Cluster. Carved from shadowstone, the *soulblade* is similar in size to a short sword, though each individual blade has a unique design and decorative pommel. *Soulblades* are +2 magical weapons and cause 1d6+2/1d8+2 points of damage, whether the blade resembles a short sword or a small khopesh.

Created by special sunmagic rituals, these blades always flicker with cold white flames. The flames cause no additional damage to Sun Mages, but they will cause a loss of 1d4 hit points to non-Sun Mages. The flames of a *soulblade* can also destroy cloth or nonmetallic armor with a successful hit; the flames engulf leather or padded armors (and any normal cloth, ropes, etc.) and consume it within one round (magical clothing or armor gains a saving throw against this effect.).

If exposed to sunlight, the *soulblade* begins to glow, its flames slowly turning red and brightening to the intensity of a *light* spell. After three rounds in direct sunlight, the wielder may fire a 30' long beam of fiery energy that causes 1d10 points of magical fire damage. The mage must roll a melee attack as normal, but receives a +2 magical bonus to this roll. No natural or magical resistances to fire provide any defense against this attack. After this energy discharge, the sword returns to its normal, dark color with white flames. The *soulblade* can only release this stored energy five times a day; after the fifth use of this power in one day, the *soulblade* will not absorb any energy for 24 hours.

## Crystal Citadels

No single craft is as feared as the Antilan crystal citadel. These craft are monstrous, ranging from 1200' to 1700' tall and 300' to 600' around. Larger than any other craft in the Cluster, they are virtually indestructible under normal wartime conditions. The only method of destroying one of these craft is to actually enter it and explode the great shaft in the center of the citadel by applying at least 200 hp of

Fiends from the outer planes have been spotted around Ushathrandra, flying on great golden barges.

# MAGIC AND MISCELLANY

damage to it in three separate locations. This will cause a dangerous weakening of the infrastructure, which will collapse the entire citadel.

Of course, it is extremely difficult to get that close to the citadels. They hold upwards of 700 Antilans at all times, most of whom are at least 4th-level fighters. They also hold a full contingent of crystal ships, and no fewer than 50 of these craft are within the citadel or affixed to its exterior at any given time.

Their armaments are as fierce as their defenses. At any time, the crew of a crystal citadel can bring 20 ballistae to bear on a target, and their wizards will be able to deliver up to 40 separate magical attacks every round. Few ships can stand within weapons' distance of a citadel for more than a few seconds without being reduced to flying splinters.

A map of a crystal citadel is provided in this box, and the following is a description of the pictured citadel, the Vengeant.

**Hangars:** The hangars aboard the Vengeant are stocked with 5 crystal ships each, as well as the support personnel and maintenance crews needed to keep the ships running and in top fighting trim. The hangars are heavily defended, with ballistae ringing the deck and constantly manned in case of attack.

Boarding these decks is nearly impossible despite their open-air construction; crystal spikes jut from the area around the decks, making it almost impossible to fly into the hangars. Without proper training and familiarity with the crystal pattern, something in short supply among the enemies of the Antilan Empire, flying through the gauntlet of crystal spines is suicide. If the ballistae and magical attacks don't get you, the spikes surely will.

**Barracks:** The Vengeant holds nearly 1,000 battle-ready troops, not including the support personnel and flight crews that number an additional 1,000 or so. The troops stay within the barracks, which are surprisingly spartan compared to the typically opulent Antilan quarters. The soldiers aboard the Vengeant have no complaints with their quarters, as they are too busy to do anything but sleep in them.

**Officers' Quarters:** The officers of the Vengeant stay here. Though larger than the barracks, these rooms are by no means lushly appointed. Most of the space is taken up with tables and charts, and the numerous forms that are filled out on a daily basis.

Officers spend more time in their quarters than their troops do, but far less time sleeping. The majority of their day is taken up with the constant record-keeping and roster-filling that is their primary task. What time they have to spare is used to review the troops and keep them in fighting trim. The officers of the citadels, and the Vengeant in particular, are spartan men and women completely dedicated to their tasks.

**Eating and Recreation Facilities:** The various personnel aboard the Vengeant eat in six different shifts, allowing the mess halls to be much smaller than might be suspected. The cooking crews work rotating shifts, insuring an uninterrupted flow of food from the kitchen to the mouths of the hungry troops.

The recreation facilities are on the same level of the Vengeant as the mess halls. The facilities are rather crude and ill-used, as most of the crew doesn't have much time for leisure activities. There is a bar or three to kick back in, but the main draw is the brutal pit fights. Slaves are brought in to fight to the death in small arenas. Wagers are taken and occasionally an Antilan soldier will deign to take on one or more slaves.

**Storage:** A ship as big as the Vengeant has to have space to hold its necessary supplies. Preserved food and large containers of water is kept here. Raw metal that can be used to make or repair weapons, and armor and magical supplies are stored here also.

Anything that the ship or crew could possibly need can probably be found in storage. If any item is in short supply, the Vengeant will probably dock to procure more of it. The Antilans learned the importance of proper supplies during their early squabbles with the illithids, and they make sure that they have more than enough of what they need aboard when they leave dock.

**Goblinoid raiders have made several forays against traders in the Inner Ring. They attack the ships and take slaves, leaving behind valuable trade goods. Could be they're in league with the illithid slavers.**

# MAGIC AND MISCELLANY

**Smithy/Armorer:** Most of the crew maintain their own weapons and armor as a matter of course, but there are some things that can't be fixed without a forge and anvil. Thirty smiths work on each of these levels, mostly making new weapons and repairing the shipboard equipment.

**Magical Research:** The Antilans are a magically advanced race, and their spelljamming vessels make provisions for this. The Vengeant in particular is dedicated to magical research, and there is plenty of room for the mages aboard to stretch their collective mind muscles. Sunmagic is the biggest concern in these areas, and the mages aboard do what they can to expand the Antilans' knowledge of this relatively new branch of magic. It is here, too, that improvements or adjustments to the spelljamming helms of the Vengeant are made.

**Spelljamming Area:** A craft as big as the Vengeant, and especially one that must move quickly upon demand, cannot get by on a single spelljamming helm. Instead, whole chains of them are connected together at two central points and used to power the craft in a method similar to a series helm. This allows them to push the craft and steer it through the use of spelljamming helms rather than furnaces and sails.

The spelljamming areas are nearly as heavily guarded as the Hangars. If something were to happen to the spelljamming helms, the Vengeant would be a sitting target. Even if it could not be destroyed, it would be stranded and the crew left to starve until rescued.

**The Jungle:** This is the means by which the Antilans replenish their oxygen. Trees and plants grow here in abundance, sustained by magic and fed through a complicated system of troughs and ditches in ten feet of rich soil. The Jungle is also used as a training area for planetside-bound troops, specifically those assigned to fighting the elves of Giltiond.

All crystal citadels are nightmares for moving around in, riddled with staircases that might run for

only a few levels before dead-ending. Tunnels also wind in and around the exterior of the ship, making it very hard to know where you're going until you get there. This is why crews are assigned to a citadel permanently. It may take them a while to get used to getting around in their citadel, but once they do, they'll never get lost again.

To speed movement of large cargos or numerous personnel from one level to another, move tubes were created. These are floating platforms that hover within tubes that run the length of the citadel. These platforms can hold thousands of pounds, and magically lift and descend at the riders' command. There are five of these tubes, one central cargo tube and four peripheral people moving tubes.

In addition to their standard weaponry, crystal citadels are also equipped with massive sunsails. These great crystal webs can be spread from four separate areas of the citadel, and create "wings" that radiate nearly a half-mile from the main ship. These wings increase the movement of the citadels over long distances and are used to hide siege targets from the sun.

Because shadowstone is worked into the wings, they literally suck heat from their target by absorbing it and funneling it out the opposite side of the sail. Surprisingly enough, the sails are remarkably tough and will not burn. Even crashing a ship into them isn't necessarily going to break them; this tactic has failed miserably in the past, ensnaring the attacking ship in the wings and allowing the crystal ships to pick them off at leisure.

## The Rest . . .

The surface of the Astromundi Cluster has only been scratched by the contents of this box. There are many more mysteries and terrors with which to entrance or horrify your players. The simple fact of the matter is that the Cluster is just too big to do cover in detail in any number of boxed sets or supplementary material.

Billions of humans and humanoids live in the Astromundi Cluster, and there's nothing to say that

**Winged monkeys have been spotted with the Varan. These strange beasts are nearly as tall as a man and are able to fly with the aid of membranes between their arms and legs.**

(DM Note: this refers to hadozee.)



the races listed herein are the only ones to live there. There could be virtually anything walking, crawling, flying or slithering out there, anything at all.

Take a look at the starchart that came in the box. See all those little squares? Each one represents a distance of 400 million miles across. Which means that each one is over a trillion square miles, and 160,000,000,000,000,000 cubic miles. You can put anything in there that you want. Compared to the vastness of Clusterspace, this boxed set is barely a start. You could easily fill thousands of pages with the information in one square on the map alone.

So, what have I done here? I've given you the tools that you'll need to expand on what's in this box. I've handed you the keys to the empire, my friends, and can sit back and watch what you decide to do with them. Everything that you need to start is in this box: heroic races battling against oppression, savage elves with a secret everyone wants, evil mages bent on conquest, an unexpected enemy of all life everywhere, and much more.

Want to put dowhar in charge of their own asteroid belt somewhere outside the Inner Ring? Go for it. A place where the illithids are hunted monsters? Why not, there's plenty of room for it!

Well, that's it for me. When Bruce Heard handed over the reins of the Astromundi Cluster, I must admit I was more than a little overwhelmed. This was a big, big project! But, with the helpful guidance of Anne Brown and Michele Carter, the daunting task became much more manageable and enjoyable. Now, I can't help but think of this place as my own; a dark little corner of the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER® Universe that I helped to create.

That's why I'm thrilled to finally see this project leave my computer and find its way into your hands. Because to me, it's not done until you, the players and DMs, get your hands on it and twist and turn it to your desires. Ultimately, I want you to have fun with it. And that's why I wrote it.

Sam Witt  
March 5, 1993

**It's all just a dream. The entire Astromundi Cluster is the product of some powerful being's fevered imagination. Soon the creature will wake, and the Cluster will cease to be.**

# Tanar'ri

Imagine an entire race of creatures—whose numbers are unimaginably vast—whose minds are filled with nothing but hatred, death, and vile contempt. Imagine beings so dark as to make the blackest pitch of night seem bright by comparison. Imagine the tanar'ri.

The Abyss is an infinite, empty place of despair. It is the disgusting toil and labor of existence made tangible. Infinite layers of bleak despair are stacked endlessly atop one another in the Abyss, chaos and hopelessness reigning everywhere. That is the home of the tanar'ri. There, where others linger in endless torment, the tanar'ri thrive.

In the broadest terms, tanar'ri are chaotic and evil. The less intelligent often attack without question and fight until slain. True and greater tanar'ri often roam the Astral and Ethereal planes—their attention is attracted to persons in an ethereal state.

**Combat:** In addition to the separate characteristics and abilities of each sort of tanar'ri, they all share these spell-like powers:

- *darkness, 15' radius*
- *infravision*
- *teleport without error*

They also can *gate* in large numbers of other tanar'ri at will, as defined for each individual.

Tanar'ri are affected by the listed attack forms as noted below:

Attack	Damage
acid	full
cold	half
electricity (lightning)	none
fire (magical)	half
fire (nonmagical)	none
gas (poisonous, etc.)	half
iron weapon	full
magic missile	full
poison	none
silver weapon	full*

\*greater tanar'ri take half damage from silver weapons.

All tanar'ri have a form of telepathy that enables them to communicate with any intelligent life form regardless of any language barriers. Tanar'ri with average or better intelligence are able to converse.

Most of the time, the Abyss-forged magical weapons of the tanar'ri dissolve upon the death of the creature. When one doesn't, it is probably that the weapon in question originated elsewhere.

**Habitat/Society:** There are five different varieties of tanar'ri, each with its own particular niche in the Abyss. They are, listed in order of ascending power, least, lesser, greater, true, and guardian. The divisions are as follows:

Least	Lesser	Greater
dretch	alu-fiend	babau
manes	bar-lgura	chasmé
rutterkin	cambion	naassu
	succubus	
True	Guardian	
balor	molydeus	
glabrezu		
hezrou		
marilith		
nalfeshnee		
vrock		

These classifications of the tanar'ri actually mean very little in their lives. They are merely broad estimates of their destructive power. The tanar'ri are not subtle and have little use for anything besides power, and a strong lesser tanar'ri who bests a weaker greater cousin is awarded greater status in the Abyss. Such petty battles of political positioning are virtually endless on the plane. The only exception to these endless power struggles is the molydeus, or guardian tanar'ri that seem to be curiously outside of the tanar'ri power structure.

As fiends, the tanar'ri are involved in the ongoing *Blood War*. In fact, they are one of the two major antagonists of that ancient war. For as long as the tanar'ri have existed, they have waged war against their ancient enemies, the baatezu.

There are vast differences in the way that the tanar'ri wage war as opposed to the baatezu. The baatezu are an organized lot, taken to fighting their battles with form and structure and relying on strategy. The tanar'ri, however, are the opposite. They are a horde of chaos and disorder, tending to use their great numbers to wage wars of attrition. In their favor, the tanar'ri have almost endless numbers to draw upon. It is difficult to estimate how many tanar'ri there actually are considering they inhabit an infinite number of infinitely sized planes, but there are easily 100 or more times as many tanar'ri as there are baatezu.

The only reason that the Blood War is waged at all by this seemingly discorded race is that the true tanar'ri seem to have a primal urge to wage the battles and thus force those less powerful than themselves to comply with their wishes.

**Ecology:** Tanar'ri are a subset of the far larger race of fiends, or lower planar creatures of supernatural power, according to the definitions made by mankind. It is fairly interesting that sages delineate fiends with a definition that would be meaningless if mankind did not exist, for fiends doubtless do not consider their abilities to be supernatural.

Most tanar'ri feed on either the flesh or the life force of other living beings. It appears that they can derive more nutrition from a victim by instilling more terror in it before the kill. Whereas most predators simply stalk and then kill, tanar'ri have a third step; stalk, terrify, kill.

# Tanar'ri, Greater—Babau

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Abyss
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17-18)
TREASURE:	D
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1 (rarely: 1-2)
ARMOR CLASS:	-3
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	8 + 14
THACO:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 or 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	by weapon or 2-5/2-5/2-8 +7 (strength bonus)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Corrosion, gaze, backstab
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapons to hit, thief abilities
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M (7' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	42,500

Babaus are greater tanar'ri that roam the layers of the Abyss collecting lesser and least tanar'ri to swell the ranks of the vast armies of the Blood War.

These horrid creatures look much like great skeletons covered with dark, form-fitting leather. They have a great horn protruding from the back of their skulls. Babaus typically have long, wicked claws covered with dirt, blood, and decaying flesh. Their movements are very quick, sharp, and mechanical, emphasizing their inhumanness as they walk the foul Abyss.

Babaus communicate using telepathy.

**Combat:** Babaus can make use of any weapon they find. They often have enchanted and magical weapons (20% of the time; determine magical weapon randomly). It should be noted that babaus have a strength of 19, and gain +7 damage adjustment.

These gruesome monsters also have potent physical attacks. They can inflict 2-5 points of damage per claw attack, and 2-8 points of damage with their sharp, wicked horn. The babaus are very intelligent and will always prefer to use other means of attack before their natural attack forms, but they will gladly fight hand-to-hand if necessary.

Babaus generate a slick, dark red substance that covers their bodies. This foul jelly is very slippery and will cause all type S and P weapons to do but half damage against them. This liquid also has a corrosive quality to it, giving it two main advantages during combat. First, if the liquid comes into contact with exposed flesh (such as during grappling attacks or other contact), it will burn for 1-6 points of damage. Secondly, it has a chance per hit of corroding a weapon and making it useless. Metal weapons must make a saving throw vs. acid with each hit or be corroded. Corrosion renders a normal weapon useless. Magical weapons simply lose one "plus."

Any creature meeting the gaze at the glowing red eyes of a babau must make a saving throw vs. spells or be affected as if touched by a *ray of enfeeblement*. Their gaze range is 20'. The gaze can affect only one opponent per round and is in addition to normal attacks.

In addition to those available to all tanar'ri, babaus have the following spell-like powers that can be used one at a time, once per round, at will:



- *dispel magic*
- *fear*
- *fly*
- *heat metal*
- *levitate*
- *polymorph self*

They may attempt to *gate* in 1-6 cambions or 1 babau with a 40% chance of success. They may attempt a *gate* only once per day. There is also a chance that a true tanar'ri will come to the aid of a babau in trouble (see below).

Babaus have all abilities of a 9th-level thief (pick pockets 30%, open locks 30%, find/remove traps 25%, move silently 95%, hide in shadows 80%, detect noise 35%, climb walls 90%, read languages 30%, backstab ×4).

Babaus are immune to attacks from nonmagical weapons.

**Habitat/Society:** Babaus are typically hated by the other tanar'ri because they roam around "recruiting" lesser beings into the vast Abyssal armies. It is not uncommon for numbers of lesser tanar'ri to gang up on a babau to destroy it. Fortunately, the babau have great power.

Because the true tanar'ri (*q.v.*) have a primal desire to wage the Blood War, they have a close tie with babaus. If a babau is attacked, there is 20% chance that a true tanar'ri (randomly determined) will notice and come to the aid of the babau. Note that this is not done for any sense of loyalty, but rather to further the Blood War. This causes many of the lesser tanar'ri to fear the babau even more.

**Ecology:** Babaus are inherently important to the ecology of the Abyss. According to the true tanar'ri (who are, presumably, among the greatest powers of the Abyss), the only purpose of the lesser and least tanar'ri is to fight in the Blood War. Because the babaus are the grim recruiters of those armies, they are viewed as being integral to the Abyss and important in the overall scheme of the Blood War.

# Tanar'ri, Greater—Chasme

<b>CLIMATE/TERRAIN:</b>	The Abyss
<b>FREQUENCY:</b>	Common
<b>ORGANIZATION:</b>	Group
<b>ACTIVITY CYCLE:</b>	Any
<b>DIET:</b>	Carnivore
<b>INTELLIGENCE:</b>	Average to very (8-12)
<b>TREASURE:</b>	Nil
<b>ALIGNMENT:</b>	Chaotic evil

<b>NO. APPEARING:</b>	1-6
<b>ARMOR CLASS:</b>	-5
<b>MOVEMENT:</b>	6, Fl 24 (D)
<b>HIT DICE:</b>	8 + 2
<b>THAC0:</b>	13
<b>NO. OF ATTACKS:</b>	3
<b>DAMAGE/ATTACK:</b>	2-8/2-8/1-4
<b>SPECIAL ATTACKS:</b>	Wounding, sleep drone, terror
<b>SPECIAL DEFENSES:</b>	See below
<b>MAGIC RESISTANCE:</b>	50%
<b>SIZE:</b>	M (7' long)
<b>MORALE:</b>	Champion (15-16)
<b>XP VALUE:</b>	30,000

Wretched and horrifying, the chasme travel the layers of the Abyss in search of tanar'ri that do not wish to participate in the Blood War.

Perhaps of all the tanar'ri, the chasme are the most terrifying to behold. They are an abomination, a sickening cross between human and giant fly. These large creatures have the body of a fly with unnatural human arms in the front and a vaguely human head. Their mouths are tiny, but their noses are sharp horn-like and used to bite and draw blood. These creatures can walk on floors, walls, and ceilings as they wish.

Chasme communicate using telepathy.

**Combat:** The mere sight of a chasme is enough to cause terror. Anyone viewing a chasme must save versus spells or flee in terror for 1-4 hours.

Literally the punishers of tanar'ri, the chasme live to fight. Their physical attacks consist of a claw/claw/nose routine. Their claws inflict 2-8 points of damage per hit and will continue to bleed profusely for 2 points of damage per round until magically healed (*cure light wounds*, etc.). A chasme can also attack with its sharp nose, inflicting 1-4 points of damage.

Chasmes will often buzz and drone in a horrid, rasping voice. Potential victims must save vs. spell once per encounter or fall into a comatose sleep. Sleeping victims must be splashed with water or vigorously stimulated to awaken them. Otherwise, sleep persists for 2-8 hours or until the chasme completely drains the victim's blood, at a rate of 1-4 points per round.

In addition to those available to all tanar'ri, chasmes also have the following spell-like powers, at 8th level of spell use, usable once per round, one at a time, at will:

- *detect good*, always active
- *detect invisibility*, always active
- *insect plague*
- *ray of enfeeblement*
- *telekinesis*

Three times per day, a chasme may attempt to *gate* in the following: 2-20 manes, 2-5 cambion, or 1 chasme. There is a 40% chance this will be successful.



**Habitat/Society:** The chasme act as the punishers of the tanar'ri. They travel among the layers of the Abyss in order to exact punishment on those who do not fight in the Blood War. This punishment is, of course, lingering, painful death.

The Abyss is an endless place. It is chaos within chaos within still more chaos. Creatures of all twisted and disgusting forms travel those countless layers, themselves in countless numbers. How the chasme are able to tell which of the tanar'ri are actually fulfilling their role within the mighty Blood War and which are not is a great mystery. Although tanar'ri as a whole are not a very psychically aware race, perhaps these creatures do have a form of psychic power that allows them to read the thoughts or empathically sense the emotional state of any tanar'ri they encounter. Whether or not this ability extends to nontanar'ri is a matter of complete speculation, but if it does, these monsters would indeed be fearsome opponents.

In return for this duty, the chasme are not sent to the "front lines" to fight in combat formations. Instead they guarantee the filling of those ranks with other hapless tanar'ri.

Perhaps the most gruesome of the tanar'ri, the chasme interact with the Blood War as wardens and executioners. This makes them extremely unpopular among the tanar'ri. Because of this, chasme are often subject to attack on sight. Only their power and the backing of the true tanar'ri keep them from being totally annihilated.

Of note, however, is that the destructive activities of the chasme do not negatively affect the war effort of the tanar'ri at all. The fiends of the Abyss are present in nearly endless numbers, thus the losses inflicted by the chasme are not felt in the war.

**Ecology:** Chasme reproduce from eggs—any chasme can lay up to 1,000 eggs per day. Eggs hatch in three days, the hatchlings growing to adults in seven more.

Chasme wings have been used in brews to create *potions of flying*.

# Tanar'ri, Greater—Nabassu

<b>CLIMATE/TERRAIN:</b>	The Abyss or Prime Material Plane
<b>FREQUENCY:</b>	Very rare
<b>ORGANIZATION:</b>	Solitary
<b>ACTIVITY CYCLE:</b>	Any
<b>DIET:</b>	Carnivore
<b>INTELLIGENCE:</b>	High (13-14)
<b>TREASURE:</b>	Q (×10)
<b>ALIGNMENT:</b>	Chaotic evil

<b>NO. APPEARING:</b>	1
<b>ARMOR CLASS:</b>	4 to -5
<b>MOVEMENT:</b>	12, Fl 15 (C)
<b>HIT DICE:</b>	7+2 to 7+20
<b>THAC0:</b>	13
<b>NO. OF ATTACKS:</b>	3
<b>DAMAGE/ATTACK:</b>	2-8/2-8/3-12 +7 (strength bonus)
<b>SPECIAL ATTACKS:</b>	Death gaze, backstab, paralyzation
<b>SPECIAL DEFENSES:</b>	+1 or better weapons to hit
<b>MAGIC RESISTANCE:</b>	50%
<b>SIZE:</b>	M (7' tall)
<b>MORALE:</b>	Champion (15-16)
<b>XP VALUE:</b>	Mature: 40,500 Fledgeling: 22,000

Nabassu are foul creatures that live portions of their lives on the Prime Material plane. These monsters are spawned in the Abyss, but travel to the Prime Material plane while they mature.

At first sight a nabassu is unmistakably a tanar'ri. They are gargoyleish in appearance, standing some seven feet tall. They are gaunt with tightly corded muscles. A nabassu's skin is leathery in texture and they have great claws on their hands and feet. Their eyes gleam a steely grey and their mouths are lined with sharp fangs.

Nabassu communicate using telepathy.

**Combat:** The nabassu begin life in an immature state, which is relatively rare among the tanar'ri. Their physical attack, however, is equally as potent whether young or adult. They have a strong claw/claw/bite routine, their sharp claws inflicting 2-8 points of damage per successful attack and their teeth inflicting 3-12 points. They have a number of magic-based attack forms, but derive pleasure from attacking with their bare hands, especially when fighting a helpless enemy (this affords greater terror in the victim and, therefore, greater pleasure for the nabassu).

Nabassu go through two distinct phases in which their combat powers are drastically different: fledgeling and mature.

## Nabassu Fledgeling

Nabassu fledglings begin life with AC 4 and 7 hit dice. When they pass into the Prime Material plane (see Habitat/Society below), they gain an additional two hit points from growth (thus giving them 7+2 hit dice). They grow and gain power by slaying and devouring humans on the Prime Material plane. With each such grisly slaying, a nabassu will gain an additional hit point and a "half factor" of armor class. For example, if a nabassu were to pass into the Prime Material plane and devour two humans, it would have 7+4 hit dice and an armor class of 3. After slaying and devouring 18 humans, a nabassu is at full growth and powers (AC -5 and 7+20 hit dice).

Immature nabassu have the following spell-like abilities:

- *darkness*, 15' radius
- *death gaze*, 1 time per hit point above 7 hit dice per day.

Immature nabassu do not gain the spell-like abilities available to other tanar'ri. Their *death gaze* causes anyone they look at to save vs. spells or become a ghast (or ghoul if the victim is a demi-



human). The change is permanent and irrevocable. The only way to bring peace to the victim is to slay him outright.

Immature nabassu also have some thief abilities: move silently 40%, hide in shadows 50%, detect noise 55%, and backstab ×2.

They are affected by attacks from magic or cold-wrought iron weapons only. Nabassu have a 19 strength gaining bonuses to their damage dice (+7 damage adjustment).

## Mature Nabassu

Upon reaching full growth, nabassu gain those spell-like abilities available to all tanar'ri, plus the following spell-like powers:

- *energy drain*
- *regenerate*, 20 hit points per day
- *silence*, 15' radius
- *vampiric touch*

They may *summon* 2-5 ghosts one time per day provided they are in the Abyss. Mature nabassu may become ethereal at will, up to twice per day. Also, any creature within 10 feet must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed for 1d10 rounds.

