

WIZARDS & LIZARDS

THE SHINING CITY-STATES

A CAMPAIGN SETTING FOR THEOGONIA



B E T A

Version 0.10 · not yet playtested

Jon Mayo. PUBLIC DOMAIN (CC0-1.0)

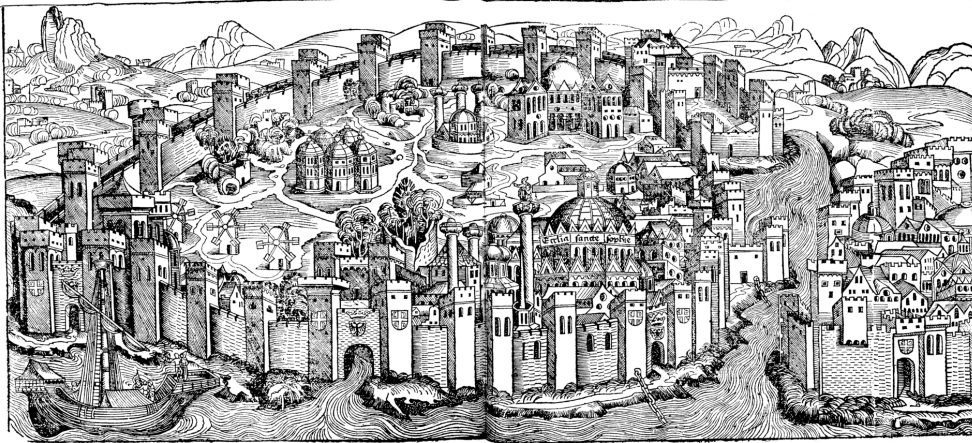
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THE SHINING CITY-STATES

The default setting for Wizards & Lizards. The rules are setting-neutral; this book is the world they were tuned for. Take what you like, change the rest.



It is an age of wonders, and an age of heroes. Handgonnes crack on the drilling-grounds where the new gunners learn their trade, the colleges burn late over old titan-lore and the working of magic, and in every city a living god looks down from the high temple and keeps the dark outside the walls. Mortals still go out past that light to win names the songs will keep. Scholars call the age **Theogonia**, the time of the gods' dominion; everyone else calls it simply **the shining city-states**, and means by it a hundred free cities, each its own small nation, each lit from within by a power that walks among its people.



For most who live behind a god's walls, it is the best of times. Trade moves on good roads and busy canals, the feast-halls are full, the forges never cool, and the patron's festivals come round bright and loud. A citizen of the shining cities can live a whole prosperous life and never see the thing the songs are really about.

But a god's reach ends at the edge of its city's light, and the world beyond is old and dangerous. That is where this game is played.

THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

The shining cities are a **patchwork, not an empire**. Each is ruled in its own way, the goddess permitting; they trade, scheme, feud, and ally, bound to one another only by a shared culture and a shared kind of faith, much as the city-states of ancient Greece were. No single crown sits over them, and, as the next chapters explain, none ever can.

This world has three things worth understanding before you play:

- **The living gods**, who make a city a city, and whose favor is its life.
- **The Age of Titans**, the vanished elder world whose fall made room for the gods, and whose ruins still poison the dark places.
- **The dangerous between**, the wilds and ruins and battlefields where civilization thins to nothing and the real adventures happen.

Each has its own chapter. After them come the cities themselves.

FIRE AND STEEL

Gunpowder is young, and crude. The firearm a person carries is the **handgonne**, a short iron tube on a pole: slow to charge, loud, and wild past a stone's throw, as much a terror as a killer. Heavier work belongs to the **bombard**, a great cast tube a city or an army hauls to a siege, throwing dressed **granite** balls to break a wall. The shot is stone by choice: cast-steel balls would be a prince's extravagance to spend by the wagonload, and packed-powder shells are as apt to burst in the cart as over the foe, so few captains trust them.

Good steel, too, is scarce. The richest ores lie deep, and no forge has yet mastered them at scale, so common arms are **iron**, fine **city-steel** is named, costly, and worth a line in a will, and a **titan-forged** edge is beyond any price. It is a world of fifteenth-century shapes, plate, crossbow, and the first guns, that still half-remembers the age of bronze in the worth it sets on a good blade.

THE LIVING GODS

Every city-state has a **patron**, a god or a goddess who is not a distant idea but a present power. The patron is the city: its protector, the source of its luck and its craft, and the voice its council listens for when the hard choices come. A city is only as alive as its god, and the people know it.

THE GOD MADE PRESENT



Most days the patron keeps to the high temple, felt more than seen, a warmth in the sanctuary and a steadiness in the city's affairs. But at the great **festivals**, and in the hour of real **crisis**, the patron takes **physical form** and walks among the people: the Walled Mother pacing her ramparts in armor of gray iron, the Lamplighter going lamp to lamp down a frightened street, the Bright Forge setting a scarred hand to the bellows of the master foundry. To stand in a god's presence is the central fact of life in the shining cities, the thing the festivals are for and the thing the enemy most wants to end.

A patron gives a city three things:

- **Protection.** While the god holds the temple, the city does not fall. Walls can be breached and battles lost, but a godlit city endures and rebuilds; its light does not go out.
- **Guidance.** The patron counsels the city's rulers, by omen, by dream, and at need by plain word from the temple steps. A wise council heeds it. A foolish one does not, and is remembered as foolish.
- **Power.** The god is the wellspring of the city's sworn servants and its sanctioned magic, the source the Hand draws healing from and the Sword draws wrath from.

A CITY WITHOUT A GOD FADES

The dread that sits under all the brightness is simple: **a city without a god is a city in decline**. Let a patron be slain, bound, exiled, or merely forgotten, its festivals let lapse, its temple gone cold, and the city begins to fade. Trade falters, walls crack, the bold leave and the desperate stay, and within a generation the place is a haunted shell on the frontier, one more ruin for the next age to wonder at. Keeping the god is survival, not piety.