**Habitat/Society:** Nabassu are a scourge of humanity. They are the only tanar'ri (and only fiend, for that matter) that lives a portion of its life on the Prime Material plane. These creatures seem to have no place in the Blood War which makes them utterly unique in the tanar'ri race. Once they return to the Abyss from their tour of carnage on the prime, they take up residence in some fortress and live there for the duration of their immortal existence.

What role these monsters play is unknown. Perhaps the slaying of humans and spilling of innocent blood somehow brings the tanar'ri power.

**Ecology:** When these creatures are "born," they live a portion of their lives in the Abyss. Those fledglings that survive on the Abyss (an accomplishment for an immature nabassu) pass into the Prime Material plane where they must slay humans in order to grow and develop.

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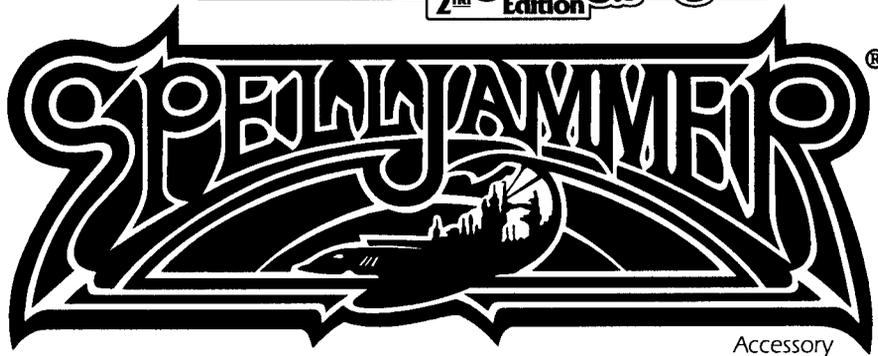
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Accessory

## The Astromundi Cluster

Adventures in the Shattered Sphere

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



Accessory

# Adventures in the Shattered Sphere

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# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

**B**y the time you read this book, you should already have read through *The Astrogator's Guide*. That booklet contains all the basic information concerning the Cluster and its occupants.

*If you're a player, you should stop reading now.* The information contained herein is for the DM's eyes only. Reading further will only spoil much of the setting's mystery for yourself and the other players.

Between the covers of this book, you'll find information regarding the secret plans and conspiracies of the Astromundi Cluster's many factions, the details on how they will go about implementing their plans, and numerous adventure ideas. Many of the adventure "hooks" center around the plots being hatched by the Cluster's power cliques, while others are entertaining side adventures.

All of this information is here to help you. While we recommend you use this book's contents as they stand, there's no reason you couldn't change whatever you like. Keep what you want and modify or throw the rest out, but take care not to lose the Cluster's unique spelljamming flavor.

The first chapter of this book is perhaps the most crucial. In it you'll find tips on starting and running an Astromundi Campaign, whether it involves native characters or "imports." The information there is relevant to all other kinds of campaigns as well, and beginning and experienced DMs alike should take a good look at it.

The second chapter goes into more depth on the most powerful and influential Astromundi Cluster races: the Antilans, illithids, Arcane, and others. This information is the basis of the feel and uniqueness of Clusterspace.

Chapter Three contains a plethora of short adventure hooks that can be used to sustain an ongoing plot or as asides to the main campaign.

Chapters Four and Five delve into the deepest mysteries of Clusterspace. Here the secret agendas of the illithids and the Arcane are explored in depth and their plans spelled out in step-by-step detail.



My name is Charun Ledisk, Varan servant to Master Brusslg.  
It is good that you have come to my masters for the true history of the Astromundi Cluster.  
They are the oldest of the races, though it is only recently that they have exerted  
the true power that they possess.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

The first thing to understand about the Cluster is that it is different from the other places you may have based a campaign. Most notable among these differences is the lack of planet-sized masses within the Shattered Sphere. This has led to fragmented societies that are dependent on spelljammers for their existence. No one outpost can sustain itself for long without commerce with other settlements.

This creates a situation in which the characters will be disinclined to stay in one place for too long. As a DM, you must encourage travel to distant planetoids or spaceports. Involve the players in the politics and conspiracies that abound within the Shattered Sphere. Stationary characters can stagnate in an otherwise dynamic atmosphere; keep them moving.

Fortunately, this isn't difficult. No matter where the characters are, there will always be ships coming or going. A lot of those ships will need replacement crewmen for those who have been killed in duty, or are retiring, or have been hired on elsewhere. Having the characters hire on a merchant or exploration vessel is a sure way to keep them traveling from place to place. You might even wish to give the characters their own ship, and set them up as a new trading or exploration company. The options are limited only by the goals and tone of the campaign.

The second important factor to keep in mind is the plots and motivations of the various races throughout the Astromundi Cluster. These will be described in more detail later, but the most important of these plots are being put into action by the Arcane (and their Antilan allies), and the illithids (and their Varan allies). The former plot involves the Arcane's plan to use Firefall to create a great portal to another dimension (see Chapter 5: **Mystery of the Arcane** for details). The illithids plan to destroy both of the Cluster's suns, starting with Denaeb. This plot is covered in Chapter 4: **The Sundeath**.

These chapters detail the far-reaching goals of the two most powerful factions in the Cluster. Integrating these plots into your campaign will give the campaign direction, as characters strive to thwart one (or both) of the factions.

The third factor is a sense of mystery. Even native characters don't know everything. After all, most Cluster natives believe that the illithids are essentially minding their own business. And everyone thinks that the Arcane are all right fellows, if a little strange. Both of those concepts are far from the truth.

In a native campaign, then, characters know a lot about the surface of their world, but not much about what's really going on. Let them read *The Astro-gator's Guide*. It contains a wealth of useful information, with a few false tidbits thrown in for good measure. Use the characters' erroneous conclusions to draw them deeper and deeper into the web of deceit that encompasses the Cluster. Perhaps they agree to hire on as bodyguards for an illithid noble. Or they may work as mercenaries completing obscure tasks for the Arcane. In either case, they may think their employers are innocent enough, but over time they'll learn otherwise and be forced to take action.

Outlander campaigns can be even more confusing, and are probably best left to experienced players and characters. After all, you're going to be placing these characters in one of the harshest spelljamming settings around. Nothing will be as they have seen it in other places. The neogi are our friends? The illithids too? Such contrasts will bring home the alienness of their environment. This lends a true aura of mystery to the world in which the characters live, but it can be overwhelming for inexperienced players.

Last but not least: have fun. The Astromundi Cluster is the most detailed SPELLJAMMER® campaign setting ever created. Everything you need to create a true spelljamming campaign is in this box. Use it, make it your own, and enjoy!

## Native or Outlander?

The type of campaign that you chose to run will have a great deal of impact on the characters and their adventures. Native campaigns are more difficult to set up, but the rewards are greater. Of course, characters must be created and outfitted and developed, but this isn't much different from any other

Keep in mind that Master Brusslg is not one to be taken lightly.  
His words have been recorded in the Book of Truth,  
to serve as wisdom for Varan and illithid for ages to come.  
Heed well what he has to tell you.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

campaign. The advantage of this sort of campaign is the ease with which characters and players are integrated into the setting. Naturally, bringing native characters into the campaign will be no trouble at all; they were born there. The players should read *The Astrogator's Guide*, which fills them in on the background of their character races and the Cluster itself.

In this type of campaign, the players can be a big help as well. Since they know something of what is going on in the Cluster, and its basic geography, they can provide their preferences for the campaign's starting location and the sorts of adventures they'd enjoy participating in. This can be a big help for DMs and makes for a campaign that everyone really feels they have helped to build.

Outlander campaigns are easier to get going, but take some time to bring the players and characters into "sync" with the rest of the Cluster and its inhabitants. Information must be carefully controlled, because the characters will be entering the setting without any preconceived notions. As stated before, this lack of knowledge can lead to confusion and indecision in less experienced players. Even the most experienced players may feel out of their depth when thrust into such an alien environment.

A good DM, however, can help alleviate this problem and use the confusion to further adventures. Characters who unwittingly attack and kill a group of neogi (thinking the neogi are evil) will suddenly find themselves on the wrong side of the law. Not showing proper deference to the masked Sun Mages can lead to trouble too. All of this can make for exciting adventures that serve as an introduction to the various aspects of the Shattered Sphere.

Outlanders may be a bit more difficult to bring into the Shattered Sphere, but a single navigational mistake or flux in the phlogiston can easily force a spelljammer into the Astromundi Cluster. And, of course, once outlanders get in, they'll have a very difficult time getting out again.

In an outlander campaign, characters may become so obsessed with escaping this strange crystal sphere that they don't take the time to investigate it. Remember, your players may not know that the

Cluster is the setting for your new campaign, and may see it as a trap to be escaped.

The simplest solution is to thrust characters into the heart of the adventure from the start. Involve them in the ticklish business of neogi politics, or have them captured by illithid or Antilan slavers (a simple but nasty trick that never loses its effectiveness). Most importantly, intrigue them. You can't force characters to stay in one area, but you can manipulate them into hanging around for a while.

And that goes right back to the mysterious atmosphere inherent to the Cluster. As long as you don't give away too much, too quickly, your players will stay involved and interested in what's going on.

## Home Port

Now that you've decided what sort of campaign to run (native or outlander), it's time to pick an area in which to start your adventures. This area will probably be the center of your campaign. While spelljamming is vital to the functioning of everyday Astromundi life (and therefore to any campaign set in the Cluster), a sense of stability and a place to call home are also important. A home port gives characters a place to rest between journeys and to store all of their loot and personal items such as spell books.

Also, the contrast between the familiar home port and the bizarre creatures of wildspace and the Fringe will enhance the flavor of your campaign. Of course, it's also interesting to let the characters feel safe in a certain area, and then stage events that disrupt their cozy home-life. For more information on the places mentioned below, see *The Celestial Almanac*.

The Inner Belt is a convenient place to set a home port. The abundance of trading posts and merchant houses insures a steady influx of conflicts and NPCs, and gives the PCs a quick and easy way to get into space. The presence of so many Antilans and illithids in the Inner Belt insures that a campaign based there will be rife with intrigue and treachery. Characters will have to be careful which side of the various conflicts they chose to ally with, since their decisions will have far reaching consequences.

I imagine that you have been told many stories about those I serve.

Well, believe none of them.

Our masters have been good to the Varan, and wish only peace.



Of course, characters in the Inner Belt may choose to steer clear of the in-fighting altogether and make their fortunes as shrewd traders or mercenaries who sell their swords and skills to both sides. They may not make any friends this way, but that just adds to the excitement.

For a wilder, more violent sort of campaign, a Thoric trading settlement out in the Fringe is a natural setting. Characters here will be faced with dangers constantly, from wild Fringe monsters to neogi vessels trying to elbow their way into the ice trade. This sort of campaign requires little subtlety but is big on sword-swinging heroics. Because no one really knows what is lurking out in the Fringe, this type of campaign becomes one of discovery as well. Perhaps the key to defeating the Arcane is to be found in a Fringe ruin. . . .

Basing a campaign in the Golden Girdle is a way to launch characters full-bore into the schemes of both the Sun Mages and the Arcane conspirators. Of course, this campaign setting can also make for very

short-lived PCs. The Antilans control their society very rigidly, and do not look kindly on “adventurers” who may disrupt their carefully regimented lifestyle. Still, the Girdle is a natural staging ground for a “resistance” type of campaign. The key to a campaign based in this area is suspicion. Who can the characters trust? Who might sell them out?

It should be noted that it is possible for a campaign to begin with the characters as allies to the Sun Mages. This would allow involvement in the high intrigue common among the Antilans and their nobility. But what happens when the characters discover what the Antilans’ chief allies are up to?

A campaign based in the Varan Group has many similarities with one set in the Antilan Empire, but there are also some important differences. The intrigues among the Varan are cruder and more violent than those found in the Sun Mages’ courts. Varan warlords have no qualms about cutting down their competitors, or poisoning whole families to further their own ends.

Wait, I’ll announce you. Don’t forget to show proper deference: bow your heads when entering, do not speak unless spoken to, and do not meet the gaze of the Master. And above all, do not mention the Antilans!

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

The heavy-handed influence of the illithids is omnipresent as well; the mind flayers are always present. There should be a sense of despair and creeping doom in this depraved section of the Cluster. Characters will be forced to hide their resistance to mind flayer schemes very carefully, or face the wrath of the illithids. Remember, the illithids can read your mind. . . .

A similar but even more oppressive setting is the Dark Group. The main difficulty here is the presence of massive hordes of illithids. Characters should be in constant fear, never knowing when the mind flayers are going to show up.

For any sort of long-running campaign using this setting, it is recommended that characters use Achemon as their home port. As the only area in the Group not under illithid control, it is by far the safest. From there, the characters could stage daring raids into illithid territory, or search the many unusual ruins that litter the Dark Group.

For something really different, you might want to experiment with the Trinona area. This gas giant is home to a large Calidian city-state, and towns that float. Characters can act as Calidian agents, searching out new markets for their mercantile employers. Alternately, they could try to cut out a share of the market for themselves, or even attempt an overthrow of the tumultuous local government. This is an excellent setting for any trading-based campaign, and certainly one that will provide an interesting change of pace.

The dwarves of the Cluster aren't exactly gregarious, but they aren't recluses either. It is quite possible to set up a campaign based on Cerekazadh. Naturally, non-dwarves (and outlander dwarves) will have to live on the asteroid's exterior, making them prey to all sorts of nasty flying things, but that's part of the adventure. Characters who set up shop here should be similar in attitude to the dwarves: work hard, play hard, and always fight to the death.

Ironport is a dangerous home port, without question. But it has lots of action. While "friendly," the neogi are endless schemers, and there's no telling what sort of intrigues the characters could get mixed

up with. Considering the neogi rivalry with the Arcane, characters should have no end of excitement here. Most of a campaign set here would involve dealing with the various neogi "tribes" (for want of a better word) and their little plots.

Highport is similar in overall tone to Ironport, but here the tensions between Arcane and neogi are subdued, or at least seem that way. In reality, this artificial port is teeming with agents from both sides. Plot and counterplot are the rule, and characters will often find themselves at the middle of an intricate conspiracy to benefit one side or another.

For another rough-and-tumble setting, the Great Belt offers characters an opportunity to become explorers. People are always in need of new land, air, and water in the Great Belt, and the characters might be just the ones to find it. The Belt is huge, and with so much of it unexplored, characters could literally spend years exploring its vast reaches.

The suggestions above are by no means exhaustive. They are just a few of the many locales that can be used as a home port and provide some insight into the sorts of adventures possible there. There's no reason, for instance, that characters couldn't become involved in shady dealings and intrigues in the Fringe, or spend their days fighting through the Inner Belt's enemies. Turning conventions on their heads can make for exciting play, and such contrasts keeps players on their toes.

## Goals

Now that you know the type of campaign and its location, you need to decide just where your campaign is going to take the characters. It won't be necessary to plan out every place the characters might visit, or any of the numerous adventures they might have. Instead, come up with a few goals that would be exciting for the characters to achieve.

Essentially, there are two types of goals: short-term and campaign goals. Short-term goals are more important than the objective of a single adventure, and may take some time to complete. If each adventure is a chapter in a book, then a short-term

All right, the master will see you.  
Come ahead. Bow, lower, lower—that will do.  
Do not be alarmed by the touch of the Master in your minds.  
It is his way of speaking and will prevent confusion in translation.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

goal is the theme of the novel those chapters are in. For example, your characters might want to eventually buy a spelljammer of their own and start up their own business. That's a pretty big undertaking, but one that can reasonably be achieved by the characters over time.

Campaign goals are much more demanding and should be the major achievements of a character's career. Defeating the Arcane and halting their plans of interdimensional conquest is an admirable campaign goal. It might take years of a character's life and perhaps years of playing to achieve, but it will certainly be a tale worth telling.

Continuing the analogy from above, campaign goals are the driving force behind a whole series of exciting novels. Campaign goals are the stuff of which legends.

When deciding the short-term goals for your campaign, it is advisable to get input from your players. They are the ones who will be playing in the game, after all, and it is part of your responsibility as a DM to keep them amused. That doesn't mean that you should pander to their every whim, but their interests should be taken into consideration. If the characters seem bent on becoming a major trading power in the Cluster, then it's probably a good idea to slant your adventures in that direction and make it a short-term goal.

Campaign goals are harder to decide, because they will shape the tone and texture of your adventures and determine the primary antagonists. For now, don't worry too much about choosing a campaign goal. Later, when you've read through all the booklets in this set, you will be better prepared to make an informed decision. For now, read through the following examples of both short-term and campaign goals. Again, the information presented here is just a starting point. Use those goals that you like, or create your own.

The choice is yours.

Some of the goals presented below are keyed to the adventure "hooks" found in Chapter 3 of this book. DMs can use the hooks to construct adventures that tie into their chosen goals.

## General Short-Term Goals

### Power

This refers to the attainment of a specific position or level of power. Wanting to become the most powerful group in the Cluster is an admirable goal, but not one that is likely to be realized in a short campaign. Plotting to take control of a shipping lane, on the other hand, is a short-term goal worth pursuing.

### Discovery

Whenever characters go looking for anything (whether known or unknown) their goal is discovery. Perhaps the characters have heard rumors of a vast sprawl of ruins found somewhere out in the Fringe, or an artifact buried somewhere in the labyrinth of Ironport. This sort of short-term goal can also concern characters desperately searching for the one spell that can save a cursed comrade.

### Escape

If characters have been kidnapped, imprisoned, or otherwise detained against their will, they are going to want to escape. Many interesting adventures can be based around characters plotting and then attempting to escape from a merciless Antilan slaver. Or perhaps the characters have sold themselves into indentured servitude to a neogi captain as payment of a debt, only to find the contract lasts a lifetime.

### Independence

In a sphere riddled with deadly politics, some characters may decide that they would be better off outside the range of the various power groups. Such characters might wish to start their own colony or trading post. A difficult venture, this short-term goal is one that will require careful thought and planning to pull off. It will also be one of the most satisfying most players have ever encountered.

If you chose to use this sort of goal make the characters and players work for it. Have them figure out trade schedules and methods of transporting the necessary goods, defense, and means of attracting colonists to their new world. And of course, other powers are going to look at the new colony with hun-

I am Brusslg.

So, you would have the history of the Cluster from those of who know it best?

I warn you, it will not be what you think it.

There are many inaccuracies in the arrogant spoutings of the Antilans.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

gry eyes. A longer goal than most of the short-term variety, it is very possible for this to become a campaign goal.

## Wealth

All characters want and need money. While at first this may seem like a greedy, simplistic sort of goal, DMs should realize the consequences of a massive accumulation of wealth. Tax collectors from various governments, unscrupulous “investment counselors,” and out and out con men will all seek out wealthy adventurers.

Outside of the obvious complications of thieves and frauds, wealth can also tie in well with other sorts of goals. After all, the characters are going to have to spend that money sooner or later, and what they spend it on can be the start of another journey to a new goal. Perhaps they’ll purchase a haunted ship (unknowingly of course) or an occupied asteroid mine that they’ll have to clean out. Money is a great springboard for adventures, as long as its accumulation doesn’t become the overriding motivation for characters in a campaign.

## Truth

This is perhaps the most elusive of all goals. For this to work as a short-term goal the DM must set up a situation that will prompt the characters to find out “what’s really going on.” Perhaps the characters learn of a one-time companion accused of some wrong-doing of which he or she must be cleared. Or a renegade Arcane passes on the beginning of a secret to the party before being slain by neogi assassins. Similar to a goal of discovery, the quest for truth can be as simple or elaborate as you like.

Note that the goals listed above are described only in the broadest, vaguest terms. They represent some of the more common types of short-term goals that characters may pursue. Specific short-term goals are listed below, with their basic type noted in parentheses.

## The Ruins of the Dark Group (Discovery)

Nestled in the confines of the illithids’ major power base are countless alien ruins. No one really knows what they contain, and even the illithids generally avoid them. They could contain vital clues in the fight against the mind flayers. Characters may be called upon to investigate and learn their secrets.

Naturally, this will be no easy task. Illithid patrols can disrupt the most carefully laid plans. Varan traitors might find their way into the characters’ confidence and betray them to the mind flayers. Strange creatures live in the ruins, making an unexpected appearance to harass or attack the PCs. Whatever the characters do in the Dark Group, it won’t go unnoticed.

## Our Own Business (Wealth)

The Shattered Sphere is the perfect environment for enterprising player characters. With the demand for trade goods constant, the Cluster can easily support more merchants than it currently does. Perhaps the characters would like to fill this position, starting up their own trading house. Or they could opt to lead other groups into the wilds of the Fringe, or conduct hunting expeditions in the dangerous corners of the Great Belt. The possibilities are endless, but so is the danger of ruthless competitors.

This type of campaign works best with a group of players who enjoy focusing on the role-playing aspects of the game. If your characters decide to start their own business, make it a challenging undertaking. Remember the magic word: overhead. Costs for a simple courier mission can far exceed profits, forcing characters to engage in other work to make ends meet. Another tactic to liven the careers of entrepreneurs is to introduce loan sharks. Characters low on funds may well take out a loan whose payment may be the performance of a dangerous task for the lender.

Owning and running businesses can lead to all sorts of exciting adventures, and DMs should use the trials and triumphs to good effect.

First off, know that we are not the villains we have been accused.  
It is true that we have stopped the rotation of our homeworld,  
but that is only for our comfort.  
We have no designs on the worlds of others.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

## The Way Out (Power)

Though reclusive and few in number, the elves of the Astromundi Cluster hold a position of great power since only they can find their way out of the sphere. Characters may try to discover the secret and use it to undercut the elven monopoly on intersphere travel. This will be very difficult to do, but would cement the characters into a position of power within the Cluster. Of course, if the characters can discover the secret, so can someone else. . . .

## Slaves! (Freedom)

With Antilan slave patrols constantly cruising the sphere, it is quite likely that the characters may find themselves on the wrong side of the shackles. Characters who find themselves captured by the Sun Mages may be transported back to the Shakalman Group and put into labor camps.

Escape from such a place would involve hijacking a spelljamming ship or stowing away. Of course, only Antilan ships are to be found within the Shakalman Group, and those are likely to be heavily guarded. Characters could also start a slave uprising, seizing a crystal ship by force and fighting their way out of Antilan space! Whatever method the characters use, they must be extremely clever and resourceful to escape the clutches of the Sun Mages.

## Campaign Goals

The basic short-term goals listed above are also adaptable to campaign goals. The key is the difference in scope. Short-term goals may involve the search for a powerful magical item, whereas campaign goals would involve the quest to stop the Sun-death (see Chapter Four) by using the item. As said before, accomplishing a short-term goal is no small thing, but completing campaign goals can make the PCs legends.

Below are some different campaign goals characters may choose to pursue, and some of the steps necessary to accomplish such goals.



The Antilans were the aggressors in our wars.  
We did not wish to attack them, but they threatened our space  
and attempted to force their way into our society as rulers—  
despots, despite their noble mouthings.

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

## Founding Fathers

Some characters may decide to begin forging their own free colony. This can make for a number of short-term goals (as shown below), all leading up to a major campaign goal (the creation of a viable colony).

Players should come up with a detailed plan of just how they are going to handle their new colony. Some things they should remember:

1) Location. The characters need a place to put the colony, and most of the prime real-estate has already been claimed by other factions. Finding a good location to start a colony can become an adventure goal in its own right.

2) Clearing the nasties. Most unpopulated sections of the sphere are not inhabited for good reasons. Typically this involves some very nasty critters that need to be removed. Characters may spend a lot of time tracking down one large beast, or several small ones, before they can begin building a home for themselves.

3) Supplies. Because most of the Shattered Sphere is not hospitable, characters are going to have to find a way to get the necessary food, water, and other raw materials to their colony. They may be forced to bribe neogi captains into starting a trade route out to their new home, or ship the stuff in themselves, which is a very expensive proposition.

4) Building. Once the characters have managed to find a place to put their new outpost, cleared out the less savory life-forms and gotten the supplies out there, they need to build something. Carpenters and stonemasons aren't cheap, especially when they have to be transported to a region lacking amenities.

After paying exorbitant prices for skilled laborers, characters may have to deal with pay increases, labor strikes and other problems. While these may seem mundane on the surface, imagine if the problems originated with Varan infiltrators working on behalf of their mind flayer masters. . . .

5) Colonists. Once a few buildings are up, the characters need to convince people to colonize the new place. Will characters offer free land to homesteaders (whom they can later tax) or come up with some other scheme? Convincing businesses to set up shop in the new colony could be difficult, but once the population begins to rise, opportunistic merchants will arrive in abundance.

6) Protection. Even after all that hard work, the colony could be crushed beneath the heel of a larger military force. Diplomacy and treachery may be necessary to keep the Antilans or illithids from turning the new colony into a member of their burgeoning empires.

The founding of a new colony is no task to be undertaken lightly. Characters who set such lofty goals should have a hard time of it, but their rewards should be commensurate with their effort. What could be more satisfying than visiting the colony one of your retired PCs founded?

## Homeworld

The characters may find themselves working with the lizard men, searching for others of that kind. This sort of campaign goal insures near constant travel, and adventures aplenty with the scaled folk. Because this sort of goal is rather loose, other campaign goals can be worked in with it as well. For instance, the characters may decide to establish a base of operations for their search. If the lizard men are seeking others of their race in the Fringe or Great Belt, a goal similar to Founding Fathers (above) may enter into play. Short-term goals of discovery and wealth would also be common to a campaign goal of this type as characters travel far and wide, trading as they go. And there's no telling what the characters might find out there. . . .

## Against the Arcane

The Arcane are pursuing their own agenda and the characters may have to find a way to stop them. This campaign goal is described in more detail later in this

But that is not what you are here for,  
and I will not bother you further with defense of my people.  
If you believed the lies you would not have come here.  
So, shall we start at the beginning?

# THE ASTROMUNDI CAMPAIGN

book, and is sure to add excitement to any game. After all, how often do your characters have the chance to save not just a world, but an entire crystal sphere?

## The Sundeath

The Arcane aren't the only race with something nasty up their sleeves. The illithids intend to put out the Astromundi Cluster's two suns in order to make the sphere more suitable to their needs. This nefarious plot is detailed in Chapter Four, and, like the Arcane plot, is on a grand scale.