THE HOLY TRIAD: SHIELD, HAND, AND SWORD

Whatever its name and nature, a patron is served by the same three sworn roles in every city, the triad that recurs across the playbooks:

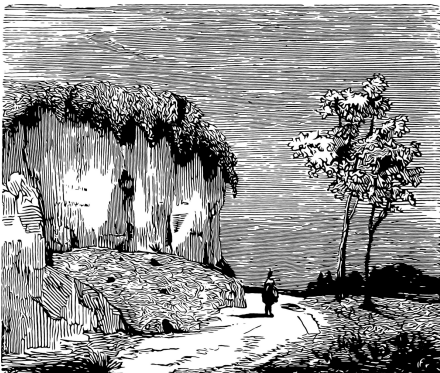
- The **Shield** (the Guardian): the god's bulwark, who stands in the line and keeps others standing.
- The **Hand** (the Cleric): the god's mercy, who mends the wounded and lifts the fallen.
- The **Sword** (the Paladin): the god's wrath, who carries its light into the dark and strikes the things that would snuff it out.

Not every servant of a god is one of the three, and not every adventurer serves a god at all. But where a patron acts in the world through mortal hands, it is most often through a Shield, a Hand, or a Sword.

THE AGE OF TITANS

Before the living gods, the world belonged to the **titans**: the elder gods of empires now vanished. The temples teach that the city-gods rose by **casting the titans down**, breaking their power and declaring them defeated and beneath the new order, and taking the conquered peoples' worshippers, temples, and even their names as trophies. Whether this was a true war in heaven or a mortal conquest dressed in divine robes, no living scholar can say, and few are foolish enough to ask aloud in a temple. What is certain is that the elder empires fell, and their gods with them, and the world that remained was emptier and, for a time, safer.

THE FALLEN EMPIRES



The titan empires are mostly lost to legend, their true names and borders gone. A handful are remembered, by occultists most of all, because their ruins still hold things worth dying for:

- **The Storm-Throne**, an empire of a thousand gods, whose lost capital was **Kanesh**. Its storm-titan is not named aloud in polite company; the colleges keep its sign in locked drawers.
- **The Charioteer Kings**, a horse-lords' realm whose seat, **Washukanni**, no living map can find. Locating it is a standing obsession of a certain kind of scholar, the kind who does not come back.

- **The Lion-Throne**, a war-empire that flayed the world in its war-titan's name until the young city-gods broke it. Its best-known ruin is **Kalhu**, a field of black stone lions where nothing nests.
- **Eridu**, the first city, from an age so old that the titans themselves called it ancestral. What it worshipped is not recorded, and the deepest occult rumors all seem, in the end, to point back to it.

RELICS AND THE OCCULT

What the titan age left behind, ruined temples, clay tablets in dead scripts, weapons that should not still be sharp, spirits still bound to their old oaths, is the deep quarry of the **occult**. A working grimoire from the age of titans is worth a duchy and, very often, a quick death. The arcane colleges are built on such finds; so are the worst of the cults. This is the lore behind a mage's *Old Lore* and the stolen titan-age grimoires, and it is the lure that draws delvers into the most dangerous ruins on the frontier.

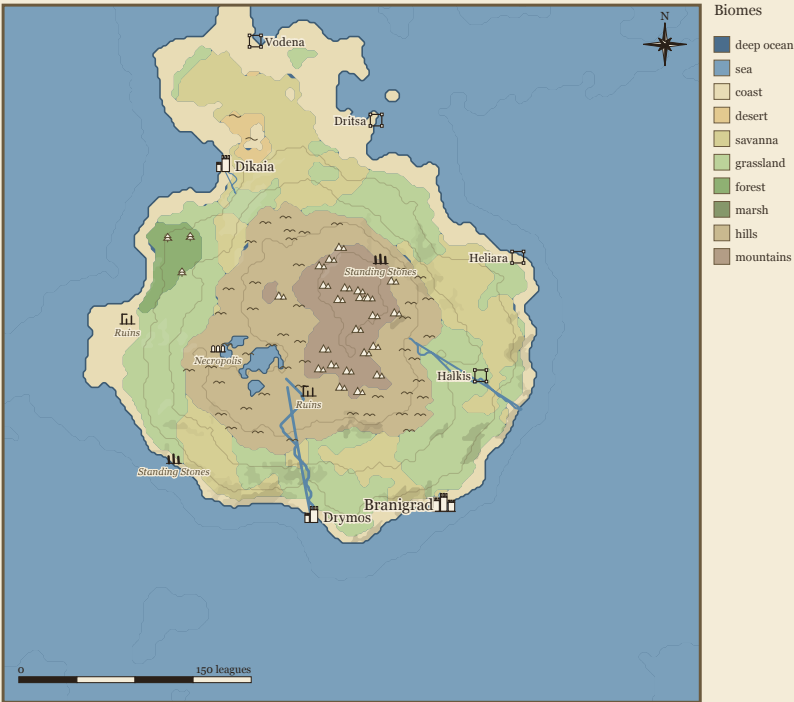
WHY THERE IS NO EMPIRE NOW

The titan age had empires. This age cannot. **A living god in every city is a guarantor of the balance:** the gods check one another, and each patron defends its own, so no power, mortal or divine, can swallow the rest. The wars of the shining cities are real, but they are wars between cities, not the building of an empire over them. Should one city ever find a way to break that balance, to bind or devour the gods of its neighbors, it would be the end of the age, and the beginning of something the temples pray never comes: a new dominion of titans, with a living face.