The short-term and campaign goals presented above are just a start of the many you may decide to include in your campaign. Feel free to use them as is, mix-and-match or discard them altogether, but it is recommended that you use either the Mystery of the Arcane or the Sundeath, or both, in your campaign. These two conspiracies are central to the setting, and eliminating them can steal a great deal of the Cluster's flavor.

In Chapter Three of this book you will find a number of adventure ideas that can also form the basis of short-term goals for your campaign.

## Story Arcs

Another concept that can add a sense of continuity and connection to your campaign is over-arc-ing storylines. While it may sound complex, creating story arcs is really quite simple. All you need to do is find the common points in several of your short-term or campaign goals. These points serve as the foundations for your arcs, which are short storylines that connect your goals as a whole.

For example, in a sample campaign there are currently three short-term goals and one campaign goal which the characters are pursuing. The first of the short-term goals centers around an NPC friend of the characters who has fallen desperately and mysteriously ill. Thus, the first of the short-term goals is the discovery of the cure for this illness. The second goal involves a mage PC's long-standing feud with a more powerful sorcerer. Naturally, the only way to fulfill

this goal is to do away with the evil sorcerer. The last of the short-term goals can only be fulfilled by discovering what purpose an ancient statue may serve in the bizarre culture of the illithids. The campaign goal is to stop the Antilans tinkering with the central sun of the Astromundi Cluster, before the near-to-inevitable cataclysm.

The first arc is somewhat obvious: the sick NPC has been afflicted by a magical disease by the nefarious sorcerer, which neatly ties together the first two arcs. Only by completing the second goal can the first be achieved. The third short-term goal can be tied into the first two by having the characters discover an identical statue in the possession of the sorcerer. Thus, from three separate, simple goals a complex situation has arisen. The characters want to defeat the sorcerer, but must do so in a way that will leave their friend cured and themselves richer with knowledge concerning the statue. All the short-term goals have been joined by arcs, so that characters pursuing any of the goals find themselves involved in all the others.

The campaign goal can be a little trickier to hook in with the short-term goals. In some cases it may be necessary to work backward from the campaign goal into the short-term goals.

To tie in the campaign goal to the rest of the arcs, the DM decided that the statues were powerful icons of the illithids' god. The characters discover that the icons can be used to thwart the Antilans' plans, as they interfere with the Sun Mages' magic. What the characters don't realize (yet) is that using the icons only furthers the illithids' insidious dream of the Sundeath. And with that stroke, not only are all of the main plots of the campaign drawn together, a second, connected campaign goal has been added, making matters even more intriguing!

Before the First Cataclysm, the Astromundi Cluster was a place of relative peace.

The Three Worlds were large and plentiful in resources.

The humans coexisted happily with the dwarves and elves.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

The Astromundi Cluster is torn with power struggles. The Antilans plot against the illithids who hatch counterplots of their own. The elves plot against no one, but hold all other races as indirect hostages within the sphere's confines. The neogi plot against everyone, furthering their own power through trade while using this power to keep war from breaking out across the Cluster.

The following sections give an in-depth view of several of these power groups. The information provided will clarify the relationships of the different power groups within the Cluster, and doubtless provide the seeds for many an adventure.

**Name:** The name of the faction being described.

**Rank:** The faction's effective power rating, as compared to the other power groups within the Cluster. Rank is decided by such things as wealth, military might, political power, allies, and general standing in the Shattered Sphere. The ranking system goes from 1 to 5, as shown below.

- 1 — This is one of the premier powers in the sphere. Their populations are regarded as the majority, and their ships are easy to identify and found virtually everywhere. A faction of this rank is probably also a military power against which most opponents are helpless. Wealth and clout among other races is impressive as well. Members of these factions are generally recognized on sight (unless they have taken pains to remain secret) and much is known about their relations with other races, both good and bad (even if what they know isn't the truth).
- 2 — An impressive power. The faction can field a very powerful fleet, and few will stand in its way. Factions of this rank are rarely militaristic, though, preferring to increase their power through diplomacy and defeat. After all, with a little manipulation of the more powerful factions, they'll be on top. The members of a faction at this level of power are widely known, though they may go unnoticed or be thought strange in backwater colonies.
- 3 — Right in the middle of the road, power-wise. They don't have a great military, and they aren't rich. Still, they're better off than a lot of people, and know it. It is likely that members of this faction will be recognized and that something will be known about them. Their own ships are vaguely familiar to almost everyone, but they also tend to fly ships of all sorts which makes immediate recognition different.
- 4 — On a quick slide to the unimpressive. This power level indicates the ability to produce a fairly strong, though small army. As far as wealth goes, this power level doesn't indicate an overabundance of riches. Most members of this faction are getting by, but not much more than that. Members of such factions are not completely unknown, but outside of the Inner Ring (or the area they tend to congregate in, if different) they will be something of a curiosity. Generally speaking, the members of a faction of this rank don't fly a particularly memorable standard and aren't that easy to pick out at a distance.
- 5 — These factions are made up of races or other groups of scarce notoriety, many of whom may not even be recognized outside of their immediate home areas, and are likely to be regarded as very strange, and even "alien" outside of the areas they normally inhabit. Their armies will be unimpressive and not at all a threat to most other powers. The members of these factions are sure to make the distinction of who's the more powerful in their own ranking, but aren't likely to be paid any attention.

The change began with spelljamming.  
Men took to the stars in a mad rush,  
charging off to planets that they had seen in the skies since the beginning.  
Thus were the first interplanetary trade routes established.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

**Major Plots:** A description of the major plot(s) and concerns of the faction.

**Minor Plots:** In addition to a faction's primary plans, there are often subsidiary plots in motion at any given time, and these are mentioned here.

**Government:** Information on the type of government employed by each faction. Note that some factions have no central government and their particular chains of command will be discussed here.

**Society:** An overview of a faction's societal standards and way of life. Each race has a distinctive way of doing things and this is described here.

**Military:** Every faction has some sort of military muscle to flex now and then. The type and rough size of each group's military will be discussed.

**Allies:** In a sphere as rife with intrigue and political dirty-dealings as the Astromundi Cluster, it is important to have friends—or at least allies. The relationship between such allies are detailed here.

**Foes:** Just as each faction needs friends, it is inevitable that each will have enemies. Each faction's enemies and its methods of dealing with those enemies will be found here.

## Antilans (Sun Mages)

**Rank:** 1

**Major Plots:** The Antilans are bent on conquest and will stop at nothing until they control all of Clusterspace. To this end, they have long consorted with the Arcane, who lend the Antilans their magical expertise, and fashion powerful weapons and equipment for them. Currently, the Antilans are using their powers and Arcane devices to increase the energy released by Firefall. The sun's energy is vital to the magic of the Antilan Sun Mages, and their powers increase in direct proportion to Firefall's output (see *The Celestial Almanac* for details).

Unfortunately, the Antilans' system of amplifying the sun's energy is a hazardous one. They have placed large mirrors of shadowstone at regular intervals about Firefall. Shadowstone is unique among gems because it not only reflects light energy, it returns it to the source with greater force. Using this property, the Antilans feed energy back into Firefall

which increases the energy it puts out, which increases the feedback. . . .

What the Antilans do not know is that they are compressing the sun, increasing its mass while decreasing its size. This is pushing it to a critical density level. In a few more years (fewer if more shadowstone is put near Firefall) the sun will be compressed to its smallest point. Then it will explode, releasing all of its energy in a cataclysmic wave of fiery death.

The Arcane know this, and it is precisely what they want to happen. For more information about this plot, see the Chapter Five: **Mystery of the Arcane**.

The Antilans also seek the destruction of their illithid foes. For countless centuries, these two races have warred with neither able to emerge as victor. This has led to an obsession with the Antilans, who cannot rest until their tentacled adversaries are at last well and truly defeated.

**Minor Plots:** Shadowstone is very important to the Antilans and their plans to amplify Firefall's energy. The Sun Mages are constantly seeking more of this precious gemstone, and will hire anyone willing to search for the stuff. Adventurers have made hefty profits seeking out mineral pockets of the stuff and selling information of its location to Antilan nobles.

**Government:** The Antilans are a true magiocracy, as only those capable of performing magic are allowed to rise into the nobility. Commoners are strictly forbidden access to magic or magical supplies, which has kept the same noble families in power for thousands of years.

The lowest level of the government is actually a sub-section of the priesthood. The Judicants are the priestesses of Gelanicus, goddess of death. The Judicants are separate from the other levels of government and serve as the law enforcement arm of the Empire. They are ruthless in their upholding of Antilan law, and have been known to invade noble houses suspected of serious violations. Judicants are easy to pick out in a crowd because they always wear jet black masks emblazoned with the fiery skull of their goddess.

The Antilans' primary ruling body is the Assembly, a hundred-member organization. Each of the most

For generations all was well.  
The travel between planets was beneficial to all concerned,  
bringing wealth and arts to the Three Worlds.  
Man and elf and dwarf worked together for the betterment of all.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

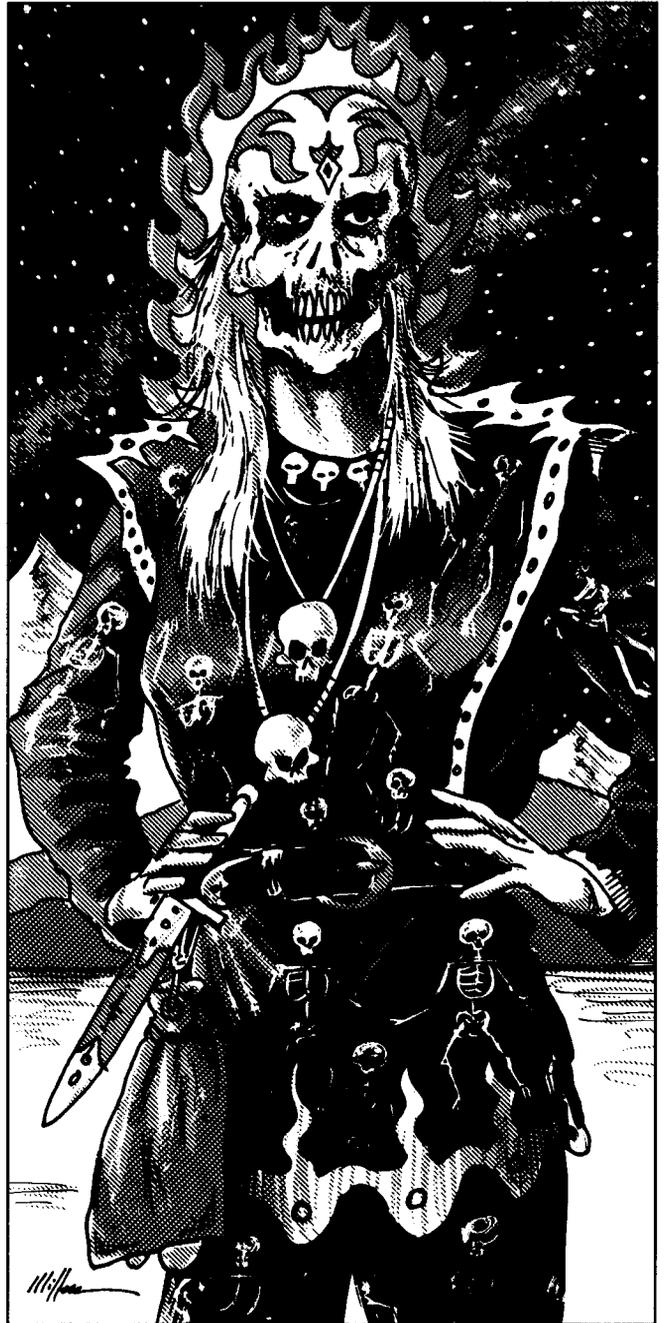
powerful noble houses is represented in the Assembly, with a number of representatives granted in accordance to each family's wealth and power. The Assembly concerns itself with such things as setting taxes, making new laws, organizing the distribution of war spoils to various government or military projects, and other mundane tasks.

More powerful than the Assembly, the Conclave is composed of the most powerful mages and priests of the Antilan nobility. Thirteen is the current number of members, but the Conclave's number is not static and members often leave or are replaced by their peers. In the past, as few as three and as many as seventeen individuals have held posts with the Conclave. The Conclave is the real ruling body of the Antilan Empire, using the Emperor as a figurehead and mouthpiece only.

The Emperor is ostensibly above the Conclave, but in reality is nothing more than that group's puppet. Selected for charisma and heroic history rather than any ability to rule, the Emperor is a figurehead the Antilans can unite behind, and he provides a sterling example of Antilan leadership to other races.

The current Emperor (Markoff IV) really isn't incompetent at all, having served as a general in the Tentacle Wars, and his service was rewarded by ascension to his current post. Of course, he knows where the real power lies, but he has used his position to advance the Antilan military considerably. Markoff is an oddity among the Antilan nobility, being one of the very few Sun Mages who does not trust the Arcane. While he can't put his finger on it, he believes that the Arcane have their own agenda and has several of his personal agents looking into the Arcanes' doings.

**Society:** The Antilans are a magiocracy; ones' place in such a society is determined by family standing and the magic that an individual wields. Because magic is strictly forbidden to the lower classes, there is virtually no upward mobility in Antilan society. The leaders of Antila are naturally in favor of keeping things the way they are, and have passed strict laws that forbid the importing of magic items or texts, save to the noble families themselves.



The First Cataclysm brought all of that to an end.  
Two of the worlds slammed together, grinding their civilizations to dust between them.  
Only Astromundi, the largest of the worlds, survived.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

The Antilans are, by and large, a decadent people, which is one of the reasons slavery exists to the extent that it does. Every free citizen owns at least one slave who sees to his or her personal needs. Nowhere else in the Cluster can one see forced servitude on such a grand scale, and nowhere is it as accepted. In fact, visiting characters should be careful lest they wind up as the main attraction at a slave auction.

The most unique aspect of Antilan life is the custom of masks. All Antilan citizens, from the lowliest freeman to the Emperor himself, wear masks virtually all of their lives. Masks are sometimes fanciful representations of the wearer, but just as often are elaborate creations meant to inspire awe or terror. Personal and family heraldry is inscribed on the mask for identification purposes. No one is quite sure when this custom achieved its status, but things have been this way for thousands of years, and no Antilan can be comfortable in the presence of others without a mask.

**Military:** No military force is as feared as the Antilan Armada. Made up of the elite of the elite and backed by powerful Arcane magics, only the illithids can stand a chance against this fleet.

The Antilan military is the pride of this race, and every young boy and girl dreams of serving in this glorious force. It has become such a way of life, in fact, that virtually every member of the Antilan race that is not crippled or unfit has tried to join. Only a handful out of thousands are taken from each city and transported to the Training Grounds within the Shakalman Group.

With the Training Grounds located so close to Firefall, the temperature are blistering. The training is intensive, sometimes lasting until the cadets faint or die from exhaustion. More than a few of the recruits have been slain in training, either from overexertion or by the swords or arrows of overzealous sparring partners.

Of the few who do make it into service, most will be raw infantry material, trained to take the brunt of the battle and endure hardship with stoicism and racial pride.

A few will become officers, trained in the arts of war and leadership and placed in charge of their fellows. Officers must endure further grueling training, which weeds out the number who actually survive to serve in this capacity.

Even fewer of the young men and women will become Warlocks, the dreaded battlefield mages who accompany all Antilan units into battle. Warlocks are the only mages trained to fight with the dreaded *soul-blades* that drain the very essence of their victims. The most gifted of the trainees will become crewmen on the glorious crystal ships, or even the massive crystal citadels.

These ships are the key elements in any Antilan assault. Crystal ships are the main attack forces, typically carried to the scene of battle aboard the massive citadels and released a short distance from the attack site. This frees the crystal ships from having to carry food and other supplies, increasing the number of troops that can be carried aboard each ship. The citadels are so large that each can carry some fifty crystal ships and enough supplies for each ship and the warriors that it carries.

Citadels are rarely used for direct attack, but they can be brought to bear against particularly resistant targets. The standard method for wearing down such obstinate opponents is to use the citadels' massive bulk and billowing sails to block out the assault target from the suns' rays. This swiftly lowers the temperature of the target settlement.

Over the course of a week, the temperature drops from a relatively balmy 60 degrees Fahrenheit to a frigid 20 or so degrees. These temperatures apply to planets in or near the Inner Belt; temperatures gradually drop the farther one gets from Firefall (the Fringe's temperature fluctuates between 0 and 25 degrees Fahrenheit) and rising the closer one gets to the sphere's center (the Islands of the Sun are never below 100 degrees Fahrenheit and are often nearer to 125 degrees).

Because temperatures are naturally quite stable, most settlements are not prepared for extremely cold weather. Without sunlight crops won't grow, and as crystal ship blockades always surround settlements

But the races were ill-prepared for the sudden cessation of trade.  
They could not support themselves without the wealth and goods of other worlds.  
And then the refugees came, escaping the destruction of their planets.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

that are being “frozen out,” food quickly becomes a problem. Unable to feed or warm themselves, the citizens of these settlements almost always surrender to the Antilan conquerors.

**Allies:** The staunchest allies of the Antilans are the Arcane. These mysterious beings are actually using the Antilans for their own ends, but to do so they must help the Antilans continue their conquest. Thus, the Arcane have been a great boon to the Sun Mages, providing them with spelljamming helms and other tools and weapons to use in conquest. Arcane advisors have a way of getting information, and such “inside” tips have swung the battle in the Antilans’ favor more than once.

The dwarves could be considered the Sun Mages’ allies, if only because they so regularly serve as mercenary troops alongside the Antilan regulars. Of course, if they weren’t well paid, the dwarves would likely become enemies. Mercenaries are like that.

**Foes:** Few associate with the Sun Mages, with the exception of the Arcane. Most other races do what they can to avoid the Antilans, because there really is nothing else that can be done. The Antilans are the most populous race in the sphere, as well as the best armed and most warlike.

Thus far, only the illithids have actually engaged in hostilities with the Antilans. Other races have been the target of Sun Mage aggression, of course, but have yet to mount an effective defense or counterattack. The Antilans are treated with grudging respect throughout the galaxy, but most other races would like nothing more than to see the Antilan Empire fall.

## Arcane

**Rank:** 1

**Major Plots:** The Arcane are involved in what may be the most devastating plot ever to rock the Astromundi Cluster. Millennia ago, the Arcane struck a trade agreement with the tanar’ri—in which they sold the Astromundi Cluster in exchange for “trading concessions to be named later.” Because the tanar’ri lack the means to directly enter the Cluster, to keep their part of the deal the Arcane must open a portal from the Cluster to the Abyss.

In order to make a portal large enough for the armies of the tanar’ri to come through, the Arcane are going to implode Firefall, using the energy of the sun’s collapse to tear the dimensional fabric between the Cluster and the Abyss, allowing hordes of tanar’ri into the Cluster. Unprepared for such an onslaught, the people of the Astromundi Cluster will surely be defeated and enslaved by the tanar’ri.

The means by which this plan will be brought to fruition is discussed in Chapter 5: **The Mystery of the Arcane.**

**Minor Plots:** The Arcane are interested in retrieving as much shadowstone as they can lay their hands on. This element will play a critical role in the major plans of the Arcane (see Chapter 5), and is also used in the manufacture of crystal ships and citadels. The Arcane have their human allies, the Antilans, looking for shadowstone and are constantly hiring adventurers to seek out large deposits of the stuff in increasingly more dangerous territory.

The Arcane also know that the baatezu and their allies are closing in on them. Because of the Blood War between tanar’ri and baatezu, the baatezu do not want the tanar’ri to establish a foothold in the Cluster. Determined to stop their foes, the baatezu have unleashed a number of the dread dizantar to hunt down the Arcane. The Arcane are terrified of dizantar and have hired mercenaries and adventurers to seek out and destroy the dizantar.

**Government:** The Arcane have a very loose form of government which has little influence on their day to day lives. Once a year, all of the Arcane from across the Cluster gather together and discuss issues of importance to the race. Prices are set, trade agreements made, and the next steps in the Darkgate plan (see Chapter 5) are discussed.

Other than these yearly meetings, individual Arcane are allowed to go about their daily business as long as they continue to contribute toward the overall goals of the race. Those that do not cooperate are typically punished with unpleasant assignments far from any major trade centers.

**Society:** The Arcane tend to adopt the societal customs of other races with whom they have fre-

The humans resented those who came seeking aid.  
As populations swelled, humans drew the walls of isolation around themselves.  
They turned against dwarf and elf, waging wars of genocide.



quent contact, and can change from one set of customs to another as easily as most people change clothes. In the Astromundi Cluster, they have modelled their dress and customs to closely approximate those of the Antilans, though they do not share that race's religion or government.

The Arcane of the Cluster, unlike their brethren in other spheres, are not the primary traders in the area, having focused all their energy on the tanar'ri deal. The rewards from that will be far greater than a mere mercantile hold on a single crystal sphere.

**Military:** The Arcane have no military, but are able to call upon large numbers of Antilan soldiers should the need for an armed force arise. They are rarely seen without several bodyguards, as the Antilans place a high value on their Arcane allies.

**Allies:** The Sun Mages are the "chosen" of the Arcane in this sphere. No other race has been so coddled by the mysterious humanoids, or so gifted with powerful spelljamming devices. Because of this, the Antilans will do anything to keep the Arcane

happy. Of course, the Antilans do not realize that they, along with everyone else in the Cluster, has been sold to the tanar'ri by their allies.

**Foes:** No one actively opposes the Arcane, but many individuals are starting to suspect that the Arcane are up to something. Even among the Antilans there are those who think the Arcane are not as trustworthy as they appear, and questions about the Arcane's real plans for the Cluster are beginning to spread.

While these rumors are an annoyance to the Arcane, they are something that can be dealt with, unlike the appearance of the dizantar.

The dizantar are powerful creatures bent on destruction, sent by the baatezu to hunt the Arcane. Only a handful have been discovered in the Cluster, but their appearance sent the Arcane into a panic and caused them to hire a number of adventurers to kill the dizantar. Characters who discover the Arcane plan and try to stop it will gain a major advantage if they can find and ally with the dizantar.

The elves took to the stars then,  
unwilling to war and unable to prevent humans from hunting them.  
The dwarves quickly followed suit,  
pulling back into the asteroid belts to hide from the humans.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

## Illithids

**Rank:** 1

**Major Plots:** The illithids are currently being led to “glorious conquest over all other races” by an avatar of their god Lugribosk. The avatar is helping the illithids to extinguish the suns of the Astromundi Cluster. The exact method of accomplishing this devastating task is detailed in **Chapter Four: The Sun-death**.

This plot is consuming the majority of the illithids’ resources, and has severely overextended their manpower, forcing them to hire mercenaries to complete some of their tasks. While this would seem like a perfect opportunity for the Antilans to attack the thinly-spread illithids, it should be remembered that the illithids do not appear to be overextending themselves. To outsiders, they appear to be as powerful as ever. No one knows that the illithids are currently being led by a powerful avatar of their deity, and the illithids guard this secret very carefully. They know only too well that if their avatar is discovered, the Sun Mages will spare no expense to have it incapacitated or killed.

**Minor Plots:** In order to complete their plans of dominating the Cluster, the illithids are going to need more manpower and money. To fulfill these two needs at once, the illithids are trying to strike a deal with the baatezu, extraplanar fiends who share the illithids’ desire for conquest and hatred for the Arcane. Though the illithids are unaware of it, the Arcane are (temporary) close allies with the chaotic tanar’ri, hated enemies of the baatezu.

The baatezu are wary of forming any pacts with the illithids at the moment, however. While they desire a foothold on the prime material plane, the baatezu are leery of allying with any group led by a powerful being such as an avatar. The illithids’ god may be weak, but it is still much more powerful than most baatezu. For now, the illithids’ plot to gain allies from beyond the prime material plane is moving ahead very slowly.

**Government:** The illithids are governed by their priest-caste, who commune on a daily basis with the avatar. The avatar communicates with all of the illi-

thid priests at once, contacting them via telepathy. The power of the illithids in this sphere has allowed this ability to be used at will, and with any priest that is within the sphere. All illithid leaders are accompanied by at least one priest who can receive the avatar’s orders every day, more often if the situation warrants it.

The priest-caste is also in charge of the day-to-day running of the illithid empire. They organize the illithid forces and assign special duties to the agents of the mind flayers. Because they are slain if they are seen to be failing in their duties, priests are extremely cautious in the orders that they give. Even so, they rarely survive for more than a few years. Those that exist as priests for longer are among the most crafty individuals of any race.

**Society:** Illithid society in Clusterspace is centered around their religion, which gives them a common goal and keeps the various mind flayers from squabbling amongst themselves. While such religious zeal is not a problem in private, in public the illithids give the impression of a coldly logical race without need of religious trappings. This has gone a long way toward keeping their avatar a secret; who would believe the cold-blooded mind flayers could have a god that cared enough to send an avatar?

Illithids are organized into a caste system, with birth determining one’s beginning caste. The priest-caste rules illithid society, serving as go-betweens for the avatar. The sorcerer-caste is second in power, with powerful wizards often being granted audiences with the avatar. Though the priest-caste are technically higher in authority than the sorcerers, priests rarely assert their authority over the sorcerers unless directed by the avatar.

Below the sorcerer-caste, the so-called instigator-caste exists as go-betweens with the humans and other races of the Cluster. Those of the instigator-caste are the only illithids most other races will ever see. The instigators are schooled in control of their more violent side and know how to hide their revulsion of all other races. This has given them a very cool and calculating manner which other races typically find intimidating or arrogant.

Humanity turned in on itself then, and began its slide into degeneracy.  
They lost the art of spelljamming almost completely,  
and only a handful of their kind took to the stars in search of a new world.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

The servile-caste are dedicated to the service of the higher castes. Servile illithids are by no means slaves, but function as butlers, chamberlains, and other servitor positions within illithid society.

The Varan have a special place among the illithids, acting as mouthpieces for the mind flayers in areas where the illithids are not well received. The Varan also act as agents for the illithids, going places where the mind flayers can or will not, and performing tasks the illithids do not want to be associated with. While a step above a true slave, the Varan are certainly second-class citizens within the illithid empire, and they know it. When an illithid gives orders to a Varan, the Varan always obeys, even to the point of self-destruction. Though no one is sure exactly what began this relationship between the two races, it is one that has lasted for more than a thousand years.