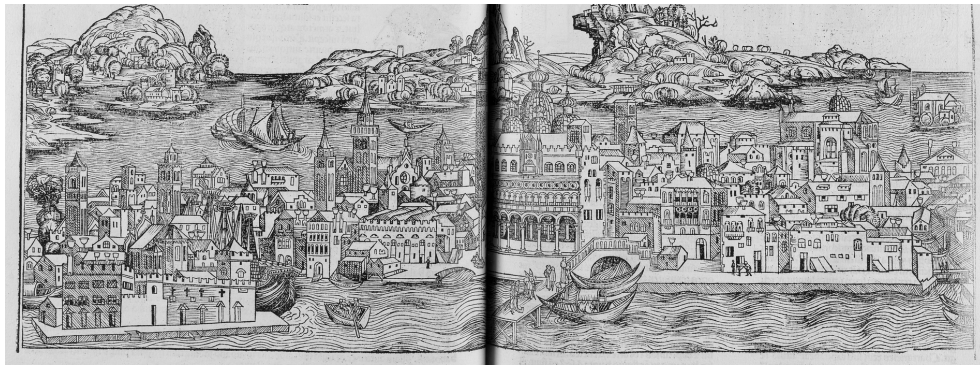
THE CITY-STATES

There are many shining cities; these seven are the ones this book details, each the seat of a patron already named across the playbooks. Their names are Balkan-Hellenic, their patrons various, their characters distinct. A campaign needs only a few; the rest are rumor and road signs until you want them.

Theogonia — The Shining City-States



City	Patron	Character
Branigrad	The Walled Mother	A hill-fortress city, martial and gray; the Shield’s heartland.
Drita	The Lamplighter	Lamplit streets and a sleepless watch; here the dark never wins.
Drymos	The Green Lady	A half-wild city at the faewood’s edge, fae-touched and strange.
Vodena	The Drowned Saint	Canals and dockward chapels; a harbor city of water and trade.
Halkis	The Bright Forge	The artificers’ city of foundries and colleges, where borrowed fire burns brightest.
Heliara	The Dawnbringer	A militant sun-cult city of holy light; the Sword’s heartland.
Dikaia	The Just Scales	The city of law, courts, and the magistracy.



RULE AND ECONOMY VARY

A shared faith in living gods does not make a shared government, and the variety is deliberate, a source of friction, intrigue, and adventure. Among these seven alone:

- **Branigrad** is a semi-secular **warrior-monarchy**: a king rules in the Mother's name but is not her high priest, crown and temple held deliberately apart. Its strength is raised on a **feudal** levy of sworn lords.
- **Heliara** is the opposite, a **theocratic monarchy** where crown and temple are one and the same, funded by a **tribute economy** that flows entirely to the sun-cult.
- **Dritsa, Vodena, and Dikaia** are **republics**, a council of the watch, a merchant senate, and a magistracy of codified law, respectively, and mostly **market** economies (Dikaia's bound by famously strict contract law).
- **Halkis** is a **guild oligarchy** of the artificer-colleges, running a **palace, or command, economy** organized around its great foundries.
- **Drymos** is a clan confederation on a **potlatch, or gift, economy**, deeply steeped in tribute and offering to the Green Lady and the powers of the faewood; status there is measured by what you give away.

A new city for your own table is, in the end, just three choices: a **patron**, a **name**, and a **way of being ruled and fed**.

THE DANGEROUS BETWEEN

The shining cities are points of light. Between them, and beneath them, lies the dark the gods hold back, and the moment you pass out of a patron's reach, the world stops being safe. This is where adventurers earn their name, and where most of play happens.



Three kinds of place turn deadly fastest:

- **The wild places.** Mountains, marshes, and the deep faewood, beyond any road or wall, where the old powers were never cast down so much as left alone. Fae keep their own law here, and beasts grow to sizes the cities have forgotten.
- **The ruins of earlier eras.** The bones of the titan empires and the failed cities of this one: collapsed temples, drowned vaults, towers still warm with borrowed fire. They hold the relics the occult craves, and the guardians, traps, and bound spirits that were set to keep them.
- **The haunted battlefields.** Fields where the wars of gods or empires were decided, scarred so deeply that the dead will not rest. Restless souls walk them, and a careless step can wake a quarrel a thousand years old.

HOW PLAY HAPPENS HERE

A company sets out from a safe city or a frontier holding, delves into one of these places, and, if it is wise and lucky, returns. Sessions are expeditions: self-contained ventures into the dark and back to the light. The world remembers what you do, the map you draw, the vault you emptied, the thing you woke and did not kill, so the frontier grows more known, and more changed, the more it is played. (The rules for running an ongoing frontier, a shared map and a home base that grows with use, are a campaign-frame supplement; see the design plan.)

THE FOUNDING OF CITIES

The highest work an adventuring company can do is the oldest work in the world: to **found a new city**. On a tamed stretch of frontier, with a holding grown into a town, the final and hardest step is to **secure a patron**, to awaken, bind, or draw a god to a new temple and persuade it to stay. Succeed, and a new light kindles on the map: a city that will protect, guide, and empower its people, and push the dark back one more march.

It is no small thing. It is, exactly, what the living gods did when they cast down the titans and made the age of the shining cities. To found a city is to take up that ancient work in mortal hands, and to risk, if it goes wrong, waking something that should have stayed beneath.

The full rite, the five great works and the three ways to secure a patron, is the campaign capstone in *Founding a City* (this book's last chapter), built on the stronghold rules.

A BESTIARY OF THE FRONTIER

These are the mythic threats of the dangerous between: the things that hold the ruins, haunt the battlefields, and stalk the wilds beyond the gods' walls. They use the same short stat line as any adversary (see the core rules):

Name: HP · Defense · Armor · Attack +N (damage) · Speed · *special*

The GM rolls a creature's attack like a character's, 3d6 + its Attack, minus your Defense, on the ladder. Defense here is the small number subtracted from the roll, not a target number. Everything past the numbers is the **special**, the one idea that makes the creature worth fighting. Scale any of these to your table with the build-a-foe tiers on the Gamemaster's Screen.

Where a creature has a **Bane**, only that named thing harms it; it is a puzzle whose answer is printed on its line, not a wall. The lair should telegraph the counter (statues, charred stumps, a temple's frescoes). Hammering a foe that ignores your weapons is the game telling you to find the other way.

Milder than a Bane are **Resist** and **Weakness**: a narrow, named kind of harm a creature takes **half** from, or **double** from. Like a Bane these are plain language on the line and particular to

that creature (bronze feathers turn arrows; old bones cave to a crushing blow), not a universal damage chart. Find the kind and the fight tilts your way.

BEASTS OF MYTH

Minotaur — HP 20 · Def 2 · Armor 1 · +4 (5) · Speed 3. *Gore-charge*: if it moves at least its Speed in a straight line before it hits, add +2 damage and you are knocked Prone. It never loses your trail in its maze, and it does not tire.

Harpy — HP 10 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3) · Speed 4 (flying). *Snatch*: on a hit it may Grab and haul you a short way before dropping you. It fights from the air, so foes without reach or bows strike it at −2, and its filthy shriek can leave the squeamish Frightened.

Manticore — HP 18 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 3. *Tail-spines*: in place of a bite it looses a volley (ranged, +3, 3 damage) or drives in a sting that leaves **Ongoing 2** venom (ignores armor) until you Endure it out. A man-eater that toys with its food.

Griffon — HP 14 · Def 4 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 5 (flying). *Diving rake*: a stoop from above hits at +2. Proud and fiercely territorial; a griffon taken as a chick and raised true becomes a prized and loyal mount.

Stymphalian flock — HP 12 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3, ranged) · Speed 5 (flying). Run the whole flock as one foe. *Bronze feathers* (**Resist: arrows**, which glance off the metal plumage): each activation it rains a volley on the party's front rank. A single bird, if cornered, is a Lesser foe; the danger is the cloud of them. Loud noise or any area effect scatters the flock and ends the volley.

Centaur — HP 14 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 4. Horse-bodied raiders of the high country, met more often as a war-band than a lone foe. *Charge-and-loose*: it looses a bow on the move (ranged, +3, 3) and, covering its full Speed before a melee hit, gores in for **+2 damage**. It fights like cavalry, wheeling out of reach; pin it against terrain or trip its legs and the speed that makes it deadly is spent. A few elder centaurs are wise teachers, met in parley, not battle.

Pegasus — HP 12 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +2 (3) · Speed 6 (flying). A winged horse of the high springs, swift and skittish, almost never the aggressor. It flees skyward rather than fight, and whoever gentles one at its watering-place wins a mount that outruns anything on the frontier, taken by patience and a golden bridle, not the spear.

Nemean Lion — HP 18 · Def 2 · Armor 0 · +4 (5) · Speed 4. A great lion whose golden hide turns every edge. *Bane: crushing* (a maul, a wrestler's choke, a rockfall, a hard throw, even its own claws; blade and arrow shatter and glance away). *Telegraph*: the first spear snaps and the first arrow bounces, so say so. Choke it, drop a cornice on it, or wrestle it onto its own talons. It gives no quarter and asks none.

Great Boar — HP 22 · Def 1 · Armor 2 · +4 (6, tusks) · Speed 4. A god-sent boar the size of a bull, loosed to ravage a careless kingdom. *Goring charge*: a straight run of its full Speed before the hit adds **+2 damage** and knocks you Prone (a Critical hurls you back). It fights on past wounds that would drop a lesser beast, and a cornered boar charges the nearest spear. Meet it behind braced spears and hounds, not in the open.

WILD BEASTS AND VERMIN

Not every danger in the dark is a wonder. Some are only tooth, hunger, and number, grown bold where the gods' light does not reach, and they fill the caves, the deep wood, and the lower halls of every ruin.

Cave Bear — HP 16 · Def 1 · Armor 1 · +3 (5) · Speed 3. A shaggy giant of the deep dens and ruined undercrofts, ill-tempered and territorial. *Maul*: it strikes with both paws (Multiattack,

two strikes) and a solid hit Grabs to crush. Nothing magical, only huge and angry, which on the frontier is enough. Fire and noise turn it more surely than steel.

Forest Spider — HP 12 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (3) · Speed 3 (climbing). A hunting spider the size of a hound, lurking in the high branches of the deep wood. *Web and drop*: it casts a web (ranged, Entangled until a Maneuver or Endure tears free, and a heavy strand catches two side by side), then falls on the bound; its bite leaves Ongoing 2 venom. Fire frees the caught faster than struggling, and a felled spider's web goes slack.

Cave Spider — HP 5 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 4 (climbing). Pale, quick, and many, boiling out of the cracks in a dungeon wall. *Skittering venom*: a bite leaves Ongoing 1, and they hunt in numbers, swarming a lone torchbearer from every side at once. A body of them in the open is far less trouble than a nest sprung in the dark; light and flame cow them.

WILD FOLK

The waste has its own small, savage peoples, haunting the cave-mouths and the old roads to prey on what the cities send out. None is a match for a hero one to one; the danger is the pack, the ambush, and the dark.

Kobaloi — HP 5 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 3. Spiteful little cave-folk, the root of every nursery warning, that infest old mines, dungeons, and the cellars of ruins. *Pack mischief*: dangerous in numbers and ambush only, they fling stones, foul the water, snatch a loose pack and bolt, and stand to fight only when cornered or sure of the odds. When the leader falls or the torches turn on them, they break and flee. The frontier's commonest foe, and its commonest theft.