The lowest caste within illithid society is the slaves. The slave caste is made up of members of every other race; the illithids do not discriminate in who they buy from the slave markets. Slaves are regarded as less than intelligent beings, and more as tools than living creatures. Illithids use their slaves without regret, and will dine on them without mercy. No life is more bleak than that of an illithid's slave.

**Military:** The illithids possess considerable military might, from their spellweaving sorcerers to slave shock troops. They are also masterful tacticians, capable of viewing a battle from many sides at once and turning random variables to their advantage. Though considerably smaller in size than the Antilan military, the sword arm of the illithids has beaten back the Sun Mages more than once.

The Varan are also an important part of the illithid military, acting as saboteurs and agents provocateur for the illithids. Masters of stealth and striking from the shadows, the Varan have foiled many plans of the illithids' enemies. If a ship catches fire in illithid territory, or ship's supplies run low after offending a mind flayer captain, it is certain a Varan is behind it.

**Allies:** The illithids have little need for allies, though they do not go out of their way to make enemies. Essentially, they are neutral to all other races, dealing with them when they must but making no

alliances or promises of aid. This has given them a reputation as arrogant, but such reputations have less than no effect on the illithids.

The Varan are the closest thing to allies the illithids have, and they are treated more like indentured servants or chattel than true allies.

**Foes:** The illithids are hated by the Arcane and Sun Mages. The Arcane/Sun Mage alliance has long fought against the illithid empire, doing whatever they can to bring about an end to the mind flayers' power. The neogi have used trade sanctions to keep the warring between the two races in check, but the fires of hatred always smolder close to the surface.

The Hidden (see Calidians, this chapter) are also enemies of the illithids, striking at their slave plantations and ships that carry slaves as cargo. The illithids have been frustrated by these attacks, as they do not know their source. Unfortunately for the Hidden, the Varan have been ordered to find the source of the attacks and it may be only a matter of time before the Hidden are discovered.

**Special Note Concerning Psionics:** Not all DMs allow psionics in their campaigns, either for player characters or NPCs and monsters. These DMs should carefully reconsider their stance on the unique powers of the mind. The illithids are, after all, referred to as "mind flayers" and are quite adept at the use of psionic powers. Such abilities give them a special flavor that players will never forget.

For those DMs who do use psionics in their campaign, it is suggested that at least one player character be allowed to utilize psionics as well. This will give the party a sorely needed edge in fighting the illithids, and makes for interesting story hooks. Remember, the Antilans do whatever they can to "recruit" psionic characters for battling the illithids.

If psionics are used in a campaign, the following notes will be of some help in running a game.

The illithid priest-caste is composed completely of psionically powered mind flayers. These have the same powers that are listed in PHBR5, *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, plus any that are deemed appropriate.

Illithid spelljamming ships are powered by psionics, but the ships are specifically tuned to illithid

As inbreeding became common, some of mankind's offspring changed, and were shunned.  
This race of unwanted children fled beneath the crust of Astromundi.  
That race was us.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

mental powers. Thus, it is impossible for a psionist of any other race to power an illithid craft.

Varan agents of the illithids are often psionic as well. It is suspected that the mind flayers are able to endow some Varan with psionic powers.

Include plenty of psionic creatures for characters to battle. While it is true that psionics are far from commonplace, if they are allowed for the characters, monsters should have them as well.

Psionics are rare! Outside of illithid society, no more than 1 being in 10,000 will have any measurable amount of psionic ability. Even illithids are not psionic as a rule. No more than 1% of their population is capable of using true psionics, the rest having only the abilities listed in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™*.

## Varan

**Rank:** 2

**Major Plots:** The Varan are primarily a race of servants to the illithids. For the most part, they have no higher ambition than to serve their illithid masters. The traders of Boyarny are the exception to this rule, using their relative freedom from illithid domination to increase their own power. For now, the Varan of Boyarny are happy to just maintain their freedom, but in the future they plan to strike against the illithids to free their brothers and sisters. Of course, there is no guarantee that the other Varan want to be free. . . .

**Minor Plots:** The Varan of Boyarny are seeking out any and all information about the illithids. They haven't made any real progress as of yet, but they are dumping large amounts of gold into the pockets of adventurers willing to dig for a few facts. What they intend to do with this information is uncertain, but it could be used as a weapon against the illithids.

**Government:** Most Varan are ruled by the illithids, who demand complete subservience from their human servitors. This relationship arose in centuries past, when the illithids managed to trick the primitive Varan into believing that the mind flayers were gods. Over the years, Varan families have instilled in their children the importance of obeying the illithid mas-

ters, but the reason for this has been lost over the years. Now, most of the Varan race serve the illithids blindly, doing whatever is asked of them.

The Varan of Boyarny have broken free from this chain of tyranny, largely because the illithids never laid claim to that colony. The Varan of Boyarny have their own government made up of three rulers who make decisions for all of Boyarny. For the time being, the illithids are content to let these Varan remain free. Should they become a problem, however, it is certain that the illithids will crush them.

**Society:** The illithid-serving Varan have no culture or society of their own. The Varan of Boyarny have a fledgling society based primarily around agriculture and trading. The Thoric of Boyarny are more than willing to help their Varan partners, and together they have made Boyarny a profitable little settlement.

**Military:** The Varan have no military but are, in effect, a large portion of the illithid military. Some of those who work as illithid servants are masters of sabotage and sneak attacks. These specially trained men and women are the illithid terrorist squads.

The Varan of Boyarny are not as martially adept as the others, but they more than make up for it with the arrangement they have with their Thoric co-settlers. The Thoric provide more than sufficient muscle to protect their Varan friends from anything but a major strike by the illithids. This strike may be coming sooner than the Thoric think.

**Allies:** The Varan are having a very hard time gaining friends among the other races. Most people readily recognize the Varan as agents of the illithids, and avoid them accordingly. Paradoxically, the Varan of Boyarny are actually aiding the illithids. By establishing trust with the settlements along the Boyarny trading routes, the Boyarny Varan are improving the Varan image, which is making it somewhat easier for the illithid-serving Varan to sneak into areas they need to. For the Boyarny Varan, it is a frustrating and dangerous situation.

**Foes:** Factions that dislike the illithids have similar feelings about the Varan. But for fear of angering the illithids, the Varan are most often left alone. While they are universally distrusted, they are also granted

Our existence was a hard one, and we spent our lives trying to better our lot.  
We staged raids into the libraries and lost museums of our ancestors,  
and became versed in the arts that they had lost.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

a certain degree of respect.

The Calidian Hidden, however, have no compunctions about striking at the illithid-serving Varan, whom they refer to as “flayer friends,” and fierce hostility has flamed to life between the two.

## Neogi

**Rank:** 2

**Major Plots:** The neogi are a devious race, involved in any number of schemes and twisted plots. Primarily, the neogi want to be the only traders in the sphere. To this end they have become very protective of their trade routes, using whatever means necessary to keep others out of their markets. The Calidians have always been a thorn in the collective neogi posteriors, and of late, tensions are high between the two races. The Calidians have begun sneaking on to neogi trade routes, undercutting the competition even if it means taking a loss themselves.

The neogi have taken exception to this tactic (mainly because it's something that they would do themselves) and are using their influence to warn off certain Calidian customers. With such conflict between Calidian and neogi traders, the Arcane are hard-pressed to keep the peace in the jointly-operated Highport. Subtle adventurers are likely to find employ here, working as agents for either side of this conflict.

The neogi are also currently working out an agreement with one of the major beholder nations within the sphere. Unknown to anyone (including the illithids, who think they know everything), the neogi plan to use the beholders to become a military, as well as mercantile, power within the Cluster.

The beholders are willing to work with the neogi, because having an ally who can provide them with weapons and magical items aids their plots against their brethren. The neogi were more than happy to use the race hatred that exists between the beholder nations to their own ends. This is a plot that, if not stopped, could spell trouble for most of the races that live within the Astromundi Cluster.

As if that weren't enough, these devious traders

have long been involved in fueling the flames of war between the illithids and the Antilans. Through a campaign of disinformation and outright propaganda, the neogi have convinced each race that the other is engaged in all manner of nefarious activities. While to some extent this is true (after all, each faction has its own agenda), the neogi keep the leaders of both factions worried about just what the other is up to.

The neogi desire this state of low-grade paranoia; it allows them to sell “information” to both sides and keeps both illithids and Antilans trading for bigger and better weapons to fight their enemies. Eventually, the neogi hope to spark a war that will destroy both sides in this long-lasting feud, leaving them as the prime power in the Cluster.

**Minor Plots:** The neogi are masters of deception. They use their talents to keep other races confused about just what the others are doing. Like the lies they tell the Antilans and illithids, these untruths are directed at convincing people that they need the information the neogi are selling.

As a new sideline to their normal trade in goods, the neogi have begun to seek out certain strange artifacts, all of which have three spiders engraved on their surface. They are especially interested in such items with origins in or around the Trinona system. The neogi priest caste is behind the search for these objects, believing they will lead to a resurgence of the ancient neogi deities. The priests hope to use the ascendance of the elder gods to provide the blessings for the neogi quest for dominance.

The Thoric people have lately come to the attention of the neogi, who desperately want to ally themselves with this advanced human race. After all, if the neogi could get the secret of the Thoric tradesman cargo ship, they would effectively neutralize the edge the Calidians currently have. So far the Thoric people have remained cool toward the neogi overtures of alliance.

**Government:** The neogi are ruled by a mysterious group of elders known as the Clutch. No one is quite sure where the Clutch is at a given moment, and personal audiences with them are rare. In actuality, the

*We carved our tunnels wider and deeper,  
creating great halls and wondrous homes for ourselves.  
Those times were good, and we became content with our lot.  
Never since has our race been so happy.*

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

Clutch is composed of three ancient neogi preserved through magical means. The Clutch dwells on the surface of the Maw, using the murderoid's lethal reputation as a method of cloaking themselves. From time to time, the Clutch will leave the Maw in a great mindspider and travel to the centers of neogi culture to deliver their edicts for the coming year.

Of late, the priest caste has begun spreading dissent among the neogi, directed at the Clutch. Always ambitious, the priests are hoping to seize power for themselves. Naturally, the Clutch knows what is going on, and in true neogi fashion, are plotting to have the rebels killed.

**Society:** Neogi society within the Cluster is based upon a caste system. All neogi are vividly tattooed with phosphorescent dyes that show their caste and standing within the caste. Traditionally there are three castes: priests, traders, and nobles. Priests are the lowest of the castes (though the unnamed fourth caste is lower by default) and the least respected despite their attempts to revive their religion. At present the members of the priest caste are clerks and record keepers for the other castes.

Traders perform the most essential task in neogi culture: commerce. They are the neogi most often encountered out and about, and bring in virtually all the wealth to neogi society.

The nobles are essentially members of the other castes who have risen to the summit of the social system. As such they get a cut (based on their caste standing) of all the profits brought in by the traders and tithes taken by the priests.

A fourth caste has come into existence over the past few decades, though it has no name. These uncaste individuals are treated as chattel by those of the castes above them and can be bought or sold as property. The fourth caste individuals have no tattoos, but may attempt to rise into one of the castes by challenging a casted individual. If successful, the uncaste neogi is tattooed with the symbols of his new caste, and the loser is scarred over all his tattoos and becomes property of his challenger. Note that only the lowest of casted neogi may be challenged in this way. Other casted neogi always strive to rise within



Our greatest sages turned their minds inward, while our scholars searched without.  
Our powers of magic and psionics grew,  
and our lives were enriched by our new-found abilities.

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their caste, ascending the social ladder as they do so and distancing themselves from the desperate uncaste.

Clusterspace neogi have developed a ritualistic series of challenges that determine dominance within their society and prevent bloodbath wars between power-hungry status-seekers. The challenges are of a personal nature and are of a sort best performed through subterfuge rather than brute force. In fact, it is not necessary for a challenger to even announce his challenge until he has succeeded in his bid for advancement, or has been discovered in the process. The challenges are as follows:

- **Fear:** The challenger must do something (or have something done) that strikes terror into the hearts of the opponent. Typical Fear challenges include repeated near-miss assassinations, threatening notes, business takeovers (in the case of the merchant caste), and other similar acts.

- **The Wounding:** The challenger must deliver a serious wound to his opponent without being caught. This can be very dangerous, despite the fact that missile weapons can be used. Challengers who fail to deliver the Wounding within thirty days of the Fear must reveal themselves and submit to a Ritual Duel.

- **Disgrace:** This phase of the challenge involves bringing shame and humiliation down on the challenged neogi. Typical challenges of this sort include sabotage on an opponent's business, spreading heinous lies about his personal life, or revealing hidden inadequacies or shameful secrets to the public.

- **The Submission:** After all the challenges have been performed, the challenger must publicly confront the challenged before their peers. At this time, they engage in combat, fighting until one submits to the other. If the challenger wins, he rises in status and receives his new tattoos and half the property of the loser, while the challenged is lowered in status and wealth. Should the challenger lose, however, it is perfectly acceptable to sell him into slavery or kill him outright for his presumption.

Because the challenged has the right to choose a champion to fight for him in the Submission, it is

dangerous to challenge those of a significantly higher status than oneself, who will certainly have more and better servants and access to better champions.

**Military:** The neogi military is composed of their umber hulk servitors and any other mercenaries they may hire. They are not a particularly powerful military power, but their unique trading position protects them from attack.

There is no record of a neogi attack, but should the neogi ever need to take such an action they will likely soften defenses up by sealing off trade routes leading to and from their target. Starvation is a wonderful weapon, and the neogi are devious enough to use it to best effect. Mass poisonings are another neogi trick, and with water supplies usually confined to one area of a settlement (because they often have to be thawed from asteroids of ice), slipping a potent poison in would be no trouble at all.

Of course, any neogi assault would be prefaced by an invasion of agents who would scout out the weak points of the target and strike from within. Any military action with the neogi is going to be fraught with deception and underhanded dealings, and conventional generals will have to alter their tactics to combat those of the devious traders.

**Allies:** The neogi have no real allies, but everyone depends on them for trade goods. This endears them to no one, but does keep them on relatively good terms with those settlements on their trade routes. The neogi would like to ally themselves with the Thoric in order to have steady access to technology and new ship designs, but this is not likely to happen in the near future.

**Foes:** Everyone is a potential enemy to the neogi. If their plans are ever discovered there will surely be an uprising against them, and they are liable to be destroyed by the very forces who now depend on them. This has led the neogi to carefully conceal their true plots from those with whom they deal, and even the illithids remain (for the most part) ignorant of what the neogi are planning.

This doesn't mean that they are well liked, however. The Calidians would like nothing better than to see the neogi destroyed, as this would give the

The humans came for us without warning.  
Our upper levels were the target of human predations.  
Our young were slain, our women stolen for purposes I dare not think.  
It was a nightmare time.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

human merchants valuable trade routes that the neogi now possess. The illithids and Antilans have no love for the neogi either, but are so dependent upon the dominant mercantile force for raw materials and other imported goods that they can take no direct action.

## Thoric

**Rank:** 2

**Major Plots:** Of all the races, the Thoric are the most honest and least prone to elaborate conspiracies. They want to be left alone to pursue their lives in peace and freedom. Unfortunately, neogi and Calidians alike are not likely to let the Thoric off so easily. Both of these races desperately want to ally themselves with the Thoric, and by doing so gain a vital edge in the trade war. Their high rank is a result of these potential allies and the Thoric's advanced technology.

**Minor Plots:** The Thoric are vaguely interested in seeing the neogi race fall into disrepute, if only to end the constant feuding with the Calidians. Though the Thoric have no particular love of the Calidians, at least they are human. So far, the Thoric have made tentative moves towards siding with the Calidians, allowing them to use Tradesman-class ships and providing mercenary forces on occasion.

**Government:** The Thoric are ruled by their queen, a solitary, rarely seen woman who is known to live out in the Fringe, where the bulk of the Thoric have settled. The queen is absolute monarch of the Thoric, but rarely calls down edicts or forces her citizens to do things not in their nature. More often, the queen acts through the leaders of settlements, allowing them to solve disputes in her name. Of course, this free-wheeling sort of government would be impossible in more devious cultures, but among the Thoric it works just fine.

**Society:** The Thoric are a reclusive people for the most part, uncomfortable around strangers. They hide their discomfort very well, and appear to be some of the most plain-speaking and easy-going people in the Cluster. Inside, though, a Thoric among strangers is extremely nervous.

The Thoric chose to settle in the Fringe for this reason, and because there was little competition for food or land out that far. While the other races were scrabbling for those necessities in the near-sun sections of the Cluster, the Thoric were roughing it on the Fringe. Eventually their frontier spirit paid off, and the Thoric now control the Fringe and its supply of ice, which other races need for water. The Fringe is also the only place that the *urig* live. This fur-bearing animal is prized for its pelt, which the Thoric are expert at working into garments.

The Thoric have benefitted from their nearness to the crystal shell and the travelers that occasionally come through. Over the years they have become adept at using more modern technologies (such as wheel- and flint-lock pistols and cannon). This knowledge has led them to produce quite a few innovative designs of their own, with the Thoric tradesman chief among these. Any other race would be more than happy to get their hands on these excellent cargo ships, but the Thoric aren't selling. The only others that the Thoric allow to use them are the occasional Calidian traders.

**Military:** The Thoric have little need for a standing army or navy of any sort. They have no desire to conquer other races, and their isolation and advanced weaponry makes it very unlikely that anyone would ever seek to conquer them. After all, the Thoric tradesman is the only ship (outside of the crystal citadels) that can make the trip from the Inner Ring to the Fringe in any reasonable amount of time, and the Thoric aren't giving these ships away. For now, the Thoric can enjoy their isolated lifestyle without the imminent threat of conflict so common elsewhere in the Cluster.

**Allies:** The Thoric are friendly with any race that welcomes them, which is nearly all others. They are the only reliable source of water (their ice asteroids), and so are welcome wherever they decide to put in. This keeps them safe as well, because no one wants to jeopardize a friendly source of water.

**Foes:** Only the neogi are the Thoric's foes. These traders are very bitter about the loaning of tradesman-class ships to the Calidians. Though they try to

A peaceful people, we were suddenly forced to war.  
We had no experience in this, and our confrontations  
with the vile Antilans were brief and bloody.  
Beaten repeatedly, we withdrew even deeper into the earth.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

hide it behind a veneer of civility and bribes, the neogi would like nothing better than to see the Thoric crushed and their ships sold to the highest bidder. Which, of course, would be the neogi.

## Calidians

**Rank:** 3

**Major Plots:** The Calidians are currently involved in a mercantile showdown with the devious neogi. Their most important goal is to become the premier trading power within Clusterspace. To accomplish this feat, the Calidians have begun consorting with a strange race of newcomers: the dowhar. These bird-like traders (see below) have only recently found their way into Clusterspace and they are delighted at what they have found.

Here the Arcane are not avid traders as they are in other spheres, allowing the dowhar to take control of mercantile matters. Of course, revealing themselves to the neogi at this time would be a tactical disaster, as it would give away the advantage of surprise. Thus, while other races think that the Calidians are talented newcomers, the real expertise lies in the hands of the dowhar.

This is why some Calidian traders have the annoying habit of pausing frequently, sometimes stopping in mid-sentence. In fact they are receiving information from their dowhar partners, who use their *ESP* to monitor trading sessions. No one knows of the dowhar except for the Calidians, who prefer to keep their allies secret for obvious reasons.

When traveling through dangerous territory, the dowhar bring giff mercenaries with them. This has raised some eyebrows (especially among the neogi), because no one had seen giff before the Calidians began using them as guards on their trading vessels. The Calidians have managed to fend off most of the questions so far, but sooner or later, their clever answers are going to run out and the dowhar are going to be discovered. Calidians and dowhar alike are hoping that by the time this happens, the neogi will be bankrupt and out of the way.

What the Calidians do not know is that they are dupes of the dowhar. Eventually, the penguinlike

traders are going to discard the Calidians as used up tools, leaving them worse off than they were when they started. If the Calidians don't figure this out for themselves, yet another race will have their chance to "conquer" the beleaguered Calidians.

**Minor Plots:** The Calidians are a noble race with big ideas about the way things should be. While they are attempting to establish themselves as powerful traders, they also want to spread freedom and hope wherever they go. To this end, the Calidians are spreading their religion, the worship of Tradifos. This deity of wayfarers requires his followers to move around, and as long as people move about, they are free. Or at least that's the Calidian logic.

Anywhere the Calidians come across injustice or inequity, they are likely to become involved in righting the wrong. This often wars with their merchant mentality—and where profit margins meet crusading, there's no telling which will win. Of course, the Hidden are the exception, refusing to engage in trade while doing what they can to free the oppressed people wherever they are (but especially operating against the hated neogi and illithids).

**Government:** The Calidians have no true central government. Instead, each family (or Trading House) governs itself and the affairs of those linked to them (such as servants and employees). The Trading Houses meet irregularly to discuss matters of importance to all of them. At these meetings all are supposed to be equal, but those with the most money and power are normally the most influential.

The houses and their locations, in order of importance, are Lanish (who co-run Highport with the neogi), Fokig (Dalmania), Trinona (Trinona), Thandilan (Thandilan), The Shattered Houses (Calimar), and the Hidden Houses.

**Society:** Calidian society is a free-wheeling one, with freedom and individual choice prized above all else. This concern for individual rights is a product of the hard road the Calidian civilization has followed. From the beginning of recorded history, the Calidians have been a prize race, passed back and forth between the Antilans and illithids. Twice in the past the entire race was sold to one party or by the other.

There, crouched in the dark, our baser impulses cried out.  
We gnashed our teeth and pounded our breasts in frustration.  
Our children began to die, weak and unable to survive. As a race we were lost.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

Only recently (in the past three hundred years) have the Calidians been able to free themselves from the shackles of their oppressors.

Taking flight, the Calidians sundered their central government and broke into what are now the Trading Houses. By careful planning and by staying hidden until they were powerful enough to be left alone, the Calidians were able to gain their freedom.

Of course, once they made their reappearance, Antilan and illithids alike decided to put the Calidians in their place. Now, several of the Calidian settlements have fallen, and several more are in danger of being conquered. Only the actions of the Hidden manage to keep them free.

**Military:** Calidians have very little military might, as seen by the continuing threats by would-be conquerors. To combat this, the Calidians have turned to guerilla warfare, via the Hidden Houses. These lesser houses have become dangerous assassins, using their anonymity to infiltrate other factions and “neutralize” enemy leaders.

Despite their ruthlessness, the Hidden Houses are very selective about their targets. They are very proud of the fact that they have never killed an innocent (though what they mean by this is unclear), and always deal with their targets in a relatively clean manner. Their reputation is spreading; even the illithids are beginning to worry about the Hidden.

**Allies:** The Calidians are not close to any of the other races, but believe the dowhar to be their allies. The Thoric are also friendly with the Calidians, as seen by the Calidian use of the Thoric tradesman ships. The elves see the Calidians as the lesser of two evils, and are considering allowing the Calidians access to the phlogiston and the goods that such access will bring to them. If this occurs, the elves may be the factor that pushes the Calidians ahead of their neogi adversaries.

**Foes:** The neogi are the foes of the Calidians by mutual agreement. Though the races are not openly hostile to one another (fighting would decrease both of their profits), they will do what they can to hurt each others’ reputation in their respective markets. Other races are not exactly friendly with the Calidi-

ans, and the Antilans and illithids are downright hostile, if only for historical reasons. Only in the Inner Ring’s neutral zone will the three races be seen together, not fighting.

If the Hidden’s home base is discovered, it is very likely that the Calidians will attract a horde of unhappy foes, all of whom will be more than happy to destroy the traders.

## Dowhar

**Rank:** 3

**Major Plots:** The dowhar are a strange group of penguinlike creatures only recently arrived in the Astromundi Cluster. They arrived while pursuing a neogi tradeship (which had attempted to capture them) from RealmSpace. Realizing that they were badly outnumbered by their neogi rivals, the dowhar have allied themselves with Calidian trading houses in an attempt to bolster their numbers. While it is true that the neogi are the primary merchants within the Cluster, the dowhar regard them as nothing more than upstart amateurs ignorant of the true subtleties of trading among the stars.

The dowhar have managed to get word back to their fellows in other spheres through elven messengers, but only the most brave or foolhardy of dowhar have answered the call. As a result, the dowhar in the Astromundi Cluster are both desperate and dangerously courageous, a rare combination for the normally self-centered beings. These efficient traders are determined to make this sphere one in which they are the primary trading power.

The Calidians believe that the clever dowhar are going to bring them along on their ride to the top, but nothing could be further from the truth. Once the dowhar have achieved their ends they will allow the Calidians to remain as minor traders and no more.

**Minor Plots:** The dowhar have managed to remain hidden from all but the Calidians and a few elven traders. Now, though, they believe that they may be in danger of being discovered too early in their plans.

In order to remain hidden, they would like to move their base of operations into the Sargasso of Skulls. To this end the dowhar have sent a troop of their giff

Our anger was answered, then, by a force we could not comprehend.  
It spoke to us in our minds, showing us the way.  
Our magicks became more forceful, much more powerful than before.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

soldiers (using magical disguise to appear human) out in search of this area's secrets.

**Government:** The dowhar have no real government, because there are so few of them. If more than a hundred or so ever get to one place, though, they will pick a "head trader" who will lead the others. The current leader of the dowhar is Ropawona, a one-eyed merchant of great skill.

**Society:** Dowhar society is communal. While there is a ranking system based on profit margins, all wealth brought in by the dowhar is spread equally among them all. This arrangement is rare among the dowhar outside the Cluster, but here it is a matter of survival. By supporting one another, the dowhar are enhancing their ability to act effectively against the neogi. Despite the fact that the dowhar's standard of living is fairly uniform, everyone knows that Ropawona is the true leader. All others have a say in what goes on, but Ropawona is in charge.

**Military:** The dowhar have no military, but as they are currently hidden from all but their allies, they don't need one. Still, the dowhar know the benefits of strong protection and keep their giff mercenaries close at hand. Typically, five giff will be present with any one dowhar, but more may be present if the trader is expecting trouble.

**Foes:** The dowhar have no real enemies. If they are discovered, however, they will doubtless face ruthless aggression from neogi mercenaries. Though other races have little to fear from the dowhar, the neogi will certainly fear for their profits and attempt to shut down any trading newcomers.

**Allies:** Of course, the Calidians are the dowhar's strongest allies, because they are one of only two races that know of their existence. The elves are unspoken allies of the dowhar, as well, taking messages outside the crystal sphere for the merchants. As with all their dealings, the elves keep these transfers strictly confidential.