Cynocephali — HP 8 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 4. Dog-headed savages of the wild marches, taller than a man, that run the frontier roads in howling packs. *Pack frenzy*: each gains +1 to hit while it outnumbered a foe, and first blood drives the pack wild, +1 damage against any target already Down or Dying. Craven alone, merciless together; break the pack or fell the largest, and the rest scatter.



SERPENTS AND THE DEEP

Out past the breakwater, and in the black water beneath the ruins, the old serpents keep their reaches.

Great Python — HP 20 · Def 2 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 3 (swimming). A constrictor long enough to ring a courtyard, coiled in a drowned vault or a sacred grove. *Coils*: a hit Grabs and crushes (Ongoing 2 while it holds, ignoring armor) and drags the caught toward deep water. Strong but single-minded; free its prey and it must begin the grip anew.

Cetus — HP 34 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +4 (6) · Speed 5 (swimming). The sea-drake of the deep coast, the beast to which doomed cities once chained their daughters. *Maw*: a Success or Critical swallows Grabbed, man-sized prey whole (Ongoing 3 inside, and the swallowed can only claw to get free). *Fearsome*. It cannot leave deep water, so the shallows and the shore are your allies, as the old heroes knew. Dire.

Scylla — HP 30 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +4 (4 per head) · Speed 0. *Six necks*: from her sea-cliff she snatches anything that passes within a ship's length (six bites a round, Multiattack; a Success hauls you up to be devoured). She cannot leave her rock, so this is a fight to *survive and pass*, not to win: row hard, weather the snatch, and she falls behind. *Telegraph*: the strait's far shore holds **Charybdis**, a whirlpool that swallows a whole hull, so the narrow water by her cliff is the only road, and a few of the crew are its toll. Dire.

Hippocampus — HP 8 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 6 (swimming). A fish-tailed sea-horse, shy and quick, that draws the chariots of sea-powers in the old hymns. It flees rather than fights; a netted and gentled one is a swift mount for coastal water and a prize to any harbor city. Mostly a wonder, now and then a way across.

GAZE AND GLAMOUR

Gorgon — HP 18 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +3 (3, snake-bite leaves **Ongoing 1**) · Speed 2. *Petrifying gaze*: meet her eyes and Endure or begin turning to stone (Staggered now; on a second failed Endure you are **petrified**, out of the fight until she dies or a remedy is found). *Counter*, telegraphed by the statues frozen mid-flight around her lair: fight with averted eyes or watch her in a mirrored surface. You strike at -2 for fighting half-blind, but you cannot be turned to stone.

Basilisk — HP 14 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +2 (3) · Speed 2. A low, eight-legged reptile whose stone gaze works like the Gorgon's. *Counter*: its own reflection petrifies it; a polished shield turned its way ends the fight. Its breath withers green things in a ring around its den.

Cockatrice — HP 10 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 3. A vicious rooster-lizard, easy to mistake for livestock in a ruin or a yard. *Stone peck*: on any hit, Endure or stiffen (Staggered; a second failed Endure petrifies). Small and fast, it is past you before you place it.

Lamia — HP 18 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 3. Woman above, great serpent below; she lairs in the titan ruins. *Coils*: a hit Grabs and crushes (Ongoing while she holds you). *Beguiling voice*: Endure or be **Charmed**, you cannot harm her and treat her as a friend, until she or her brood spills your blood.

Empusa — HP 14 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3) · Speed 4. A blood-drinking undead beauty. Her *charming gaze* works like the Lamia's, and her **kiss drains life**: a hit also marks 1 stress that will not clear until you rest in safety. *Counter*: daylight is poison to her, **Ongoing 3** that she cannot regenerate; hold her till dawn, or drag her into the sun.

Siren — HP 10 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 2 (swimming). *Song*: all who hear it Endure or be drawn helpless toward her, Charmed, walking onto the rocks or into the water. *Counter*: stop your ears, wax, a loud drum, a deafened champion, and the song cannot take you.

Sphinx — HP 18 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 3 (flying). Rarely a straight fight. She bars the road and asks a riddle; answer well and she may let you pass, or even help. Answer poorly and she falls on you with lion's claws and a withering word that leaves the boastful Frightened. More often a parley than a battle, which is the point of her.

THE RESTLESS DEAD

These rise thickest on the **haunted battlefields**, where a quarrel of gods or empires was decided and the dead were never laid to rest.

Shade — HP 10 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (4, chill touch) · Speed 3. *Bane*: fire (a torch or blessed flame; ordinary steel passes through). It cannot be Grabbed, tripped, or knocked Prone. Its touch drains warmth, a hit marks 1 stress that is slow to clear.

Drekavac — HP 6 · Def 5 · Armor 0 · +2 (2, raking claws) · Speed 5. A small, hairy, hollow-eyed thing that runs shrieking on the night roads and around the byres, the unquiet spirit of a child

dead before its naming-rites. *Death-wail*: its cry is a mixed thing of infant sobbing, a scream, and a wolf's howl; all who hear it in the dark Endure or be Frightened, and the old folk hold the wail an omen: when it circles a house by night, a death follows there. *Frail and fleet*: it can scarcely wound and bolts from any who stand firm, but it is quick and hard to corner. *Counter*: it cannot bear light or the turn of day: a steady torch, a blessed hearth, or the first cockcrow scatters it; its true unmaking is to lay the nameless dead to rest with the rites it was denied.

Todorci — HP 16 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4, trampling hooves) · Speed 7. Run the spectral troop as one foe. A wild hunt of cloaked horsemen, faceless men grown from the backs of their mounts, that rides abroad only in the dead of certain unhallowed nights, led by a great limping black horse. *Trample-charge*: covering its full Speed before a hit adds **+2 damage** and is Knockdown, and the press of riders catches two foes side by side. *Riders of the dark*: spectral, they cannot be Grabbed, tripped, or knocked Prone, and they hunt only those caught in the open after nightfall. *Fearsome*. *Counter*: they cannot cross a threshold, a roof, or hallowed ground, and the first cockcrow or the greying of the sky scatters the whole troop at once; the lame lead horse is the telegraph that the hunt is abroad. The danger is to be on the open road when they ride, so the fight is to reach shelter, not to win.

Battlefield Wight — HP 18 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +3 (4) · Speed 2. The war-dead risen in rusted panoply, fighting the old battle forever. *Resist: blade and arrow* (rusted plate turns half their harm), but its old bones are brittle, *Weakness: crushing* (a maul, a rockfall, a hard fall deals double). It *cannot be Frightened*. Each round it is not put down, its keening rouses another of the fallen to stand.

Fury — HP 16 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3, brazen scourge) · Speed 5 (flying). A winged spirit of vengeance that fixes on one oath-breaker and hunts only them. Its whip Entangles (Grab at reach), and it regenerates 2 HP an activation. *Counter*: steel will not lay it to rest; only answering the crime it came to avenge will. *Fearsome*.

Vrykolakas — HP 12 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 3. A village dead that would not stay buried, swollen and ruddy, walking by night to trouble the living. *Strangling weight*: a hit Grabs and bears you down (Ongoing 1 while it pins). It cannot cross running water. *Counter*: it lies helpless in the grave by day, and is unmade for good only by fire or the rites that unseal its tomb, else it rises again the next night.

Vukodlak — HP 18 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +4 (5, rending claws and bite) · Speed 5. A living curse, not a risen corpse: a villager who at the full moon (or, in the worst of them, at will) sheds the man and runs as a great wolf, savage and swift. *Beast-shape*: in wolf-form it is fast and hard to corner, and a solid bite leaves **Ongoing 1**; live through it and you may carry the curse, turning at the next full moon. *Quick to knit*: it regenerates 2 HP an activation, and ordinary steel barely slows it. *Weakness: silver* (a silvered edge or shot deals **double**, and that wound will not close, the one harm its flesh cannot mend); fire, too, stops its healing. *Counter*, telegraphed by the barred doors, the silver charms, and the wolfsbane the village hangs: by day it wears a human face and walks unsuspected among the folk, so the surest hunt is to learn which of them it is before the moon rises, and to meet it with silver when it does.

Ghoul — HP 10 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +3 (3, filthy claws) · Speed 3. A gray, grave-robbing eater of the dead from the desert tomb-roads. *Paralyzing touch*: on a hit, Endure or be Staggered; a second failed Endure leaves you frozen, unable to act, until you shake free by an activation's struggle or an ally's hand. Ghouls hunt in packs around battle-graves and flee a torch and a holy word.

Psoglav — HP 18 · Def 2 · Armor 1 · +4 (5, iron bite) · Speed 3. A solitary horror of the sunless caves, the larger, lone-hunting cousin of the **Cynocephali**: a man's torso on a horse's hind legs, crowned with a one-eyed dog's head set with iron teeth. It hoards no gold but gnaws the dead,

digging open graves and barrows to drag the corpses down to its gem-lit, lightless den. *Iron teeth*: its bite shears through mail (**ignores Armor**), and a solid hit Grabs to worry the caught like a hound with a bone. *Sun-shunner*: bred in the dark, it cannot abide bright light; in daylight or against a raised flame it is dazzled and cowed (strikes at -2 and gives ground toward the dark). *Counter*, telegraphed by the eyeless black of its den and the picked bones at its threshold: bring strong light and drive it deeper, or face it in the open by day, where its strength fails. Corner it in its own dark and the iron teeth find you first.

Tomb-Bound — HP 20 · Def 1 · Armor 2 · +3 (5) · Speed 2. A king of the elder empires bound in wrappings and binding-words to guard his tomb forever. *Withering grasp*: a hit lays a slow curse (Ongoing 1 that will not clear while you remain in the tomb, and stacks with itself). *Resist: blade and arrow* (the dry wrappings part and close), but *Weakness: fire* (it goes up like old linen). It cannot be Frightened and will not leave its charge: slow, certain, and patient as stone.

The Kosovo Maiden (Kosovka devojka, devoyka) — HP 10 · Def 5 · Armor 0 · — · Speed 3 (drifting). Not a foe but a sorrow: the shade of a girl who walks the haunted battlefield at dusk with water, wine, and bread, kneeling to the dying, forever seeking the betrothed who never came home from the field. *Succor*: she tends any who let her, and her cup is a mercy: accept it and it clears all your stress and staunches your wounds (a Dying one she steadies and stills, though she cannot call back the truly dead). *She knows the slain*: she can name every body on the field and point the way, who fell where, what they bore, and which road out the dead do not watch. *No violence in her*: a gentle shade, she offers no harm and takes none; blades pass through her grief, and to raise a hand against her mercy is a black mark the field's dead will not forget. *Counter*: she is bound here by her unfinished search. Find her betrothed among the fallen and lay him to rest, return his token, or only tell her true how he died, and she finds her peace, blessing you who eased her as she fades, and while her blessing holds, the restless dead of that field let you pass.

CHTHONIC HEROES

Some of the mighty dead were never only dead. A champion laid in a great barrow and fed with offerings and oaths becomes a power in the earth: a blessing to those who keep the tomb, a terror to those who break it.