We returned to our abandoned homes then,  
led by the force that had come to us in our night of despair.  
Then, when we felt our powers at their peak, we prepared to strike.

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## Dwarves

**Rank:** 4

**Major Plots:** On the surface of things, the dwarven race seems to be one of little ambition. They exist primarily as miners or mercenaries and seem to have no intention to move into the larger political arena. In fact, the Four Kings (see below) are plotting their rise to power. Like all things dwarven, this planning has gone quite slowly, as each portion of their grand scheme is meticulously worked out.

At present, the dwarven plan is proceeding on schedule. Most races are dependent on the dwarves for their mineral wealth, and many are becoming extremely dependent on the dwarves for military might as well. That is the linchpin of the dwarven philosophy: get everyone to depend on your resources. At some point in the future, the dwarves are going to withdraw their metal supply from the markets and call their mercenary troops back to their homes. Without metal or troops, other races are going to be easy pickings. At least that's what the dwarves believe.

Unfortunately, not everyone is ignorant of the dwarves plan. The illithids, for instance, have used their mental powers to pierce the dwarven veil of secrecy and have since begun procuring their own supply of metal (the Calidians at Calimar are a prime supplier at this point). The Antilans, too, have their suspicions, but are finding it very hard to break their years of reliance on dwarven mercenary troops. Slowly, the Sun Mages intend to phase these squads out of their attack plans.

The dwarves plot and plan, with every day making it less and less likely that their schemes will succeed.

**Minor Plots:** Part of their plan to conquer the crystal sphere rests on the fact that no other race has proven to be a stable provider of metals and minerals. The Calidians at Calimar are starting to change this, though, and the dwarves don't like it one bit.

Currently, they are trying to work their way onto Calimar using agents posing as laborers. The idea is for the agents to sabotage the mines, making them less and less profitable until at last they are given up for good. Naturally, the dwarves don't want to be tied

to such goings-on and are willing to hire characters to do their dirty work for them. . . .

**Government:** The dwarves are ruled by the so-called Four Kings. These are the heads of the four major dwarven families, and each has an equal say in matters of state. Each of the Kings lives in a different dwarven colony, communicating by means of courier. The Four Kings meet at the beginning of each new year to lay the course for the dwarven nations for the following months. Emergency meetings may also be called, but this has never happened.

The Four Kings and their colonies are: Dwumor Barethold (Barukhaza), Gordo Runelight (Chakarak), Makky Kurebold (Cerekazadh) and Huul Rantiron (Doromakhad). Makky Kurebold is the most important of the Kings as ruler of Cerekazadh, and he has the power of tradition behind his words. Though the other Kings are theoretically equal when it comes to decisions, Makky is definitely in charge.

**Society:** The dwarven nations are based around their clans. Though the Four Families (Barethold, Runelight, Rantiron, and Kurebold) are the broadest unit of definition, the clan is the most common. As an analogy, the Families are like nations, the clans like towns. While a dwarf may be a member of the Kurebold Family, it is his or her clan that is most important. Clans have no names, but are identified by unique symbols that are prominently worn as jewelry in a dwarf's beard or hair.

Each of the clans serves a specific function in its colony. Some are drillers, some are rock-haulers, some are artisans, some are warriors or mercenaries. Clan traditions go back generations, and dwarves are loath to take up an occupation not practiced by their clan. This has led to very specialized groups within each colony. A given clan is very skilled at what it does, and no other clan is likely to have such skills.

If a clan is wiped out, the loss will cripple the colony. After the recent slaughter at Doromakhad, where several clans were all but lost, some cross-migration of occupations is beginning to occur, but slowly.

**Military:** While the dwarven clans are very close-mouthed with their secrets, out of necessity the warrior clans agreed long ago to train the others in the

I cannot say what happened in our time in the dark.  
When we came up from the depths, the madness we beheld was impossible to comprehend.  
Fires raged where cities had stood; destruction was everywhere.

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basics of warfare. This has given the dwarves a huge standing army, as nearly every member of the race could pick up a hammer or axe and use it with at least moderate effectiveness.

Dwarven mercenaries are especially fearsome, garnering high wages throughout the Cluster for their strength, fortitude, and skill. No one has ever managed to conquer a dwarven colony without very heavy losses. On the other hand, the dwarven army as a whole is geared more as a defensive force than an aggressive one, making them a negligible threat where invasion is concerned.

**Allies:** Everyone thinks that they are the dwarves' allies, but no dwarf would consider those "others" to be anything more than useful acquaintances. The dwarves treat everyone with a fair amount of apparent respect, however, and have no long standing feuds with any race.

**Foes:** Though the Calidians don't know it, they are about to become the target of dwarf-hired saboteurs at their mining operation on Calimar. The dwarves are agitated that the upstart Calidians would begin putting ore on the market and are determined to stop its flow (see *Minor Plots*, above).

The illithids are also a potential threat, as their psionics have learned of the dwarven schemes to rule the sphere. For now, though, the mind flayers are playing it close to the chest, and the dwarves do not realize that their security has been compromised.

## Lizard Men

**Rank:** 4

**Major Plots:** The Khalzan lizard men are almost totally isolated from the rest of the Cluster. They have trading ties to the neogi, but they profit little from this. These lizard men are a race in decline, mired in their own past. They refuse to seek out others of their kind, and so their race has become almost hopelessly inbred.

The Ssthakal lizard men, on the other hand, have decided to look to the stars for salvation. Knowing that they had fewer and fewer children every year, they correctly deduced that they needed new bloodlines to survive. Thus, Ssthakal lizard men will sign

on to nearly any ship that comes their way. Many of them serve as mercenaries, risking their lives for the chance to explore the stars. The Ssthakal are as outgoing and adventurous as the Khalzan are insular, constantly on the lookout for others of their kind.

**Minor Plots:** Neither the Khalzan nor the Ssthakal lizard men are prone to plotting.

**Government:** The Khalzan lizard men are ruled by the voices of their ancestors, which speak from an ancient burial mound within the heart of Khalzan. No outsider has ever seen this mound. The ancestors are unfortunately quite short-sighted, and their insistence that the Khalzan maintain blood purity is leading to the demise of this proud people. It is possible that the ancestors may be consulted by characters, but only those who are very skilled in diplomacy or exceedingly stealthy. The risk could very well be worth it, as the ancestors could provide important clues to the plots currently underway in the Cluster.

The Ssthakal lizard men have a very free form government. A leader is elected biannually by the entire colony. Occasionally the leader proclaims laws or commands, but for the most part the lizard man ruler deals with outside forces and acts as a manager.

**Society:** The lizard men of Khalzan have based their society around the worship of their ancestors. They are a very death-oriented people, fatalistic and accepting of the fleeting nature of life. This makes dealing with them very difficult, as little can entice them out of their self-imposed isolation. After all, how attractive are gold and gems to a people who only know that they will perish and go on to an after-life where these things will not aid them?

The Ssthakal lizard men are a gregarious race, their society firmly geared toward exploration. Though they have few ships of their own, young lizard men (and lizard women!) are encouraged to take passage on the ships of other races and return with word of more lizard men. Unfortunately, there have been no discoveries of new lizard men enclaves so far, and the Ssthakal lizard men are beginning to get discouraged.

**Military:** Neither lizard man colony has a standing military, though both are able to defend themselves

They were known as the Unbidden, and they had cheated us of our destiny.  
We could not have foreseen them, but we would defeat them.  
As we had before, we called to the Power.  
And it answered.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

more than adequately. Lizard men are fierce fighters, with or without training, and their prowess is well known by other races. Most other factions have no desire to come to blows with the lizard men in any case, as neither colony has much of interest to offer.

**Allies:** The lizard men of Ssthakal are friends with everyone, or at least they try to be. No other race is as hungry to be accepted, or as accepting, as the lizard men of Ssthakal. Unfortunately, a good many people are scared to death of the huge, scaly men and aren't quite ready to accept them as friends. Such misunderstandings have led to conflicts in the past, but overall, the lizard men are seen as strange but typically harmless creatures.

Khalzan has no allies to speak of, but they do trade with the neogi from time to time.

**Foes:** No faction has an axe to grind with the lizard men, and the lizard men are careful to keep it that way. They do not attempt to conquer other races, and serve as mercenaries only, remaining neutral in their views.

## Beholders

**Rank:** 5

**Major Plots:** The beholders are a race constantly at war with themselves. The internal bickering between the different "families" of beholders has led to a fragmented society with no real course of action as a whole. Instead, each family pursues its individual goals while trying to keep the other families from crushing it.

One of the beholder families is currently at work hammering out a deal with the neogi. These beholders want technology and magic, while the neogi want to use the beholders as assassins and terror tools against their enemies. The beholders have no intention of upholding their end of the bargain, but are going along with the plan until the right time for treachery arises and they turn against their neogi "partners."

Another beholder family located in the wastes of the Great Belt is searching for an ancient device that will insure their power within the sphere. The artifact



In one hand it cradled us, pulling its chosen children to its breast.  
With its other fist, it smote the forces of the Unbidden,  
and the Second Cataclysm occurred. Astromundi exploded,  
and we alone survived.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

is a weapon of great power once used by the beholders to cause the First Cataclysm (whether this is true or not is entirely up to the DM). They intend to collect the artifact's pieces, put them together, and destroy the other beholder families. Then they'll turn their attention to the upstart humans.

Several of the families have recently begun waging an all-out war against the illithids. No one really knows the reason for this, but there are a number of possible answers. The illithids could have intruded upon beholder space, discovered a crucial weakness in the families, or could simply have annoyed the beholders. Whatever the reason, it is quite rare for the beholder families to work together, so the illithids must be a threat to the beholder race as a whole.

There are more plots at work within the beholder families within Clusterspace, of course. This faction has been left intentionally vague to give the DM more flexibility in working the mysterious beholders into a campaign.

**Minor Plots:** There's just no telling what the beholders and their kin are going to be doing. Feel free to come up with whatever outlandish or devilish plots you desire. The beholders are here for you to tinker with and customize to your particular style of play and your campaign.

**Government:** There is no central beholder government. Each family is ruled by a queenmother, to which all other beholders are subservient.

**Society:** Little is known about beholder society, though it seems they are compelled to war amongst themselves in mindless conflicts and wars of attrition. This has helped to keep their numbers down, making them very little threat to the other forces of the Cluster despite their great individual power.

**Military:** The beholders have various sub-races (see *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™ 7*) who do their fighting for them. These races are heavily customized to each family, leading to all manner of bizarre constructs unique to each group of beholders. It is rumored that those taken prisoner by the beholders end up as such abominations.

**Allies:** The neogi are the closest thing that any of the beholder families have to an ally.

**Foes:** Beholders are universally despised and will be attacked on sight. No one likes them, everyone hates them, and yes, they do eat worms. People too.

## Elves

**Rank:** 5

**Major Plots:** The elves are the most secretive and private of the Cluster's races. They are seen as haughty and purposely obscure beings, though they are respected for their ability to enter and leave the Cluster at will. The elves have no real plots, wanting only to return to their glory days as the conquering warriors of the Unhuman Wars. Unfortunately, it may be some time before they can regain their standing among the other races. Though they possess wealth and all the equipment they need, elves breed very slowly and their numbers are dangerously low.

The elves of Giltiond have reverted to a primitive lifestyle, communing with nature in an attempt to find a solution to their troubles. The other elven settlements, particularly Avarien, have resorted to other measures, such as seeking out elves outside the sphere with whom to attempt to produce offspring. The major drawback to this is that the Astromundi elves have changed quite dramatically over their centuries of isolation. Other elves scarcely recognize them as belonging to the same race, making breeding next to impossible.

**Minor Plots:** The Astromundi elves amuse themselves by controlling who is granted leave from the crystal sphere, thus altering the balance of power within the Cluster. They are careful in what they do, knowing that allowing one race or faction easy access to the phlogiston will make that faction much more powerful than their competitors. The elves believe firmly in keeping things equal, though, and have done a fairly good job of it so far.

The secret of the sphere's exit has been protected by the fact that the elves of the Cluster are immune to the mind-reading talents of the illithids. The price of that protection is the complete lack of psionic talent or potential in Astromundi elves. They are still vulnerable to psionic attack, however.

**Government:** The elves of Giltiond have no gov-

The Power took us away,  
gave us these worlds around a gas giant it created specifically for our kind.  
We have lived here ever since, wishing no ill to other races.

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

ernment, existing as a communal tribe along their vine. The other elves are organized under elected officials who decide on policy and measures needed to enforce such policies. Generally speaking, the leadership of the elves is a loose sort, allowing individuals great freedom.

**Society:** Elven society is currently geared toward producing children. Elven males and females are married early, with the disparity between the numbers of each sex insuring that each female has numerous husbands. This limits the number of elven adventurers, who are actually renegades for not marrying in accordance with elven custom. While not exactly outlaws, such elves must take care when they return home, lest they be married off and shackled to their homes for the rest of their lives.

**Military:** Elven military units are always shipboard fighters, masters of fighting in space but not as effective on the ground. Since they do not wish to conquer other races, the elven military is geared primarily toward defense.

The so-called Homeguard serve six-year terms, during which they are excused from their marriages. Some young elves try to secure lifetime positions within the Homeguard in order to escape marriage, but few succeed. The Homeguard specializes in asteroid belt maneuvers. Their ships have little difficulty slipping through the most crowded of belts, and only the goblinoids are more adept at avoiding collisions with asteroids.

The elves have also become masters of improvised traps within the belts. They have also "trained" the infinity vines that surround their settlements to attack enemy ships. Attacking an elven settlement is nearly suicidal, as it is nearly impossible to avoid the surrounding vine.

**Allies:** The elves have no real allies, but no one will attack them for fear that the elves will deny them exit from the crystal sphere. Many races and factions pretend to be friends of the elves, but few rarely trust them and no one really likes them.

**Foes:** For the same reason that elves have no real allies, they have no enemies to speak of—with the exception of the goblinoids. Fearful of being denied a

way out to trade with other crystal spheres keeps most other races from making any serious moves against the elves. The Antilans, who feel no need to contact other spheres, might attack the elves if it would further their plans.

## The Goblinoid Races

**Rank:** 5

**Major Plots:** The goblinoid races (goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, scro) have but one thing on their minds: killing elves. Though few in number, they are a potent force that use lightning swift raids to attack elven settlements. Thus far, the goblinoid have been less than successful with their attacks on the elven vine-fortresses and have begun to turn to less conventional means to achieve their ends.

Scro agents are currently in negotiation with the Varan, who are bargaining on behalf of their illithid masters. The Varan are promising to help the goblinoids destroy the elves, if they can discover the secret of leaving the crystal sphere.

The goblinoid also believe that the Astromundi Cluster contains a secret cache of witchlight marauders. If they find these terrible beasts, the goblinoid races will not stop with merely destroying the elves; no race will be safe from them.

**Minor Plots:** Reinforcements periodically arrive in the Cluster, but they often cannot find their kinfolk and are easy pickings for the other races. The goblinoids have begun a travel pattern that should make it easier for others of their kind to find them. Their path takes them dangerously close to the Thoric settlements in the Fringe, however, and the humans there do not take this lightly.

**Government:** The goblinoid forces are lead by a scro general calling himself Ruk'kahn, the Great King. Thus far his leadership has been unquestioned, but if he doesn't score some telling successes against the elves soon, he may be attacked by his followers and replaced by a younger, stronger scro.

**Society:** The goblinoids of the Cluster are military units that were trapped in the sphere after pursuing elven troops through the Astromundi crystal shell. As such, they have no real society and exist solely as a

I understand that you would like to go now and speak with the Antilans. I can only suggest caution, as they are a treacherous people, and will attempt to fill you with lies about our race. Go now.



large war-tribe, traveling throughout the Cluster in search of elven settlements to destroy.

**Military:** The goblinoid armada consists of several hundred different ships, scattered throughout the Cluster. Thousands of goblins and other lesser goblinoid races are led by powerful scro captains in search of elven prey. Because the goblinkin are universally disliked throughout Clusterspace, they are careful to avoid populated areas. After years of traveling through the crowded, dark asteroid belts, the goblinoids have become masters at navigating seemingly impassable areas. This ability allows goblinkin ships to strike without warning from within asteroid belts, taking unwary targets with ease.

**Allies:** The goblinoids have no real allies, though they are currently working out an agreement with the illithids (see Major Plots, above) in order to better deal with the elves within the Cluster.

**Foes:** No one much cares for the goblinkin. As far as the other races are concerned, the goblinoids are nothing but trouble and deserve whatever they get.

This attitude is strengthened by the goblinkin piracy that persists within the Inner Sphere despite attempts to eradicate it.

## Other Races

While there are other races within the Astromundi Cluster, most of them are represented by relatively small populations, and, in some cases, by single individuals. Any race may be found within the Astromundi Cluster, even the “world-specific” races such as DRAGONLANCE® kender or the various nasties of the RAVENLOFT® campaign world. Below are some of the different races that are especially appropriate, and their motivations and attitudes within the Astromundi Cluster.

The Cluster also teems with any number of strange and/or unique creatures. DMs should feel free to tailor specific creatures for their campaigns, maintaining a sense of mystery and the unknown.

The Master is tired; you'll have to go.  
Come on, this way. No, not down there—you, uh, don't want to go that way.  
No, nothing serious, just sometimes guests don't understand what they see . . .

# ASTROMUNDI POWERS

## Giants, Spacesea

Rover giants are far from common in the Cluster, but they are not unknown. The giants roam throughout the sphere on their Spacesea Giant Galleons, spreading the word of Ptah. Other races are unsure of how to deal with them, and most avoid the rovers altogether. Spacesea giants can be an interesting source of information for characters, as the giants journeyed far and wide before becoming trapped within the Astromundi Cluster, and might know nearly anything.

## Great Dreamers

These mammoth whale-like creatures are meant to be obscure and mysterious, serenely gliding through the reaches of wildspace, heeding only their own thoughts. They are best used as information sources and wise sages that must be tracked down before being questioned.

## Outer Planar Creatures

The Astromundi Cluster lies at a nexus point for the many planes of existence. Here, the dimensional fabrics are thin and frayed, and creatures from other planes sometimes find their way through. In addition to the baatezu and tanar'ri (who are involved with the illithids and Arcane, respectively) virtually any of the creatures found in the Outer Planes *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™* from aasimon to zoveri may appear in the Cluster.

These creatures should not appear with any frequency unless the illithids or Arcane succeed in their plotting, but should be used to surprise and terrify characters. Used properly, even the lowliest lemure can make for a memorable encounter.

## Plasmoids

If things are getting too tame in your campaign, or if the characters manage to bring about an end to the tyranny and treachery of the Arcane and illithid masterminds, the plasmoids make an excellent way to stir things up. Perhaps the DeGleash and DelNoric bring their war to the Cluster, forcing the characters to choose sides and bring peace back to their homes.

Or the DelNoric could come alone, a new threat determined to dominate the Cluster.

## Reigar

The reigar are the perfect *deus ex machina* for characters in trouble, or a perfect way to land them into hot water. The reigar could be in the sphere for any reason, from wanting to help destroy the illithids to searching for a gem in a particular shade of blue. Able to enter and leave the Astromundi Cluster as they will, the reigar are an easy way to hook characters into an adventure or rescue them from one gone awry.

## Xixchil

These mantoids are rare, but the few scattered throughout the Cluster are prized surgeons and craftsmen. The xixchil may be able to repair or help destroy pieces of the Darkgate or Sunslayer. If this is the case, finding one can be an adventure in itself, as can protecting the xixchil from Arcane or illithid-sent assassins.



Here you are, all safe and sound.  
Of course, you'll have to let us blindfold you and fly your ship out for you, same as you came in.  
While the location of our planet is not a secret, its defenses are.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

The Astromundi Cluster is ripe with the thrill of adventure. Rival factions constantly jockey for position, using pawns (read: adventurers) to carry out their plans and see to their objectives. Strange ruins beckon with eerie lights, and strangely twisted spires thrust toward the depths of wildspace. Creatures from beyond the material plane stalk the shadows, with death in their talons and flames in their eyes.

There are literally endless hours of adventure within the Astromundi Cluster. Below are a few adventure ideas, some of which are related to the major plots of the Cluster (the Sundeath and the Mystery of the Arcane) and are marked as such. Others are entertaining side ventures that can be used to spice up any campaign. These are not complete adventures, but rather outlines that can be expanded into full adventures by individual DMs. Use them as a jumping off point for your campaign, changing them as you will to fit your particular style and that of your players.

Adventure Outlines are comprised of three sections: The Setup, The Adventure, and Future Adventures. In the Setup, information is provided concerning the adventure's setting, recommended number of levels in a party, and a means for getting the characters involved. The Adventure describes the plot of the scenario, providing a framework of events that can be fleshed out by the DM, but which is essentially complete. Future Adventures describes the consequences of the characters actions and tie-ins to other adventure outlines in this booklet.

## Little Lost Tradesman

### The Setup

This adventure is set in the so-called Grim Regions of the Inner Ring, a few days travel from the neogi outpost of S'jalamai. A Thoric tradesman has been attacked by goblinoid raiders. Though they were able to kill most of the crew, the goblinoids took such heavy losses that they were forced into retreat. The neogi, ever desiring to get hold of a cherished tradesman, have hired the characters to retrieve the craft.

This adventure is intended for 4 to 6 low- to mid-level characters. This adventure is tied into the Sundeath plot of the illithids (see Chapter Four: **The Sundeath** for more information).

### The Adventure

The neogi are hungry to get their hands on the Thoric tradesman, eager to discover how the ships are built and how to build their own in order to carry on long-distance trading. They learned of the damaged ship after capturing a fleeing goblinoid raider. The neogi would have gone after the tradesman themselves, but know there are other interested parties.

In particular, the Thoric have hired dwarven mercenaries to retrieve the vessel. After the ship did not return from its regularly appointed route, the Thoric trading house to which it belonged dispatched a crack squad of "deep space retrievers." These dwarves are armed to the teeth and ready to do whatever is necessary to get the ship back.

The neogi will loan the characters a spelljamming vessel, if necessary, after the characters sign an iron-clad contract. Should the ship be damaged, the characters are responsible for the cost of repairs. If by some misfortune the vessel is destroyed, characters will be sold into slavery in order to compensate the neogi. On the up side, characters will receive 3,000 gp for the successful retrieval of the Thoric tradesman, *Zakal's Folly*.

Naturally, the dwarves and the player characters will arrive at the *Folly* very near to the same time. On the way the characters may encounter a few wild-space creatures, but nothing that would keep them from reaching the main object of the adventure.

The characters should get to the *Folly* first and perhaps poke around a bit. Still aboard are several wounded goblins, none of which are spellcasters able to use the helm and escape. They have devoured the majority of the ship's stores and the air is beginning to go stale, making them quite desperate. They will hide among the rigging and below decks, waiting to attack the characters when they can gain surprise.

The bodies of Thoric merchants and crewmen lit-

Thank you for coming to seek the wisdom of the Master,  
and we wish you all fortune in your journey of knowledge. This starchart is our gift to you.  
With it, you will be able to enter Antilan space. I, Charun of the Varan, wish you farewell  
and the best wishes of the illithids in your travels.



ter the deck, left there by the goblinoid pirates. Even from a distance the carnage is evident, as the goblinoids remaining on board have staked the bodies of their fallen foes to the ship's cargo hold.

Once the characters land aboard the ship, they will no doubt run afoul of the goblinoids. There are 15 goblins remaining aboard the *Folly*, and they are led by a scro captain, Bazeev. The goblins are armed with short swords and maces, though a few may be armed with missile weapons as well. All wear leather armor, giving them AC 6. The scro captain is better armed, wielding two *scimitars +1* which he uses as a two-weapon fighter (see *PHBR1, The Complete Fighter's Handbook* for details).

Bazeev will try to get his raiders in position for an ambush, if he becomes aware of the characters before he is discovered. If surprised or caught without time to make a plan, Bazeev orders his goblins to take down apparent wizards first, followed by priests and finally fighters. Goblins armed with missile weapons will fire from cover when possible, using their

attacks to pin characters down and cover the advance of their fellows.

After a few rounds of fighting it out with the goblins and their captain, the PCs are "rescued" by the dwarven mercenaries hired by the Thoric to retrieve the *Folly*. While they will attack the scro and his cronies, the dwarves are not going to take a very positive view of the PCs. After questioning, the dwarves will decide just what to do with them.

If the characters reveal that they have been employed by the neogi, the dwarves will most likely settle the matter in the only manner fitting for mercenaries: a fight. The characters will be allowed to choose their champion, and the dwarves will pick theirs. The fight is not to the death, but losers may be slain at the winner's whim. Whichever side wins may claim the wreck as their own. The losers must return in shame to their employers.

Characters may chose to hide the identity of their employers, in which case the dwarves will simply ask them to leave, or force them to do so.

The journey is not a long one,  
and with the aid of the starchart it passes quickly and uneventfully.  
Within a week the first Antilan outpost flickers into view,  
its crystal battlements winking rainbows of refracted light.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

Whatever happens, the characters won't get off the ship without encountering the cargo. If they tow it back to the neogi, the cargo will greet them once they are underway. If the dwarves gain the rights to the ship, the cargo will come up from below decks before the characters have a chance to get back to their own ship.

The "cargo" is a contemplator, found and mistaken for a statue by Thoric explorers. Until now the contemplator, Tlurian, has remained locked in stasis by an medallion enchanted by illithid wizards. Tlurian was cursed to silence so that the secrets he knew about the illithids and the Sunslayer would never be heard.

Fortunately, the "statue" and its medallion were separated by a light-fingered goblin after the battle aboard the *Folly*. Now, the contemplator is awake, but the decades spent in stasis are starting to catch up to Tlurian. He can say only the following before he collapses and decays into dust.

"The time is coming. Beware the worshipers of the snaked one, the eaters of the soul. They bring darkness where they walk, their paths littered with corpses wretched in shadow. They seek the Sunslayer, that will destroy this sphere. Beware . . ."

This shakes the dwarfs up a bit, but they are professional to the last, and sweep the remnants into a small urn to insure its safe return to their Thoric employers.

## Follow Up Adventures

Whether the characters know it or not, they have just been given an important clue to the plots of the illithids. If they chose to follow it up, they can begin hunting down someone who can shed more light on the words of the contemplator. Perhaps another of Tlurian's kind exists within the Great Belt and the characters must hunt that contemplator down. In any case, this makes a great starting point for an adventure-series involving the illithids and the Sunslayer (see Chapter Four: **The Sundeath**).