Hero-Shade — HP 24 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +4 (5) · Speed 3. The risen shade of a deified champion, mighty as it was in life and bound to its grave-mound. *Wrath of the tomb*: it *cannot be Frightened*, and while it stands on its own grave-ground it regenerates 2 HP an activation and strikes at +1. *Counter*: it would far rather be honored than fought, pour a libation, name its deeds, return what was taken, and it may give a boon or an oracle in place of battle; or lure it off its grave-ground, where its strength fails. Defile the tomb and nothing will appease it.

Marko Kraljević (Kralyevich), the Sleeping Champion (*a named Hero-Shade*) — HP 32 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +5 (6, great mace) · Speed 3 (*5 mounted on Šarac, Sharats*). The mightiest of the chthonic heroes: a wolf-capped strongman of the old songs, laid not in a barrow but asleep in a moss-grown cave with his piebald horse, to wake when the moss is gnawed away and the world has need of him again. *Strength of the hero*: his mace shatters guard and bone, a hit **ignores Armor** and a Critical is Knockdown that hurls a foe back, for he can wring water from dry cornel-wood and bend a bar of bronze. *Šarac*: roused, he rides the piebald that leaps three spears and shares his master's wine; a charge of its full Speed adds **+2 damage** and tramples the Prone, and afoot or ahorse he never tires. *Deathless*: the legend will not die, so he cannot be truly slain; beaten down, he laughs, salutes the worthy, and returns to his sleep rather than perish. *Counter*, the point of him, like all his kind, is the meeting: wake him with honor, pour him wine, name a wrong that wants righting, and he may ride out once at your side, the frontier's mightiest arm.

But he is proud, hot, and half in his cups; a petty or graceless waking earns a brawl, not a boon. Like the day he slew Musa, he grieves a good foe even as he fells him. Dire.

Miloš Obilić (Milosh Obilich), the Martyr in the Tomb (*a named Hero-Shade*) — HP 26 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +4 (5, blade) · Speed 3. A knight wrongly named a traitor at his lord's last feast, who answered the slander by riding alone into the tyrant's camp and cutting him down before he himself fell, and was laid in honor where he died. *Oath-keeper*: he *cannot be Frightened*, and on his tomb-ground he regenerates 2 HP an activation and strikes at +1. *Trial of faith*: he weighs all who come to him; a lie spoken at his bier he knows at once, and the slanderer, the oath-breaker, and the betrayer of kin he falls upon without quarter, giving them no rest while they stand on his ground. *The martyr's boon*: come to him wrongly accused and seeking to clear your name, or swear a hard oath before him and mean it, and he grants you a single blow struck true: your next strike at a tyrant or a great foe lands as a **Masterstroke**. *Counter*: he would far rather bless the faithful than fight them; keep faith, come clean, and honor his death, and he is the staunchest ally on the frontier. Defame him, or come as the very thing he died denying, and nothing will appease him.

Banović Strahinja (Banovich Strahinya), the Forgiving (*a named Hero-Shade*) — HP 26 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +4 (5, blade) · Speed 3. A knight whose wife was carried off and who, having won her back by his own hand, forgave her the disgrace when his kin bayed for her blood, the one mercy the hard songs remember. *Wrath of the tomb*: he *cannot be Frightened*, and on his grave-ground he regenerates 2 HP an activation and strikes at +1. *Trial of mercy*: he weighs how those who come to him treat the fallen, the captive, and the penitent. Slay the helpless or the yielding on his ground and he turns implacable; show quarter and forbearance and he names you friend. *The forgiving boon*: stay a killing hand, ransom a foe, or pardon a wrong done you, and he grants you a single grace: once, a foe you offer quarter must Endure or lay down arms and yield, and he lifts from you one curse or the lingering weight of a grievous deed (clears an Ongoing curse and all your stress). *Counter*: he would far rather bless a merciful hand than cross blades; honor his name and spare what you can master, and he is a gentle power; only cruelty to the helpless rouses him past appeasing.

Tsar Lazar, the Martyr-King (*a named Hero-Shade*) — HP 30 · Def 4 · Armor 2 · — · Speed 2. The sainted prince of a city that fell, who on the eve of his last battle was offered an earthly crown or a heavenly one, and chose heaven and the grave, becoming the holiest of the war-dead. *He gives no battle*: a serene and numinous power, he cannot be slain by any hand and lifts none against you; like the Sphinx, he is met in reverence, not in arms. *Hallowed ground*: his tomb is the one safe place on the haunted field: no shade, wight, ghoul, or unhallowed thing can cross into it or abide his presence; they are driven back as by the dawn. *The choice of kingdoms*: seek his blessing and he sets before you a choice between an earthly prize and the harder, righteous road, and weighs which you take. *The saint's blessing*: renounce a worldly reward for a greater good and he grants you a lasting grace: his benediction wards you (you *cannot be Frightened* and Resist the first harm you take in a righteous cause, until next you rest), and he speaks an oracle of the road ahead. *Defilement*: rob or profane his tomb and the blessing turns to a curse, the holy ground fails, the dead it held off come flooding in, and you bear the saint's mark until you set it right.

GUARDIANS OF THE RUINS

The titan age left its watchmen behind, and they do not know the age is over.

Bronze Sentinel — HP 20 · Def 1 · Armor 2 · +4 (5) · Speed 2. A mindless, tireless automaton of a titan vault. *Resist* (halves non-magical harm) under its heavy bronze. *Counter*: a single ichor-

seal at the heel or the nape, marked by a glowing seam; pierce it (a called shot, a clever climb) and the bronze runs empty.

Living Caryatid — HP 40 · Def 0 · Armor 2 · +4 (6, crushing) · Speed 1. A temple's pillar-maiden, statue-still until the temple is robbed. *Near-invulnerable stone*: she *Resists all harm but the one element bound in her making*, and the sanctuary's frescoes telegraph which (she was quenched in seawater, say, and so dreads it). She Grabs and crushes, but cannot pursue past her own threshold. Dire.