If the characters manage to beat the dwarf champion, the Thoric are going to be very agitated at the fact that a Thoric tradesman was turned over to the

neogi. Characters may find themselves chased by vengeful mercenaries hired to dispose of the fools responsible for apparently giving the neogi the edge they need to dominate long-distance trade.

The neogi are not going to be happy if the characters don't get the ship, however. If the neogi ship is destroyed as well, the characters will most likely be hunted down and killed or sold into slavery.

Characters who succeed in their mission will find themselves favored by the neogi, and offered special assignments. They may even be hired to hunt down craftsmen capable of the sort of quality work that is necessary to make a Thoric tradesman.

DMs should note that whether the mission succeeds or not, the neogi are not going to gain the means to build the most powerful ship in the Cluster. The tradesman is built very carefully to prevent reverse engineering from stealing its secrets. The neogi may gain more powerful ships, but they will never equal the Thoric's.

## Dizantar Dilemma

### The Setup

A dizantar is loose in the Cluster and is doing what it does best: killing Arcane. The Antilans, acting in the best interest of their Arcane allies, hire the characters to track down the dizantar and dispose of it. Due to the difficulty of this task, this adventure is recommended for characters of mid- to high-level.

### The Adventure

In order to find the dizantar, the characters will have to keep track of where Arcane are being killed, and listen for rumors of dizantar sightings. After several Arcane have been killed in far distant points of wildspace, regular sightings of a dizantar near Highport should be enough to send characters chasing out to the Arcane trading post.

Intelligent characters will set up an ambush in or near Highport and wait for the dizantar to show up. Let them wait for a bit, thinking that they may have been wrong about where the dizantar would be, and then move onto the next part of the adventure.

I am Rexus Damik, captain of the Antilan Guard in this area.  
You have entered the jurisdiction of the Antilan Imperial Fleet.  
You must at once secure all shipboard weapons and step away from them.  
Our crystal ships will arrive shortly; please allow our investigators aboard.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS



The dizantar will strike to the core of Highport's power, slaying an Arcane. The characters, of course, will be alerted and ordered to stop the creature before it can escape.

A harrowing chase should ensue, with the dizantar running through the lower levels of Highport and the characters in hot pursuit. The Arcane have sealed Highport so no one can physically or magically exit, thereby preventing the creature from using its ability to *dimension door* in wildspace. The dizantar, frustrated in its escape attempt, will try to go to ground and hide until the search is called off.

The dizantar is a canny and dangerous hunter. Once it realizes that it cannot escape from Highport, the creature will change its tactics and attempt to find and kill as many Arcane as it can before it is killed. This particular dizantar is a veteran tracker, the survivor of many such strikes against the Arcane. It is equipped with a *ring of invisibility* and a *rope of entanglement*, and its halberd has been enchanted with the ability to cast *darkness 15' radius* (as the

2nd-level wizard spell) twice per day. It will use these items and its native strength to their full advantage, setting ambushes and traps for its pursuers.

This adventure is a chance for the PCs to engage in a hunt-and-see mission through the warrens and hidden places of Highport, hunting a creature that may very well be hunting them in return. Included in this box is a poster map of Highport, and *The Celestial Almanac* gives a description of the various sections. The mine, slave pits, and the lawless Rogues' Alley are natural places for the dizantar to hide. Other locations might include the Great Bazaar (where the creature might grab a hostage to deter pursuit), or the Garden. It will probably avoid the Dwarven Quarter, the Repair Deck, the Dock, and the Reserve.

For even more intrigue, the dizantar might meet with the Calidian Hidden in the twisting passages of Minstrel's Way, and agree to serve as their hand of vengeance in exchange for a safe "home ground" and perhaps (eventually) a way out of Highport. After all, the Arcane can't keep it sealed forever. . . .

## Follow Up Adventures

This adventure can bring the characters all sorts of grief. For one thing, failing the Arcane is a bad idea; they have very harsh ideas about contract violations. If the dizantar escapes Highport, or kills more than one Arcane, the Antilans (with instructions from their Arcane allies) will make the characters a deal they cannot refuse: either the characters will make good their promise to the Arcane and go after the dizantar again, or they will be sent to the Shakalman Group as slaves.

This in turn could lead to their discovery that there is more than one dizantar in the Cluster, and a whole series of adventures as they are hired to hunt them down. And of course, characters may start to wonder why the dizantar was after the Arcane in the first place. . . .

Wouldn't happen to have any contraband aboard this vessel, would you?  
In case you don't know, we don't allow magical items or instructional materials of any sort  
within the boundaries of our space.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

## Frozen Secrets

### The Setup

The frozen world of Hatha has begun exporting some rather bizarre artifacts of late, attracting the attention of collectors across the Cluster. Naturally, the characters are hired by one such collector to travel to Hatha and dig up some artifacts for her, eliminating the middle man. Character groups of low- to mid-level are appropriate for this adventure.

### The Adventure

Artifacts and strange ruins are big favorites with virtually all AD&D® game players and their characters. These things offer mystery, the threat of the unknown, and the opportunity to ransack treasure hordes. The ruins of Hatha are no different, but there is the added difficulty of extreme cold. Also, the Thoric who inhabit Hatha have strictly forbidden anyone else from investigating these ruins.

In order to get out to the ruins, characters are going to have to equip themselves with cold-weather gear (which isn't commonly available in other parts of the Cluster) and suitable gear for exploring, without attracting undue attention. The Thoric are generally an unsuspecting lot, but if the characters are not careful, they may find themselves under scrutiny by Thoric authorities.

Once outfitted, the adventurers have to reach the ruins, a journey possible only by icesailer. Few Thoric are unscrupulous enough to bring outsiders to the ruins, and that only for a hefty fee. After several days or even weeks of carefully nosing around for an icesailer for hire, the characters come across Bjorg Skald, a one-eyed ex-mercenary with no compunctions about breaking laws and customs that he finds prohibitive.

After paying an outrageous price for his services, Bjorg will take the party out to one of the ruin sites, promising to return in eight hours. Characters are free to explore the ruins for that amount of time.

The ruins themselves are eerie, encased in ice and made of strange green stone that seems to flare and flicker with its own inner fire. Tall, glassy cylinders

abound, their exteriors marked with unusual runes. If characters bother these at all, a zombie will exit the cylinder 1d6 rounds after the cylinder is first touched. After a few of these encounters, and after characters notice the layout of the place, they will realize that these ruins are huge mausoleums.

Further exploration of the ruins will reveal a small room in which many artifacts are stored. These artifacts are, in fact, pieces of an ancient device meant to bring the beings in the cylinders back to life. Characters who study the artifacts may discover this, as their method of storage and the pictograms that accompany the artifacts point in this direction.

If the device is assembled, the people in the cylinders will be restored to life—in noncorporeal form. Actually, they were stored in a special state, and were never truly dead. The zombies released from the cylinders that are examined are a result of tampering and premature opening of the cylinders.

The ghostlike people here will converge on the room that contains the device. If they arrive, and the characters do not have a piece of the Sunslayer, they will deliver the following speech:

“You have summoned Those Who Wait in Ice, yet you do not know our purpose. We wish you no harm, but you cannot stay in this place of the dead. Go now, and return when you can aid us, and we, you.”

Those Who Wait in Ice are a group that escaped from illithid bondage centuries ago. They vowed that the illithids would never rise to rule this sphere, and magically preserved themselves to aid those who oppose the mind flayers. They are mentioned in the Mind Dark Prophecy, but characters who are involved in this adventure may not have heard the prophecy or know of the illithid plot to extinguish the sun. This adventure can be a prequel to the characters' involvement in the schemes of the illithids, giving them a taste of things to come.

If the characters have a piece of the Sunslayer, Those Who Wait in Ice will swear undying loyalty to the characters.

“We have waited for your call, our allies. Lead us that we may assist you in your war against the snake-faced ones. We can last not long in this place;

Please take this opportunity to divulge the location of any such items to us at once.  
Mages may keep personal materials, but we must see it and mark it with our approval seal.  
Thank you for your cooperation.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

carry us forth in the Item Accursed. From that we can be called but once by each of you, to serve as you will. One task we can complete, or attempt to complete: choose well your will for Those Who Wait in Ice.”

What all that means is that Those Who Wait in Ice will transfer themselves to the characters' piece of the Sunslayer. Then the characters can call forth Those Who Wait in Ice to aid them in any task they are assigned by the characters. DMs may equate this aid to one *limited wish* per PC, unless that would overbalance the campaign. This power can only be used by the PCs who were present when Those Who Wait were found. That done, they can finally rest in peace, knowing they fought their former masters as best they were able.

## Future Adventures

The Thoric are not going to be amused if the characters are discovered. The party is likely to be imprisoned or worse if found out, and only a very good explanation could save them from this fate. Of course, filling the Thoric in on Those Who Wait in Ice and how they relate to the illithid plot might work, but you never know what might come of that. . . .

Characters who discover the ruins and their occupants before they learn of the illithids and their plans will probably want to return here later, adding continuity to your storyline and making the players realize that things happened before their characters came along, and will continue to happen long after they have passed on or retired. Such storylines do much to give the impression of a living, dynamic atmosphere in which the campaign takes place.

## In the Pale Witchlight

### The Setup

The characters should be of mid-level, higher if there are fewer than five members in the party. This adventure can be sprung on characters wherever they are.

The adventure begins when the characters are out flying through wildspace and discover a strange glow

coming from a nearby asteroid (or other such body). The glow comes and goes at regular intervals, giving the impression of some sort of coded transmission. If the characters drop in closer to take a look, they see the light is coming from a cave of some sort, which glows with the same pale, green light that the characters saw blinking.

### The Adventure

The source of the light is a cache of witchlight marauders. Though a small group of tertiaries are all that is located here, they should be more than enough for the characters to fight.

The marauders have been signaling for several days now, having woken from a magical sleep alone and hungry (the signal light is part of the magic of their cache, and cannot be turned off) and are hoping to attract goblinoids who can lead them into battle, but luring in food is part of their plan as well.

There are four tertiary marauders here, each hungrier than the last. The caverns in which they live are riddled with twisting passageways that cross over and under one another. The marauders have created murder slits in their spare time, allowing them slice down through the ceiling or up through the floor at passing characters.

When the characters begin exploring the caverns, they should never get a good look at the marauders. Instead, the canny beasts strike from their murder slits and fade away, wearing the characters down.

If the characters seem to be having too easy a time, some goblinoids might finally pick up the signals from the marauders and pop in to check things out. This can create a very tense scenario, as the characters attempt to avoid both sets of enemies and escape with their lives.

When the marauders are finally seen, their strangeness and alien natures should be emphasized. When forced to fight, the marauders use simple but sound tactics and should give the characters a run for their money. If goblinoids are added to the mix, those forces will use missile weapons to back up the marauders who move into melee range to finish the characters off.

So, you'd like to speak to one of our Libricants?  
That can be arranged, but first we'll have your assurances that this information  
will not be used against the Antilan Empire.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS



## The Pens of the Illithids

### The Setup

This low-level adventure is good as an introduction to the illithids and their slaving practices, and to the Hidden. It is not tied to any one area, or the major conspiracies of the Cluster.

The characters must be captured by illithids and chained into the slave pens. The following are some good ways to enslave the characters:

They are captured by the illithid press gangs that are rumored to haunt the winding passageways of Ironport.

Their ship is impounded for any number of reasons, some of which might even be valid.

A ship's captain offers the characters outrageous wages, then once aboard, has them drugged. They awake in the hold of an illithid's slaving ship.

### The Adventure

Life in an illithid slave pen is barely survivable. Characters will be shaved right away, and powdered with some sort of bug-killing dust. After being shaved and checked for communicable diseases (which could infect the rest of the slaves or the illithids), a small tattoo or brand will be placed on the characters' left forearm. The brand typically numbers the character and sometimes has the identifying mark of the clan that owns them.

Once characters are shaved and marked, they will be taken to the slave pens. A single steel rod runs down the center of the hold's ceiling. Slaves are chained to this, with their toes just barely touching the floor.

There are only two times when the slaves are released from their bonds, and then only a few at a time. The characters may seize these opportunities to escape, but planning is the key.

The first "free" time occurs when slaves are taken down to do repair work on the bottom of the hull. Illithid spelljammers are not as careful about debris as other captains, and accumulate quite a bit of damage on their exteriors. Since the illithids themselves can't stand to be outside the ship, slaves must do this

### Future Adventures

The witchlight marauders may force the characters into retreat. If this happens, the characters may want to return with greater numbers and mercenaries to finish the strange beasts off. Of course, this will give the marauders time to attract goblinoids and a pitched battle begins when the characters show up.

If the characters do not kill off the marauders, they will most certainly hear of the creatures serving alongside goblinoid masters in the future. A sense of duty may compel such characters to finish what they started. Or the characters may be hired by another faction to defeat the marauders.

Characters who kill the marauders may be spotted by goblinoids who then mark the characters for death. This can be an interesting subplot, as goblinoid assassins dog the characters' step and goblin saboteurs interfere with their plans.

Our crystal ships will accompany you to the citadel you see over there.  
You must dock at the topmost bay, where you will be greeted by an honor guard.  
These soldiers will direct you to Maligus.

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work. A Varan overseer is often dispatched with the slaves, but during night repairs this is rare.

The second time during a day that characters might have a chance to escape is during their feeding. Feedings occur once a day, and all slaves are released at once to eat. Of course, the freedom is limited, because the illithids simply withdraw the bar upon which the slaves are chained, leaving their wrists bound by a two-foot length of chain. This would be a good time to stage a mass revolt.

Planning is the key to any escape. Characters must become familiar with the other slaves, ferreting out any Varan spies who might have been placed with the slaves. The characters should never know who they can trust, making caution the watchword.

Once the characters have assembled a small group that they believe are trustworthy, their planning should begin in earnest. After all, with every day that they spend aboard the ship they come closer to a port where they may be sold or eaten at the illithids' whim.

The escape should be played through with great detail. Play up the suspense of slaves trying to overthrow their better-armed captors. Characters might try to sneak about, killing and looting the Varan overseers, before making their final attack on the illithids.

If it appears that the characters are not going to be able to successfully pull off their plan, have the Calidian Hidden come to their rescue. This organization is devoted to freeing slaves, especially from the illithids. Characters who prove themselves in the ensuing battle may be asked to join the Hidden as agents, leading to future adventures.

Characters who attempt to escape and fail will certainly be placed under closer guard, making their next jailbreak that much more difficult!

## Future Adventures

Characters who fail to escape may be sold to even worse masters, from whom they might try to escape. Or they may make another attempt at getting away.

If the characters join the Hidden, they may be asked to perform all sorts of missions for that secret organization. Perhaps they will become an elite arm

of the Hidden, dedicated to hunting down illithid slavers (a job that may bring them into contact with the Sundeath plot). Or they may decide not to join the Hidden, and the Calidians may try to coerce them into doing so. Such a battle between the Hidden and the characters opens up all sorts of role-playing possibilities.

Slaves who escape the illithids are often hunted by Varan bounty hunters. Unless the characters can find some way to have their brands or tattoos removed, they may be hunted to their dying day.

## The Dowhar's Service

### The Setup

A group of mid-level characters are hired to work for the dowhar. Of course, the characters are hired by a Calidian go-between who does not reveal who they will really be working for. The characters are paid to infiltrate the neogi trade center of Ironport and retrieve the so-called *black egg*. This adventure has ties to the *Mystery of the Arcane*, the *Darkgate*, and the *Sunslayer*.

### The Adventure

Ironport is a dangerous place at the best of times, and downright deadly if the characters are plotting against the neogi.

The *black egg* is an item of some power that has only recently come into the possession of the neogi. The dowhar want the *egg* simply because the neogi have it and are using to increase their share of trade. Neither faction is aware that the *black egg* is in fact the *Egg of Night*, a key piece of both the *Darkgate* and the *Sunslayer*.

Finding the *black egg* in Ironport is a task that may take several days or even weeks. The labyrinthine tunnels of Ironport hold strange mysteries, among these the mysterious Dead Feeders. This cult of degenerate neogi worships an undead old master, and it is they who possess the *black egg*. Characters will have to discover just who the Dead Feeders are and where they meet.

Then they'll need to stake out the location of the

Welcome to Citadel Vengeant. We are the guards assigned to your group.  
Have faith; no harm will come to you that you do not cause yourself.  
All weapons must be left aboard your vessel, for your own safety.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

Dead Feeders lair and test its defenses. They might attempt to infiltrate the group, but this could be very difficult given the neogi prejudice toward other races. On the other hand, the neogi might consent to allowing the characters in, but actually plan to feed them to the undead old master.

Especially clever characters may be able to avoid a direct confrontation altogether by linking the Dead Feeders to the recent deaths and disappearances of several neogi in Ironport. This tactic may work, but will require considerable planning on the part of the characters. Also, the neogi who finally kill the undead old master may decide to keep the *black egg* for themselves.

Once the undead old master is killed, the characters will be able to retrieve the *black egg*, which it wore at all times. Whether they return it to the Calidians or not is another matter entirely.

## Future Adventures

Characters who have encountered pieces of the Darkgate or Sunslayer, or know of their existence, may very well suspect that the *black egg* is in fact a piece of one of these. They are right, and may have second thoughts about turning such a thing over to the dowhar. Reneging on such an agreement will certainly anger the dowhar, who may attempt to exact their vengeance when they have more power.

Turning the *egg* over to the dowhar will have no dire consequences, as the *egg* alone has little power. If the characters want to finish the Arcane once and for all, they'll need the *egg* back, but that's another adventure entirely.

Characters who give the item to the dowhar must be careful, however, not to let on how valuable the *black egg* would be to the Arcane or illithids. If the dowhar know this, they will certainly attempt to sell the mind flayers the *egg*, bringing the Arcane just that much closer to completing their plans.

*The Egg of Night:* This artifact resembles an obsidian egg, inlaid with precious gemstones in flame patterns. While certainly more powerful as a part of the Darkgate, the *egg* has no little power of its own.

The *black egg* is used by the neogi to create what appear to be umber hulks. To do this the user of the *egg* must carefully arrange the patterns of the flames (requiring a -3 check against INT), which will open the *egg*. The user then need only place a single gold piece inside the *egg*. Seven days later, the *egg* will open and a miniature umber hulk will exit. The hulk grows to full size in ten hours, and is completely loyal to its maker. For a time, anyway.

The *egg* actually opens a tiny portal to the Abyss. The stuff of the Abyss then seeps into the *egg*, and through the item's magic, is formed into a lifelike umber hulk. For twenty-eight days the umber hulks created by the *egg* are loyal servants to the master of the *egg*. After that, they become less and less likely to obey commands. Four weeks later, the umber hulk will try to escape from his master, killing him and stealing the *egg* if possible. The hulk will then use the *egg* to open a portal to the Abyss, and escape into that plane.

The neogi will have had the *black egg* for less than two months when the characters finally retrieve it. They've had no trouble with it because none of their hulks have lived long enough to go rogue, having been killed in service to the neogi before that.

Anyone who has ever handled a piece of the Darkgate or Sunslayer will instantly know that the *black egg* is part of one of those nefarious machines.

Further details and uses for the *Egg of Night* are provided in Chapter Four: **The Sundeath**.

XP Value: Unknown (method of creation not known to PCs, as typical for artifacts of this nature).

## Trade Route

### The Setup

This adventure can be played by any size group or level of characters, difficulty determined by the DM.

Characters are hired by the Calidians to establish a new trade route between the settlement of Thandilan and the Inner Ring. A handsome sum is being offered, but the danger is quite great.

Yes, this is an immense warcraft.  
As you have heard, no doubt,  
the crystal citadel is the premier machine of destruction in the Cluster.  
No one can stand against their firepower for long.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

## The Adventure

Establishing a trade route is a difficult process. Characters must first make sure the route is not populated by an inordinate number of hostile spacefaring creatures. If such creatures are in evidence, characters will have to remove them before the route can be considered safe for travel.

Another major danger to take into consideration is the threat of opposing trade cartels, who may not take too kindly to new trade routes being opened, especially if those routes directly (or indirectly) compete with already established ones. Characters will have to deal with such opponents diplomatically or risk a major trade war, something the Calidians do not want to deal with right now.

Once the route itself is cleared and any opposition dealt with, characters will have to find buyers for the Thandilan's food. This shouldn't be too hard, but neogi traders aren't above undercutting prices to shut out new traders. Some buyers may decide not to purchase Calidian wares after being warned off by neogi enforcers. Characters will be forced to come up with new ways to get their goods on the market, and may be hired by the Calidians to stay on and oversee the supply process until the route is firmly established.

## Future Adventures

Life running a trade route can be both exciting and frustrating. Great profits can be made by those who watch over trade lines, but the dangers are many. Characters will have to make sure any unforeseen menaces are dealt with before they become major thorns in their soles. Unexpected price fluctuations often force traders into new markets, as well, and the characters may be hired to establish yet another route, starting the process all over again.

There's nothing boring about being a trader, and an inventive DM can use this adventure as a spring board for many mercantile adventures in the future. Perhaps the characters will become traders in their own right, maybe even attempting to wrest the routes they established from the Calidians! Trade wars can also live things up, as characters must protect their

ships from saboteurs and themselves from the knives of their enemies. Trading in the Cluster is truly cut-throat, and only the wiliest of space merchants will survive for long.

## Among the Masked Ones

### The Setup

The illithids hire the characters to infiltrate the Antilan stronghold of Dumovian in order to incite a slave riot. While the characters do not know it, they are meant to be nothing more than a diversionary tactic, distracting the Antilans while the illithids strike somewhere else. The illithids have no intention of carrying through on their end of the deal, and will offer the characters outrageous sums of money. The mind flayers firmly believe that the characters will be killed anyway.

This adventure should only be attempted by high-level characters, as the challenge is very great.

### The Adventure

There are few ways to get to Dumovian without being captured and questioned by the Antilan crystal ships that float throughout the belt. One way is to come in aboard an Antilan slave ship, but that puts the characters at a disadvantage already. The illithids will suggest this to the characters, even going so far as to offer them a way onto a slave ship: as cargo sold to the Antilans by illithid agents.

If that doesn't appeal to the characters, they can attempt to sneak into the belt and take control of a crystal ship. This will be more than a little difficult, considering the fact that crystal ships are quite heavily armed and typically carry several mages in addition to the one running the helm. Characters who attempt this daring feat must take pains to attack a crystal ship that is not in sight of others, unless they plan to take on a horde of the things.

A third method is to come into the belt using extraplanar means, perhaps traveling along the Astral Plane. This has its risks as well, namely the creatures that inhabit the other planes.

Whatever means the characters use to get to the

Moving about in a vessel of this size was a problem for quite some time.  
But as you can see, the Arcane have provided us with move tubes that have solved this.  
Step in here, please.

# ADVENTURE IDEAS

slave colonies, they will have to be very careful once they arrive.

Characters who come in as slaves will be stripped of all equipment (of course) and kept in isolation for several days to break their spirits. Eventually they will be allowed out into the general population of the slave colony, and be assigned to a work crew. Typical work assignments include simple repairs on the crystal ships, making bricks with which to build more slave pens, weaving ropes and nets, or any other menial task that comes to mind.

Slaves are kept in deep pits, where they live and work. Pits are ringed by walls that are manned by guards armed with crossbows. Mages also patrol the walls, with *sleep* and *stinking cloud* spells at the ready should slaves become too restless. The only time slaves are allowed out of their pits is when working on other sections of their prison.

Characters who sneak in will find that Dumovian is a massive complex, taking up several asteroids which have been extensively carved out to make space for the slave pits. There are over a hundred pits, each thirty feet deep and ten times that long and wide. Guard buildings are away from the pit and noble vacation villas are even further. Thousands of Antilan troopers wander about Dumovian, relishing their power over the slaves. Antilan nobles also frequent the slave colony, always eager to test out the effects of a new spell on human subjects.

Guard patrols are common, searching for escaped slaves and those who might have come to Dumovian to free the slaves held there. Non-Antilans are rare here, and such characters will have to hide their identities. Fortunately, the Antilan custom of mask-wearing is adhered to in the Dumovian colony, making it much easier to remain concealed.

Convincing the slaves to revolt against their captors will be difficult, unless the characters can show the slaves that they have a chance. Slaves respect great force, so characters who use powerful items or spells to kill guards in front of slaves will probably gain quite a following.

Once the first slaves are freed, the battle will begin in earnest. Fearful of losing their most productive

slave colony, the Antilans will react with amazing force. They intend to put the rebellion down quickly, to show the other slaves the results of defying the Antilan overlords.

Quick action will be necessary to save the day. Characters who planned ahead may have reinforcements ready to spelljam in and bring weapons and armor for the slaves. Though few, if any, of the slaves are trained to fight, just having the weapons and armor in hand is enough to give them courage. That and sheer numbers should give them enough of an advantage to turn the tide against the Sun Mages, if they can continue freeing other slaves. If they cannot spread the rebellion to the surrounding asteroids and their slave pits, it is almost certain the rebellion will fail.

## Future Adventures

Characters responsible for destroying the Antilans' favorite slave colony are going to be high up on the Sun Mages' hit list. Assassins will surely be dispatched, and the characters faces and names will go upon wanted posters wherever the Antilans travel.

The illithids are going to be less than amused that the characters succeeded as well, because they have to make good on their promise of payment. The mind flayers will surely try to cheat the characters, but subtly, wanting to keep the characters around for later use. After all, to waste such powerful hirelings would be foolish. However, if the characters aggressively demand their pay or catch the illithids trying to cheat them, the mind flayers may decide that the PCs are no longer worth the trouble.

The Hidden will no doubt seek out such great heroes, with gifts in hand to entice the characters into their organization. Characters who refuse will be asked to return the gifts, but the Hidden will be too impressed with them to force the issue.

Characters may find themselves at the head of a group of dependant slaves, who have no real skills and now depend on the characters who freed them for food, shelter, and a way to make a living!

Unsettling? Of course it is;  
you've just traveled two hundred yards in less time than it took you to take a step.  
Such rapid movement allows us to respond instantly to a threat anywhere in the Citadel.



# THE SUNDEATH

In this chapter the darkest secrets of the illithids will be revealed. These plots are sure to challenge the characters through countless adventures, and provide an underlying theme to adventures in the Shattered Sphere. Combining this information with that found in the next chapter will provide the makings of an in-depth storyline that will puzzle and amaze your players for months to come.

## The Birth of a Race

The Astromundi Cluster is the birthplace of the illithids, the sphere in which the mind flayers first raised their tentacled faces thousands of years ago.

In the History section of Chapter One in *The Astrogorator's Guide*, there was talk of a race of mutants that disappeared from known space after unleashing the Second Cataclysm. Those mutants were the illithids. Humans and other races have all but forgotten the legends of the mutants and their god, and virtually no one has made the connection between those deformed children of legend and the powerful race of the present. This lack of attention to the history of the Cluster may very well spell the end of all other races who call the Cluster their home.

In the beginning, the illithids were forced to live in the damp interior of the planet Astromundi, huddled in squalid tunnels and darkness. Shunned by their human parents, the illithids were a race bound together by hate for a mutual enemy. Though there were disputes over leadership and territory, the illithids were united as a race. From this unity and their desperate, dreaming wishes, the illithids began to forge their empire.

The mind flayers stole forth under the cover of darkness, stealing from their human parents. They took books of art, sciences, language—anything related to understanding the world they had come from. They also took any and all information that would help them build a world of their own. Some illithids began the building, hewing great halls and massive dwellings out of rough stone.

Others, more introverted, delved into the depths of their own minds, exploring the strange regions they

found there. From their studies came the illithids' mastery of the strange powers of the mind, and most notably their command of the dreaded mental blast.

For generations the mind flayers built their empire, forging weapons of steel and magic in their hidden laboratories. Above their heads, the human empires leapt toward the stars and sank into depths of their own excesses.

The mind flayers finally believed themselves ready to attack, planning to use their powers to spread the darkness of their caverns to the world of light.

But the human empires were already laid to waste. The illithids could scarcely believe the destruction: entire cities laid to the torch and great golden Hellbarges floating serenely above it all.

The Unbidden fell like a scourge upon the shoulders of the illithids, and the mind flayers were forced into retreat.

From their rage and confusion, they mustered the power to break dimensional barriers, and the avatar of an unhuman god answered their desperate call. Lugribosk appeared in the fire-ruddied skies, his massive tentacles crushing the Hellbarges in his slimy grasp, his clawed feet stamping out the armies of the Unbidden.

Still the illithids were not satisfied. They had been cheated of their revenge, they had been banished for ages, and now they screamed for vengeance. Once again, Lugribosk answered. With one hand, the illithid deity cradled the deformed race and with the other Lugribosk destroyed Astromundi.

The Second Cataclysm was terrible, powerful enough to grind the planet Astromundi into a smattering of asteroids and comets, gas nebula and frozen pockets of ice. To complete his vengeance, Lugribosk laid his wrath upon the Unbidden, banishing them to the Abyss and sealing the Shattered Sphere from them forever.

The Shattering took great power from the avatar, however, and his power was drained dangerously low. To preserve himself on this plane, Lugribosk sealed his essence into a device of his own making. Called the Sunslayer, this device was entrusted to the illithids, so that when the required time had passed

Here is Maligus' chamber. Listen carefully to what he says, for he is the wisest historian aboard the Vengeant. Bit hard of hearing though, so make sure you speak up. We'll wait outside, to return you to your ship.

# THE SUNDEATH

they could call their rejuvenated god back to the sphere.

The illithids believed themselves to be the only survivors of the Shattering. They enjoyed their new homes and the serenity of their moons as they orbited the dark bulk of the gas giant Ushathrandra. Their only regret was that for a period of a few days each month, the moons were bathed in the fiery rays of Firefall and Denaeb. Still, the moons were chill, shadowy and wet, perfect homes for the illithids.

The illithids were caught by surprise when the human agents of the Unbidden fell upon their benighted empire. Though few in number, and armored only with their cunning and scant magical weapons, the Unbidden agents dealt great harm to their enemies before being beaten back.

During the attack, the Sunslayer was disassembled, its parts scattered throughout the Sphere by the servitors of the Unbidden. The Dispersal was complete.

The illithids immediately turned their great power toward hunting those who had attacked them. They stalked the servants of the Unbidden across the astral plane, killing them wherever they were found. But all their savagery, all their hate, could not undo the damage visited upon the Sunslayer.

Centuries passed, and the illithids nursed their loss like a festering sore. They studied their ancient texts, studied the arts arcane and probed the inky darkness of the Cluster with tendrils of thought. Yet nothing came of their efforts, and they feared they had lost their god forever. The pieces of the Sunslayer seemed to have disappeared forever, and Lugribosk with them.

Independent of the other races, the illithids developed their own form of spelljamming ships, powered by the force of their minds rather than magical energies. They took to the stars, eager to seek out any information of the Sunslayer, hoping they could find physically what they could not find otherwise.

Their journeys led them to the other races that littered Clusterspace, and the Antilans became the first target of the illithids. The mind flayers' lightning raids disrupted the supply lines of the Sun Mages' empire,



You're the ones, eh? I'm Maligus, chief Libricant of the **Vengeant**. Come closer, won't you? I can't hear as well as I once did, and I can't talk as loud either. So you want to know about the history of the Cluster? Have you talked to the illithids?

# THE SUNDEATH

crippling the once-mighty humans.

In the heat of their ecstatic conquering, the illithids forgot their ancient ways and forsook their search for a way to rebuild the artifact of their god. The leaders of their military stirred the hearts and minds of their followers, and the illithid military exploded into the Cluster. Their squid ships became a sight to inspire fear into the heart of even the mightiest warrior.

Eventually, other races struck treaties with the illithids and bought their peace with the mind flayers with yearly quotas of slaves. But the Antilans would not surrender, their fierce pride unbending even in the face of superior forces. And the illithids continued to destroy the Sun Mages wherever they found them.

The Arcane changed all that. They delivered powers to the Antilans that the illithids could not counter. Fueled by the strength of the sun, the Antilans returned to the stars with renewed vigor. To this day the battle between the two races continues.

With the Arcane as allies, and the enhanced power of sunmagic, the Antilans were able to strike back. Their power had increased dramatically, and they were fast overtaking the mind flayers in power.

Stunned by this turn of events and looking for any advantage available to them, the illithids returned to their ancient ways and the worship of their almost forgotten deity Lugribossk. To show his appreciation, the faded deity used the last dregs of his real power to deliver another avatar to his people.

Currently, the priest-caste has taken charge of the mind flayer empire, and the illithids stand poised to take back what they claim is their own: the Astromundi Cluster.

## The Avatar's Message

When Lugribossk sent his avatar, he sent with it a message, known as the Mind Dark Prophecy. The following is the pertinent portion of the Prophecy (alien histrionics and praises to Lugribossk omitted):

*In the time of burning suns  
Of masked ones dominant and  
Vermin cloaked in the flesh of merchants  
The Dark Mind returns, a binding  
Force of the Tentacled One.  
Gather to you the pieces of  
the Sunslayer, font of  
Lugribossk's power.  
Call to them; the Egg of Night  
the Sword of Fecundity  
the Crowns of Midnight Sorrows  
the swollen Seeds of Fornever.  
'Ware the Ones Who Wait In Ice,  
the ancient race who rebelled.  
Cull from the vortex the shades of  
Phlogiston's might and watch well  
for the Constellations.  
Do these things in my name, and  
I will come.*

The Prophecies are more numerous than those, but this is the most relevant section. The illithids have done much to make sure that the Prophecies do not fall into the hands of other races, and have been largely successful. The above text, however, has found its way into the hands of scholars who are still troubled over its meaning. None have made the connection to the illithids, however. For now, the dark secrets of the illithids are safe.

## Meanings of the Prophecy

The prophecy is a surprisingly straightforward piece of dogma, unlike most religious statements. The avatar has spelled out for the illithids exactly what they must do to bring back the glory of their early days, and it is helping them do just that.

The time of burning suns is now; the Arcane and the Antilan Sun Mages are increasing the brilliance of Firefall with regularity, and the illithids have taken note of how this fits into the prophecy. Of course, the rise of the sun's power has correspondingly increased the power of the Antilans; thus, the "masked ones [are] dominant."

Sad, really.

They were the result of failed magical experimentation.

I suppose they fed you that load of garbage about being the children of humans?

Rubbish, the lot. They were never human. Ever.

# THE SUNDEATH

The neogi are “vermin cloaked in the flesh of merchants,” although some illithids consider the Calidians the fulfillment of that part of the prophecy.

The return of the Dark Mind (the illithid honorific for avatars of their deity) has also recently come to pass. The mind flayers now know the importance and purpose of the Sunslayer, and are searching in earnest for the pieces.

The magical items listed in the prophecy are all parts of the Sunslayer. Without all of the pieces, the Sunslayer cannot be constructed and the prophecy will remain unfulfilled.

The *Egg of Night* is the *black egg* discussed in “Frozen Secrets” (see the preceding chapter). The powers listed in that adventure are only some of the powers that the *egg* could possess. The *egg* is crafted of a mystical material that picks up the thoughts of its owner, and slowly transforms its powers to conform to what the owner most wishes. Because the neogi have such an affinity for umber hulk servitors, the *egg* currently is capable of creating umber hulks out of gold coins. If the characters were to come into possession of the *egg* and did not know its powers, the *egg* would slowly change its powers to something more appropriate to the beliefs of the characters.

The *Sword of Fecundity* is crucial to the survival of the illithid race once the prophecy has been fulfilled. When engaged as part of the Sunslayer, the *Sword* will endow the illithids with the ability to reproduce much more quickly than they now are able. The current gestation period of the illithids is twenty-seven months, and nearly half of all mind flayer children die in birthing or shortly after. The *Sword of Fecundity* will reduce gestation to a mere ten months and insure the survival of the children.

Used apart from the Sunslayer (by enemies of the illithids), the blade is a terrible weapon. Because of its link to the illithids, the weapon does triple normal damage against the mind flayers. In addition, the wielder is protected from the mental attacks of the illithids (if psionics are used, the wielder is more difficult to affect, reducing the effect of any psionic attack by one half). This weapon is very dear to the illithids, and they will stop at nothing to retrieve it.

Perhaps the most dangerous of the Sunslayer’s pieces are the six *Crowns of Midnight Sorrow*. These devices appear to be crafted of flawless obsidian, inset with pale blue gems. They are designed to siphon the energy from the six wizshades that settled in the Cluster shortly after the First Cataclysm. The wizshades originally entered the sphere in order to protect the Cluster from any further Cataclysms, which could conceivably spread to the phlogiston and wreak great havoc there.

Unfortunately, when Lugribosk came to the aid of the illithids, the wizshades were nearly destroyed by the Second Cataclysm. In trying to stop the Second Cataclysm, the wizshades became permanent fixtures of the Cluster, frozen and locked in the constellations (the illithids do not know their current location). Note that there are thirteen constellations and only six wizshades. DMs are free to place the wizshades in whichever constellations they like, and populate the remaining constellations with whatever bizarre creatures suit their fancy.

The *Crowns* can be used as spelljamming helms, operating exactly as a *crown of stars*, save that the SR = level/2, rather than level/3.

The *Seeds of Fornever* are extremely powerful magical items, scattered throughout wildspace during the First Cataclysm. They are rumored to be artifacts belonging to the first race to exist, but no one can say for sure whether this is true.

In appearance, the *Seeds* are deceptively smooth, but when touched they seem to have sharp edges that cut the holder. The *Seeds* are a variety of shapes and sizes, ranging from the size of a marble to roughly as large as a man’s head.

All told, there are six *Seeds of Fornever*, each possessing a special power of great magnitude. DMs are encouraged to make the *Seeds* items of great mystery and decide upon unusual powers for them.

The *Seeds* are the final component of the Sunslayer, and once attached to the *Crown of Midnight Sorrows* will allow the illithids to fulfill their long-promised “destiny.”

We made them,  
though we have long since forgotten how.  
They were to be a slave race, to help us in our wars with the impure races.

# THE SUNDEATH

## The Sunslayer

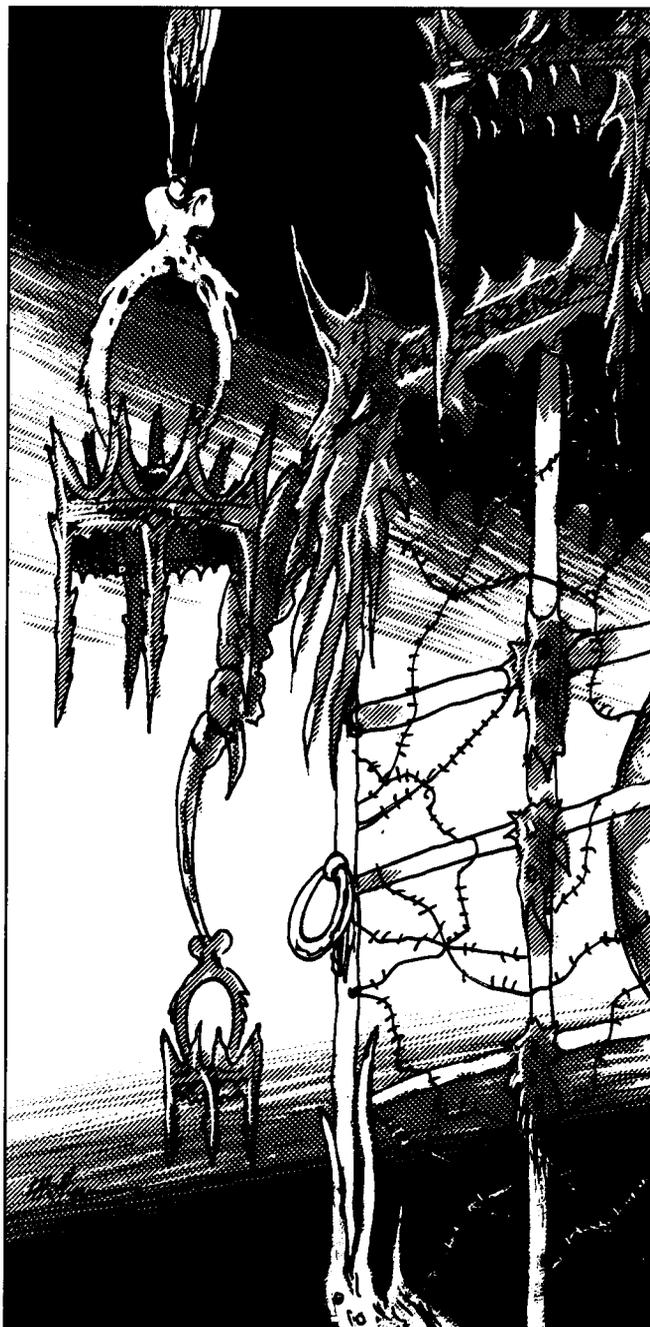
No magical item (except, perhaps, for the Dark-gate) is as powerful as the Sunslayer. Once it is put together, the artifact will be able to extinguish the suns of the Astromundi Cluster. To do this, the illithids will only have to put the Sunslayer on a spell-jamming vessel and sail it toward either of the suns. Once the device is at the proper distance (the Sunslayer will allow the ship to go no further), shadowstones will be placed into the Egg of Night.

The power source in place, several members of the illithid priest caste will focus their mental powers on the Sunslayer, igniting its inner forces.

The Sunslayer will then draw on the power of the Negative Material plane, creating a gate to that plane within Firefall. By forging such a link with the Negative Material plane the Sunslayer will be able to funnel the sun's energy into that plane. Over the course of a few days, the sun will grow progressively dimmer, until it is at last extinguished.

There is one weak link in the whole of this plan: the illithids have no idea where all the pieces of the Sunslayer are. Their plan could take a year or more, as they comb the deeps of wildspace for the artifacts they so desperately need. And while they are searching, their enemies are going to be on the move. Once the plan of the illithids becomes known, the Antilans will certainly do what they can to stop the mind flayers, and other races will likely oppose them as well.

The Sunslayer does have a good application as well as the evil one for which it is being assembled. Clever characters may discover a way to use the Sunslayer against the Antilans, reducing their power. This can be done, but care must be taken lest the power of the Sunslayer overcome the power of the shadowstones that bolster Firefall's strength. See Chapter Five: **The Mystery of the Arcane** for more information about this method of using the Sunslayer for good rather than evil.



But the illithids proved to be far more a liability than an asset. They possessed unbalanced psyches, unable to focus long on the tasks we assigned them. Worse yet, they had an uncanny aptitude for magical study.

# THE SUNDEATH

## Plan of Attack

The illithids have only recently mobilized to search out the pieces of the Sunslayer, but their avatar has a plan already laid out. First off, they intend to locate the *Egg of Night*. Once they hear rumors that an item fitting its description is being used by the neogi, the illithids will be satisfied just to know where the *Egg* is. To force their hands with the neogi would be detrimental to their search, as it would deprive them of an important information source. The illithids can always hire someone to steal it later.

Following that, the mind flayers would desperately like to begin exploration of the constellations. Because they themselves are not too keen on endangering their slimy hides in this unknown area, they are more than likely going to hire adventurers (the PCs) to do the searching for them. They do not know that the wizshades are imprisoned there, but they do know that the prophecy has instructed them to watch the constellations, and they intend to do so.

Their next priority is to recover the rest of the artifacts necessary to construct the Sunslayer. To reach this goal the mind flayers will be using their own ships and captains, as well as hiring mercenary adventures to seek out the pieces of the Sunslayer. The illithids know that it is dangerous to let non-illithids handle the pieces of the Sunslayer (because the Sunslayer could be potentially be used against them) but they feel the risk is worth furthering their quest.

Once all the pieces of the Sunslayer are brought together and assembled, and the wizshades placed beneath the *Crowns of Midnight Sorrows*, the illithids will put their final plan into action. After that, it will be only days before Denaeb is destroyed. Firefall will be much more difficult to destroy because of the Antilan presence near that sun, but the illithids have only to slip one ship through in order to use the Sunslayer on that sun as well.

## Stopping the Sunslayer

The illithids are still quite a ways off from their final goal, giving characters some time to put an end to the mind flayers' dreams of conquest.

Of course, in order to stop the illithids, it is going to be necessary to gain possession of at least one piece of the Sunslayer. The more pieces that the adventurers can keep out mind flayer possession, the longer they can delay the construction of the Sunslayer. The illithids will not stand idly by as characters snatch the pieces of the holy artifact, though, and are going to hunt down the pieces with ruthless efficiency. Characters who flash around pieces of the Sunslayer are going to attract attention, and eventually tales of them will reach the illithids. Then the mind flayers will send out hordes of Varan assassins and sorcerers to recapture the pieces.

Another way to stop the illithid threat is to stalk the mind flayers that are hunting down pieces of the device. Clever characters may be able to follow found pieces to the place the device is being constructed. This will allow them to attempt to seize the device after it is constructed. This is the most dangerous plan, and the least likely to succeed. There will be hundreds upon hundreds of illithids seeker ships scattered across millions of miles. Finding the right one to follow will be next to impossible. Stealing the Sunslayer from under the noses of the illithids will be no easy task, either, making this the choice of desperation.

In all likelihood the illithids will be stopped through a combination of the two methods. Characters may find a piece of the Sunslayer themselves, and have to fight off illithid and Varan assassins to keep it out of mind flayer hands. Then, once they know what it is that is happening, they may set out to lure illithids into traps in the hopes of finding where the mind flayers are putting the Sunslayer together.

DMs should make this a difficult, but not impossible task to complete. After all, once characters learn of the prophecy, they will know nearly all the illithids know. Though they do not have the manpower and resources the illithids possess, characters are, after all, heroes.

Of course, this was not what we needed or wanted.  
At once we set about removing them from circulation.  
Our troops chased them out of our cities, drove them into hiding.  
We believed they would perish there.

# THE SUNDEATH

## Consequences of the Sundeath

It is possible that the characters may not be able to stop the Sundeath from occurring. Despite their brave attempts, the illithids may be able to go on with their plans unimpeded.

If this happens, there are going to be some major, major changes in the Astromundi Cluster.

The illithids will put out Denaeb first. The sudden death of a sun will alert the Antilans to the foul play and it won't be hard to track down the responsible parties. This will lead to an no-holds-barred outbreak of the war between the Sun Mages and the illithids. Despite the so-called Neogi Treaties that forbade war within the Inner Ring, the two powers are liable to tear the Ring apart in their war.

The illithids will have a definite advantage, as their avatar's power will be greatly increased by the death of Denaeb. It is likely that the avatar itself will step into the battle, perhaps using enough of Lugribosk's power to turn the tide in favor of the illithids.

As illithid predations increase, the Arcane and Antilan forces may appear as heroes to the beleaguered people of the realm. The Antilans will be the only force able to form any opposition to the mind flayers, and factions normally opposed the Antilans may throw in their lot with the Sun Mages.

If the illithids succeed in extinguishing Firefall, things will be grim indeed within the sphere. With their god fully charged up with the power of his people, and no longer having to worry about the burning rays of the sun, the mind flayers will rampage throughout the Cluster, enslaving any race that they encounter.

Eventually, without the sun to power their magic, the Antilans will no longer be able to oppose the illithids, and the Arcane will flee for greener pastures, so to speak. In the end, the success of the illithids' plot spells the end of civilization in the Cluster.

The worst case scenario will occur if the illithids achieve total victory over the Cluster and discover the secret of the Arcane and their Darkgate. If this occurs, the illithids will be able to use that device to manipulate the tanar'ri and spread their empire to other crystal spheres by passing through the outer

planes. In this case, only powerful magic and the blood of heroes will be able to stop the mind flayers' advance.

## The Illithids Defeated

The failure of their plans will put the mind flayers in a terrible position. Characters who manage to swipe more than half of the pieces needed to put together the Sunslayer will naturally be on the illithids' hit list. The mind flayers have only a limited time to recapture the pieces of the Sunslayer. If they cannot recover the necessary pieces within the space of a year, Lugribosk's power will fade to nothing, and the avatar itself will dissipate.

Without their avatar to lead them, the illithids will find themselves overextended and will no longer be able to maintain the illusion of a powerful empire. The Antilans will fall mercilessly on their ancient foes, hunting the mind flayers nearly to extinction.

At this time the illithids may strike a deal with the baatezu. This is strictly up to the DM and makes for a particularly lethal sort of campaign.

Once the illithids have been defeated and hook up with the baatezu, they will begin hunting the characters down. Though they can no longer use the Sunslayer to extinguish the suns of the Astromundi Cluster in order to power up their god, they can use the terrible weapon to open a gateway to the realms of the baatezu. And, of course, this could lead to a war between the Arcane allies (the tanar'ri) and the baatezu, a war that could destroy the Cluster entirely.

Somehow, they survived.

We caught them pilfering from our supplies, stealing food and water. More frighteningly, they had infiltrated our storehouses of magical knowledge, and valuable texts fell into their inhuman hands.

## MYSTERY OF THE ARCANE

The Arcane of the Cluster are devoted, like all of their kin, to making the ultimate deal. They have spent their entire existence traveling from one crystal sphere to another, always on the lookout for the perfect bargain.

Which is why they were more than willing to strike a deal with the tanar'ri, a deal to which all others pale in comparison.

Ages past, the tanar'ri had their first contact with the humans of the Astromundi Cluster. The tanar'ri quickly gained control of these humans and used them as slaves. The tanar'ri found these slaves to be quite entertaining, and decided that they could use a few more. They forced the Astromundi natives to lead them back to the Astromundi Cluster, and set about conquering that crystal sphere.

Things went better than the tanar'ri could ever have hoped. The races of the Cluster were relatively weak and torn by civil insurrections and race wars. The tanar'ri descended on the Cluster like a plague of locusts, destroying everything they touched. Thousands of humans were enslaved and shipped back to the Abyss where they would spend their miserable lives as slaves to the tanar'ri.

The tanar'ri were very happy with this new sphere. They could rule here, and no one would challenge them. Far enough away from the other major spheres, they could grow in power and learn to operate more effectively on the Prime Material plane. There was an endless supply of slaves, and plenty of room for individual tanar'ri to build their estates.

And then the illithids came, and with them, their god. At a stroke, the tanar'ri found themselves on the losing end of a terrible war. The god of the illithids was too powerful for even the massed might of the Abyss to overcome, and in the end, the Second Cataclysm banished the tanar'ri from the Astromundi Cluster.

For centuries the tanar'ri fumed over their defeat, vowing to return to the Cluster and claim it as their own. But there was no simple way; the Cluster had been sealed from their predations.

During this time, the tanar'ri stumbled across the Arcane. Quick thinking on the part of the unfortunate



We knew then that they were too dangerous a threat to leave alone.  
We chased them down and killed as many of them as we could.  
We could not allow those flawed experiments to live!

# MYSTERY OF THE ARCANE

Arcane trade ship managed to save the crew from certain death at the hands of the Abyssal fiends.

In an unprecedented move, the Arcane managed to form a trade alliance with the tanar'ri. The tanar'ri found that the Arcane could enter the Astromundi Cluster at will, and move about there freely. The Arcane discovered how much the tanar'ri coveted this sphere, and managed to construct a deal that would make everyone (except the inhabitants of the Astromundi Cluster) happy.

The Arcane would find a way to deliver the crystal sphere to the tanar'ri, in exchange for "trading concessions to be named later." The tanar'ri snatched at the deal, not bothering to haggle over the price or to wonder just what it was the Arcane wanted in return.

In order to hold up their end of their bargain, the Arcane set about finding a method by which the tanar'ri could enter the Cluster. Their searches took them far across the phlogiston, to crystal spheres that have likely never been visited by another intelligent race.

Their search took them to other planes as well, and it was on one of these planes that they discovered the secret of the Darkgate.

This device is incredibly powerful, capable of shattering dimensional boundaries at a stroke. But it had been disassembled and its pieces scattered so that it could never be used for evil.

Knowing that they had found the key to their deal, the Arcane immediately began searching for pieces of the Darkgate. Though it was unlikely they would find the original materials used in the construction of the Darkgate, they could very well find reasonable substitutes.

Because the Arcane needed powerful allies to protect them from the other, more violent races of the Astromundi Cluster, they ingratiated themselves to the Antilans. By providing the secrets of spelljamming to this race, they not only gained a lasting partner but insured the supremacy of that partner in the Cluster. The Arcane have since used the Antilans' vast resources to seek out the ruins of the First and Second Cataclysms, in the hope that they will

contain the necessary magical items to create the Darkgate.

Over the centuries, the Arcane have made themselves invaluable to other races in the Cluster as well, primarily by selling spelljamming equipment to these races. The Arcane have done much to advance the state of technology and spelljamming in the Astromundi Cluster. It has also earned them a few choice bits of magical knowledge that they need to operate the Darkgate.

The most important piece of information concerns the enormous amounts of energy that the Darkgate will require. The device is very powerful, but in order to operate at full effectiveness, it must receive massive energy.

It took the Arcane a long time to come up with a way to generate the power necessary for their plan to succeed, but they have at last found the answer.

Shadowstone is a rare element that exists only within the Astromundi Cluster. It possesses the unique property of not only reflecting energy directed at it, but amplifying that energy. The Arcane intend to use reflectors of shadowstone to amplify the energy of the central sun, Firefall, to enormous proportions. As the reflected energy peaks, the sun will begin to collapse. When the process is complete, the energy produced will be more than enough to power the Darkgate. And then the tanar'ri will be free to return to the Astromundi Cluster.

## The Arcane—Now

It has been nearly a thousand years since the Arcane agreed to sell the Astromundi Cluster to the tanar'ri. Since that time Arcane scientists have worked diligently to find all the pieces of the Darkgate and construct the device.

Meanwhile, the Antilans spend their time hunting down pockets of shadowstone. They believe that the Arcane are increasing the power of the sun for the benefit of the Sun Mages, whose magical power is directly proportional to the light of the sun. The Antilans have devoted a large portion of their resources to aiding the Arcane, unwittingly speeding the end of

*We were forced to abandon our fight with those monsters, however, when another threat fell upon us from the sky. The Unbidden had come, launching a brutal assault that took all our power to repel.*

# MYSTERY OF THE ARCANE

the Astromundi Cluster.

The Arcane, as a whole, should not be considered evil; they're simply completing a business deal. They are, after all, truly neutral beings. They will buy and sell anything to anyone, as long as their price is met. It is part of their culture not to question the nature of the sale, or the effect a sale will have on other races. The Arcane aren't ignorant of the fact that the tanar'ri are going to wreak havoc throughout Clusterspace, but that's not their concern. Once the sphere is paid for, the tanar'ri can do whatever they want with their property.

Now, the Arcane are anxious to complete their deal with the tanar'ri. The tanar'ri have been very insistent that the Arcane speed up their plans, and the Arcane want to keep these customers happy. Still, they do not want to make a mistake, and are being very careful to make sure that everything goes as they have planned.

## The Darkgate

The Darkgate is the most powerful artifact in the Astromundi Cluster, and the most dangerous. Fortunately, it is also not yet complete, requiring several more magical items before it will be ready to be put into use.

Over the centuries, the Arcane have put together the main body of the Darkgate, and have made significant progress on the engine that will drive the device and the focusing mechanism which will serve to create the dimensional rift. But a large amount of work still needs to be done.

The chief piece missing from the Darkgate is the *Egg of Night*. This magical device will serve to convert the enhanced energy of Firefall into a form the Darkgate can put to use. It would be possible for the Arcane to create a new power converter for the Darkgate, but that could take centuries and their tanar'ri customers are not known for their patience.

Instead, the Arcane are busily searching for this most vital piece of the puzzle. What they don't know is that the neogi actually have the *Egg of Night* in their possession. Even if the Arcane find out that the



Even so, we were not completely saved.  
Many of our cities fell into ruin beneath the onslaught of the terrible creatures.  
Their powers were formidable and they killed many of us.  
In the end, however, we were victorious.

# MYSTERY OF THE ARCANES

neogi have the *Egg*, it is going to be very difficult for them to get the item away from their trading competition. This will call for either very crafty trading on the part of the Arcane, or the use of high-powered agents to wrest the *Egg* away by force.

The *Egg* is not the only missing piece. There are fifteen to twenty other items that are needed to complete the Darkgate. The characters may have difficulty getting ahold of these items, but doing so will be a feat worthy of the mightiest champion.

The DM is encouraged to come up with a list of these powerful items and scatter them throughout the Cluster. The characters may have a difficult time coming up with them all, but once they do it will be a feat worth remembering for some time to come. Below are some suggestions:

*Amulet of the Planes (DMG)*: This amulet is commonly able to transport its possessor to or from one of the outer planes. As part of the Darkgate, this item can be used to home in on the Abyss and “shoe-horn” a breach through the wards separating that plane from the Astromundi Cluster.

*Chime of Opening (DMG)*: A low-powered item by most standards, the chime can open locked doors or windows, locks, shackles, bars or gates. The Darkgate amplifies this power, allowing the chime to affect the spaces between the planes, easing the breach into the Abyss.

*Claw of Magic Stealing (TOM)*: This device is used to steal the spells from other magicians. When attached to the Darkgate, the stolen spells can be used as a supplemental power source.

*Dimensional Mine (TOM)*: The mine ruptures extra-dimensional spaces. When attached to the Darkgate, this devious device will be used to forge a strong tie to the Astral Plane, which can then be extended out into the Abyss.

*Portable Hole (DMG)*: The portable hole creates an extra-dimensional pocket. The hole will be filled with shadowstone, and then placed in the teleportation chamber, allowing large amounts of the stone to be moved into space. Needless to say, more than one hole will be needed.

*Rod of Passage (DMG)*: The rod will normally only perform each of its functions a single time. When worked into the Darkgate mechanism, though, its various powers of transport will be constantly recharged and amplified by to help in the opening of a permanent portal to the Abyss.

*Sphere of Annihilation, Talisman of the Sphere (DMG)*: This powerfully destructive item and its control are important parts of the Darkgate. The sphere will be used to affect the sun, Firefall, draining off some of the residual energy that will be left when the sun collapses. This will keep fire and heat from rushing into the breach when it is created.

*Teleportation Chamber (TOM)*: The chamber is used to move matter from one place to another. As part of the Darkgate, this item will be used to send shadowstones to precise locations around Firefall, increasing that sun’s power.

*Trimia’s Catalogue of Outer Plane Artifacts (TOM)*: The catalogue lists many devices for traveling to other planes, but the Arcane are interested specifically in the devices used to travel to the Abyss. Should they find the catalogue, the Arcane will be that much closer to finding the magical items needed to fine-tune the Darkgate to the Abyss.

Many other items can, of course, be added to this list making the players’ task that much more difficult. Alternately, fewer items might be needed to complete the Darkgate. While this makes it that much easier for characters to accumulate all of the remaining pieces, it also adds some time pressure. With less pieces to retrieve, the Arcane may be able to finish their project much sooner than the timeline below may show.

## Defeating the Arcane

The only sure way to defeat the Arcane is to turn the Darkgate against them. In order to do this, the characters must first get to the Darkgate. This is no easy feat, as it is being constructed deep within Antilan space and will be heavily guarded by the finest Antilan troops, a number of warlocks with *soulblades* and many, many dwarven mercenaries.

The illithids came at just the wrong time.  
As we were winding up our war with the Unbidden, we were faced with this new threat.  
We turned to face them, and would have beaten them back.

# MYSTERY OF THE ARCANE

If characters manage to get to the Darkgate, the final piece (the *Egg of Night*) must be placed in the Darkgate by a cleric of a god violently opposed to the tanar'ri. Virtually any god of good alignment, and most of neutral alignment, will fit the bill. However, the cleric that wishes to destroy the Darkgate must first seek the blessing of his or her god, or the effort will not be successful.

This, of course, means a trip out to the constellations (see Chapter 3 of the *Celestial Almanac*) to confer with the contemplators.

If a cleric receives the blessing of his god and installs the *Egg of Night* in the Darkgate, the end will be most impressive.

The Darkgate will activate, but will begin a slow process of self destruction. As minutes pass, the device will begin to dissipate the energies contained within its magical components. Ten minutes are required for the de-energizing of the entire device, save for the *Egg of Night*.

This most powerful of the devices will take another ten minutes before becoming useless. While all of this is taking place, Antilan troops and dwarven mercenaries will be trying to get to the Darkgate and remove the *Egg of Night*.

If the characters can pull all of this off, they must still escape with their lives. They will be hunted for the rest of their days by assassins hired by the Arcane and the few tanar'ri that have managed to get past the magical barriers and into Clusterspace.

The up-side of all of this is that the Arcane's business deal with the tanar'ri will no doubt be rendered null and void. The tanar'ri are not a patient race, and will not wait around for the Arcane to spend another few millennia trying to find another way to get them into the Cluster. Instead, they will probably seek out the dowhar, and give them a chance at getting tanar'ri armies into the Cluster.

By destroying the Darkgate, the characters will also have caused a major setback to the Antilans. The Arcane used shadowstone to amplify the power of Firefall, which the Antilans used to drive their magic. With the Arcanes' plan defeated, they will not be able to continue to amplify the sun's power.

Gradually, Firefall will return to normal. This will reduce the Antilan's magical abilities, making it impossible for them to use their sunmagic. This will lead to a power imbalance between the Sun Mages and the illithids, bringing on all sorts of other problems for the characters to deal with.

## The Tanar'ri

Why do the tanar'ri want the Astromundi Cluster?

First, because of its isolated position, it is doubtful that the races within the Cluster will be able to receive aid from other crystal spheres.

Second, there are only two major military powers in the sphere, and neither of them is any real threat to the tanar'ri. The Antilans will be magically neutered when the sun collapses, and the illithids are relatively few in number when compared to the raging hordes of the tanar'ri.

Third, the Cluster is ripe with wealth waiting to be discovered. The tanar'ri will be able to enslave the majority of races within the Cluster, using them to seek out this wealth.

But the most important reason, from the tanar'ri standpoint, is the fact that this will give them a major foothold on the Prime Material plane. The chance to remake an entire sphere in the image of the Abyss is worth nearly any price. And as the baatezu do not have such a position, it will aid the tanar'ri in the Blood War with this hated race.

## An Arcane Timeline

The Arcane are further from victory than the illithids, but are in no way far from achieving their ends. The following is a brief timeline of just how the Arcane will progress toward their goal in the coming months. All time is measured from the point at which the plot of the Arcane begins as a feature in the campaign. The timeline is intentionally sketchy, and though it provides some major events, the exact details of those events are left up to the DM to adapt to his or her campaign.

But we became too impatient,  
and our mages prepared a spell they believed would destroy both of the threats to our people.  
The spell was cast, and at first it seemed to have worked.  
The Unbidden fled, shattered and defeated.

# MYSTERY OF THE ARCANES

## Months 1-3

During the first few months, the Arcane accomplish very little. Their Antilan agents begin stalking several knowledgeable sages within the Cluster, including a few powerful mages who may take offense at such close scrutiny. The characters may fall under surveillance, especially if they have come into contact with any piece of the Darkgate. A mage may hire the characters for protection, fearing attack or capture by Antilan forces.

## Months 4-6

This period of time brings rumors of Arcane traveling throughout the Cluster, accompanied by powerful contingents of Antilan mages and warriors, as well as elite dwarven mercenary units.

These rumors are true, and reflect the mobilization of Arcane forces to capture the mages. The Arcane want the knowledge that these mages possess, and the easiest way to gain that knowledge is to capture the mages and interrogate them at leisure. The Arcane also know that most of them will not go without a fight, and have prepared accordingly.

Characters who have come found a piece of the Darkgate may very well be targeted by such retrieval groups. They may have to defend a mage who hired them earlier. Either way, it is doubtful they will be able to defeat the powerful Antilan forces.

The Antilans are offering huge amounts of gold for the delivery of any shadowstones found. Groups of adventurers take to the stars in search of the stuff, which has suddenly become the most valuable commodity in the sphere.

## Months 7-12

The Arcane are furiously searching out the pieces of the Darkgate at this point, and will put up with no interference. It will be almost impossible for characters who are doing likewise to avoid the Antilan forces, but space is a very big place. Canny adventurers should be able to hide out in Fringe or the Great Belt, but may have to deal with goblinoids or other forces that have already taken up residence in the remote places.

If characters have not become involved in the plot by this time, DMs should get them into the swing of things with all due haste. After all, the Arcane are nearing completion of the Darkgate.

Characters can get involved through contact with an escaped prisoner (likely an enslaved mage) of the Antilans. This prisoner will know enough of the plot to get the characters involved, but not enough to answer all their questions.

DMs may also create a prophecy similar to the Prophecy of the Darkmind found in Chapter Four, and have the manuscript fall into the characters hands. The prophecy could act as a sort of shopping list for the characters, pointing them in the direction of the items the Arcane seek.

## Months 13-18

During this period the Arcane will manage to accumulate all of the pieces the characters don't have. They will then begin working to eliminate the characters.

It is crucial that characters somehow discover the means by which to destroy the Arcane now, if not sooner. This will give them a definite goal and keep them from wandering aimlessly about wildspace with Arcane assassins at their backs.

If the *Egg of Night* has not yet been discovered by the Arcane, and the illithids are still searching for it, the characters may be chased by both parties at once. This should be a very exciting time for the characters, as they race around trying to avoid illithids and Arcane and use the *Egg* to destroy both. Truly an adventure to be remembered!

## Months 19-24

This is the endgame, the point at which the Arcane make their final bid for power. They will intensify their search for the last of the pieces, and once they are found will begin stockpiling shadowstone.

Characters in the know will begin to see signs that the Arcane are nearing the end of their plotting and are nearly ready to put it into action. It is at the end of two years that the characters must make their move, or the Arcane will be victorious.

The spell must have upset some sort of dimensional balance, for it allowed the beast-god of the illithids to strike at us. The thing was hellishly powerful and destroyed our world.



## Arcane Victory

If the Arcane complete their tasks and the Darkgate is constructed and used, things will get very grim indeed.

Clusterspace holds many planar nexuses, areas where the fabric between the planes has grown thin and weak. The Darkgate will use the power of Firefall's collapse to open a major portal at the site of the dead sun, but will also tear through the many planar nexuses. A thousand openings to the Abyss will come into being, and the massed might of the tanar'ri will come roaring through.

Within days the tanar'ri will explode across the face of Clusterspace, dealing death and destruction as they go. No race will be able to stand against them for long, and in the end the only defense will be to run.

The Antilans will be the first destroyed as the tanar'ri armies march forth from the corpse of Firefall. The illithids remaining in the Cluster (those not

"dealt with" by the characters) will be the next to be taken down; tanar'ri have long memories and end grudges only in blood.

The neogi will most likely make no attempt to stop the tanar'ri, preferring to run instead. Thoric and Calidians will do the same, preferring to hide from the rampaging armies of outer planar denizens. The Calidian Hidden will not take the easy way out, however, preferring to fight this oppressor as they have fought others in the past: from the shadows. Player characters may find themselves inducted into the Hidden (if they haven't been already) and given a chance to strike back at the Arcane and tanar'ri.

The dwarves will fight with the zeal of their kind, but in the end, they too will fall. The elves will help where they can by ferrying people out of the Cluster as quickly as possible, but this will be of little help.

In the end, the tanar'ri will dominate the Cluster, using their fierce might and magical ability to bind the other races as slaves. For the tanar'ri, the chance to capture and twist an entire crystal sphere to the

We survived, but just barely.  
The illithids were saved by their god-thing, taken away to their own land.  
Not that it mattered much, because as soon as we could  
we started hunting them again.

# MYSTERY OF THE ARCANE

cause of chaos and evil is well worth any price the Arcane may later demand.

There are still several possible ways for characters to turn back the tide of evil:

- **The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Friend:** The tanar'ri are blood foes of the baatezu, the primary denizens of the Nine Hells. Characters can attempt to bring the baatezu into the Cluster, opening their own rifts into the Nine Hells.

This isn't an ideal method by any means, but it is the simplest way to contain the influence of the tanar'ri. By bringing the Blood War to the Prime Material plane, the characters can force both sides of the War to waste their energy fighting one another rather than rampaging into the phlogiston and beyond. The problem with this line of attack is the chance that one of the two powers might gain a significant edge over the others, which would result in the winning race turning on the other denizens of the Cluster.

- **The Sunslayer:** By some quirk of fate, it may be possible to activate the Sunslayer and use its contained power to battle the tanar'ri. Of course, the illithids are going to have other ideas and using the Sunslayer at all may result in a furthering of the illithids' plans for conquest.

- **Appeal to Higher Powers:** There are some good denizens of the Outer Planes, a few of whom may be convinced to lend a hand in the conflict in the Astrumundi Cluster. Of course, such powers aren't known for dealing straight with mortals, and the price may be a little higher than most characters are willing to pay. . . .

- **Artifacts:** There's no telling what sort of magic is lying about in the various planes beyond the Prime Material. Various mages have found their way out into the other planes, and may live there even now. It is possible that they know some sort of artifacts that could be used to turn back the rampaging tanar'ri. Such artifacts won't be just lying about, though, and characters may have to make some unpleasant deals with some very unsavory beings to get them.

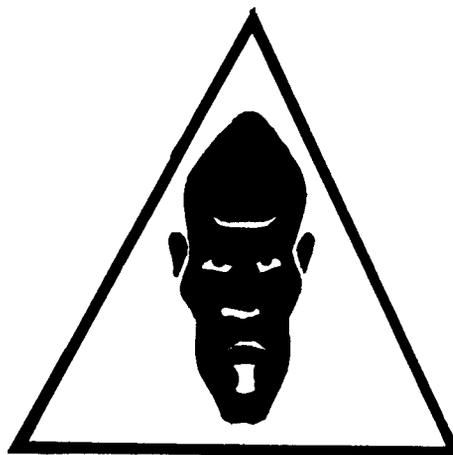
- **Taking the Bull by the Horns:** Characters are known for attempting seemingly impossible feats and

pulling them off. One such feat would be charging into the Abyss and taking out the leaders of the tanar'ri, crippling their military conquests within the Cluster. Naturally, this will involve a very complicated quest across several of the outer planes, as characters search for the weapons and allies needed to pull off such a feat.

- **The Big Lie:** Tanar'ri are smart, but they're also greedy and mindlessly violent. Quick-thinking characters may be able to convince them that somewhere else would be a better place to start their conquest of the Prime Material plane. Characters would have to sweeten the pot, obviously, most likely by guiding a tanar'ri scout force into another crystal sphere. This won't endear the characters to anyone who knows what they've done, but it could save the Cluster.

- **Kill the Arcane:** The Arcane are a pivotal force in tanar'ri plans. If something should happen to all of them, the tanar'ri would most likely have to abandon their designs on the Cluster until they could find new servitors to help them across.

These are just a few of the ways that characters can try to defeat the tanar'ri, but others are certainly possible. DMs are urged to make the doing quite difficult, a thing that legends are made of!



So now you know the truth of the matter, and you can forget what those lying illithids told you. The Antilan Empire has no reason to lie, so there is no doubt that the history we speak of is true.

**With that, Maligus ushers you out and closes the door.**

# MONSTER SUMMARY TABLE

This table presents the vital statistics for some of the monsters mentioned throughout this product. Use it for handy reference during play, and refer to the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™ (MC) volumes, *Lorebook of the Void* (LV), or *SJR1 Lost Ships* for details. Remarks marked with an asterisk (\*) are explained on the following page under the appropriate monster description.

Name	AC	HD	THACO	#AT	Dmg	MV	Remarks
Arcane (LV)	5(3)	10	11	1	1d8/by weapon	12	AL LN; 40% magic resistance; SD <i>invisibility, dimension door</i>
Archlich (SJR1)	0	11+	10	1	1d10	6	AL any good; SA *; SD +1 or better weapon to hit
Baatezu (MC8):	(See MC8 for details on the individual baatezu types.)						all types, AL LE
Abishai, red	1	6+3	13	3	1d4(x2)/1d4+1	9, Fl 12	SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 or better weapon to hit; MR 30%
Barbazu	3	6+6	13	3 or 1	1d2(x2)/1d8 or 2d6	15	SA glaive, disease, battle frenzy; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; MR 30%
Gelugon	-3	11	9	4	1d4(x2)/ 2d4/3d4+4	15	SA tail freeze, fear; SD regeneration, +2 or better weapon to hit; MR 50%
Beholder (LV)	0/2/7	45-75 hp var.		1	2d4	Fl 3	AL LE; SA *; SD anti-magic ray
Buzzjewel (MC9)	-3	1+1	19	1	1d8+poison	3, Fl 24	AL N; SA poison; SD *
Contemplator (MC9)	0	13+1	7	3(5)	2d10(x3)/ 2d8(x2)	24	AL N; SA *; SD spell; 50% magic resistance
Dizintar (MC7)	-3	8	13	1	1d10+6	15	AL LE; SA spiked armor; SD <i>dimension door</i> ; MR 20%
Dowhar (MC9)	5	3	18	1	1d4	3, Sw 9	AL CN
Dracon (LV)	5(3)	6	15	2 or 1	1d4/1d4/ or weapon	18	AL LG
Dweomerborn (MC9)	-4	10	11	2	1d12(x2)	6+ special	AL NE; SA *; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; MR special
Firelich (MC9)	0	16+	4	1	16d6	FL 36, SR 4	AL any evil; SA fear; MR 40%
Gammaroid (MC9)	-2/-10	100	5	3	10d6(x2)/ 60d4	9, SR 9	AL N; SA *; SD hide limbs, flame sheath
Giff (LV)	6(2)	4	17	2	1d6+7 or weapon+7	base 6	AL LN; SA head butt; 10% magic resistance
Great Dreamer (MC9)	0	72-144	5	1	special	Sw 6, Fl 30	AL Lawful; SA *; SD *; MR variable
Illithid (MC 1)	5	8+4	11	4	special	12	AL LE; SA mind blast; MR 90%
Infinity Vine (MC7)	10	special	nil	nil	nil	10 cubic ft/ro.	AL N; SA engulf; SD regeneration; MR 25%
Lhee, lesser (MC9)	2	3+3	17	1	1d2	9, Fl 12	AL CN; 30% magic resistance; SD *
Murderoid (MC7)	0	50	5	1-3	5d10	Fl 12	AL NE; SA spells; SD spells
Neogi (LV), (SJR1)	3	5	15	3	1d3(x2)/1d6	6	AL LE; SA slowing poison; SD *
Undead Old Master	5	7	13	3	1d3(x2)/1d6	3	AL LE; SA chill touch; SD *; MR 10%
Plasmoid (MC7)							
DeGleash	2	8	13	1-4	1d8/wpn+3	9	AL any non-evil; SA boom, absorb; SD malleable
DelNoric	3(8)	5	15	1-3+	1d6/wpn+2	6	AL any non-good; SA squeal, acid; SD malleable
Reigar (MC7)	2	14	7	2	special	12	AL CN; SA, SD magic use; MR 45%
Scro (MC9)	4(8)	3	18	1	1d6 or wpn	9 (12)	AL LE; SA weapon specialization; MR 10%
Spacesea Giant (MC7)	0	14+1d4	7	1	1d10 or wpn	12	AL NG; SA hurl rocks for 3d10 points
Tanar'ri (MC8)	(See MC8 and <i>The Celestial Almanac</i> for details on tanar'ri.)						all types, AL CE
Umber Hulk (MC 1)	2	8+8	11	3	3d4(x2)/1d10	6, Br 1-6	AL CE; SA surprise, -5 victim's surprise, <i>confusion</i>
Undead, Stellar (MC 9)	3	5	16	3	2d4(x2)/3d4	9	AL NE; SA three successful hits = 2xbite damage

# MONSTER SUMMARY TABLE

Name	AC	HD	THACO	#AT	Dmg	MV	Remarks
Vampire (MC1)	1	8+3	13	1	1d6+4	12, Fl 18	AL CE; SA <i>energy drain, charm</i> ; SD +1 or better weapons to hit, <i>gaseous form</i>
Witchlight Marauder (tertiary) (MC9)	2	4	17	3	1d6+3(x2)/1d10	16	AL NE
Wizshade (MC7)	0	10	nil	nil	nil	12, Fl 24	AL CN; SA magic; SD harmed only by magical weapons; 25% MR
Xixchil (MC9)	var.	1+1	19	1(3)	weapon type or 2d6(x2) or poison	12	AL any; SA poison

## Archlich

These rare undead exude an aura of power that acts as a *fear* spell on creatures of less than 5 hit dice. Their touch causes 1d10 damage and *paralysis* for 2-5 turns. They can also *repel* and *animate dead* if necessary. Archliches are immune to clerical turning.

## Beholder

The eyes of the beholder have the following abilities: *charm person, charm monster, sleep, telekinese, flesh to stone, disintegrate, fear, slow, cause serious wounds, and death ray*.

## Buzzjewel

Due to the buzzjewels' quick movement and swarming attack, defenders receive no Dexterity bonus to AC.

## Contemplator

Contemplators can encase a victim in a thin layer of stone and drain its intelligence, 1 point per day. If a wizard is drained in this manner, the contemplator has access to all memorized spells.

## Dweomerborn

These sentient energy creatures have the following spell-like abilities, usable once per day: *detect magic, identify, invisibility, know school, and gaseous form*. Dweomerborn can also drain wizards and magical items of their magic. They are only affected by illusion/phantasm spells.

## Gammaroid

These huge creatures masquerade as asteroids and can attack passing ships with a 6d4 point attack (hull damage). In atmosphere, friction from the creature's rapid rotation causes a *fireball* that causes 12d6 points of damage.

## Great Dreamer

These enormous, whalelike creatures have a powerful, benevolent *telepathy* that prevents most other creatures from attacking them (save at -4). They may *summon* air or water elementals of 12-16 HD to defend themselves.

## Illithid (Mind Flayer)

The tentacle-flailing attack of the illithid will reach the brain and kill a victim in 1-4 rounds if not detached from the victim's head. Their mental blast (save vs. wands) acts as a *stun* for 3-12 rounds. All illithids have the following psionic abilities at 7th level: *suggestion, charm person/monster, ESP, levitate, astral projection, and plane shift*. All saves vs. these abilities are made at a -4 penalty. Some illithids may have additional psionic abilities.

## Lhee

These canine pranksters can cast *invisibility* at will as well as *audible glamour, dancing lights, blur, and darkness* once/day. Lesser lhee can also cast *grease, spook, and phantasmal force* three times per day at 2nd-level ability.

## Murderoid

Murderoids can cast *grease, hallucinatory terrain, stone shape, and earthquake* at 14th level, three times per day. They are immune to *earthquake* spells.

## Neogi

Neogi always have umber hulk servants on hand to defend them; 1 in 10 neogi also has magical ability equivalent to a wizard of 1-8th level. Undead old masters also cause a momentary *paralysis* with their touch. They have most of the attributes of normal undead and are *turned* as "Special."

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