Lamassu — HP 22 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +4 (5) · Speed 4 (flying). A winged bull with a bearded sage's face, set at the gates of an elder palace to weigh all who enter. *Warding roar*: once a fight it speaks a word of power, and every foe before it Endures or is Frightened and driven back a step. Proud and lawful, it would sooner test a trespasser with a hard question than gut one; answer its challenge and it may stand aside, or bless the worthy.

Scorpion-Man — HP 18 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +3 (4) · Speed 3. Man above and great scorpion below, set to keep the mountain gate where the sun goes under. *Sting at reach*: its tail strikes two spaces off (Reach) and leaves Ongoing 2 venom (ignores armor). It guards a threshold and will name the peril beyond to the rightly-purposed and let them pass, but turns back any thief.

Ushabti Host — HP 14 · Def 2 · Armor 1 · +2 (2) · Speed 2. Run the host of little tomb-figures as one foe. *Many hands*: the funerary statuettes wake by the dozen to do the dead king's labor, here, to bury intruders under sheer number; each is brittle, but the host strikes again and again. *Counter*: shatter the taller **scribe-figure** at the bier that calls them, marked by its scroll, and the rest fall lifeless.

Scarab Swarm — HP 8 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 3. A living carpet of sacred beetles boiling out of a tomb's cracks. **Tiny** (a Partial deals one beetle at most and scatters it; only a solid hit clears a patch). *Strip to the bone*: the swarm clings and bites through every gap in armor (Ongoing 1 while you stand in it). Fire, water, or smoke scatters them faster than any blade; the peril is being caught in the open.

SPIRITS OF THE FAEWOOD

The marches of **Drymos** and the deep wood are the Green Lady's, and her people keep their own law.

Dryad — HP 12 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 2. Rarely hostile unless her oak is threatened. She steps into one tree and out of another nearby, and her glade is hers: trespassers Endure or wander it lost and Charmed. Harm her tree and she fades, but so, often, does the wood's patience with you.

Naiad — HP 10 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 3 (swimming). The spirit of a spring or pool, beguiling and proud. Her charm-song is gentler than the Siren's but works the same; angered, she drags a foe under (Grab, in her water).

Satyr — HP 12 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +3 (3) · Speed 3. Goat-legged and mischievous more than murderous, but a band of them in the deep wood is real trouble. *Pipes*: a tune that stirs sleep or wild dancing, Endure or be Staggered while the music holds.

Vila — HP 12 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3) · Speed 4. A spirit of the high pastures and mountain springs, far kin to the Green Lady, beautiful and wild. *Dance-ring*: watch her dance and Endure or be drawn in, Charmed and helpless, until dawn or until the ring is broken. *Wrath*: break into the dance uninvited and she turns deadly, whirling too quick to follow (foes who cannot match her Speed strike at -2). Gentle to the courteous, merciless to the rude.

Marsh-light — HP 6 · Def 5 · Armor 0 · +1 (1) · Speed 4 (drifting). A cold flame that bobs over the fen at dusk, feigning a lantern or a friendly fire. *Lure*: follow it and Endure or wander ever deeper into the mire, Charmed, until you are sunk to the knees or worse. It can scarcely harm you itself; the bog it leads you into is the killer. It shrinks from cold iron held up against it, and a steady, doubting head sees through the trick.

Kallikantzaros — HP 5 · Def 3 · Armor 0 · +2 (2) · Speed 3. A spindly underground imp that creeps up in the dark of midwinter to sour the milk, foul the well, and gnaw at the roots of things. *Mischief in numbers*: one is a nuisance, a band a night of ruin; they swarm and nip and scatter from light. Simple-minded and easily gulled, set them to counting grain or sorting seed and they forget themselves till cockcrow; they bolt from fire and a blessed hearth.

DAIMONES

Between the living gods and mortal men move the **daimones**: spirits that carry prayers up and dooms down, bind oaths, and kindle longings. Some are souls of the lost Golden Age, set to watch over mortals; some are powers of love or strife given a shape. They are rarely a fight, and almost always a bargain.

Daimon — HP 16 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3) · Speed 5 (flying). A messenger-spirit of the middle air, neither god nor ghost, that carries word and will between the temples and the heavens. *Go-between*: it comes to strike a bargain, deliver an omen, or hold an oath, and harm done to it breaks the thread it carries, which the gods mark. *Counter*: met in words and offerings, not steel; bound or sent away by the true name of the god it serves. Cross it, and the oath it kept turns on the oath-breaker.

Daimon of Longing — HP 14 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (3) · Speed 5 (flying). A spirit of desire, child of plenty and want, beautiful and barefoot and never content. *Kindled longing*: meet its eye and Endure or be **Charmed** with a yearning it names, you will not strike it, and you drift toward what you most want, heedless of the danger between. *Counter*: it has no hold on a heart already fixed on something greater: a sworn purpose, a true love, an honest grief sees clean past it. A turning-aside of the soul more than a wound.

Golden Shade — HP 18 · Def 4 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 4 (drifting). A soul of the lost Golden Age, clothed in mist, set by old decree to watch over mortals and deal out good fortune. *Warden's grace*: where it keeps its charge, a hearth, a spring, a temple lamp, a hero's tomb, it shields the worthy (Resist to the first harm an honored guest takes) and turns ill luck aside. *Wrath*: it strikes only to drive off those who defile its charge, and roused it is terrible, but it cannot be bribed or beguiled, only satisfied or shunned.

POWERS OF THE FAR DOMINIONS

Trade and conquest dragged stranger things home than gold. These are powers of the elder empires of the east and the south, met now as relics, captives, and curses far from the lands that named them.

Simurgh — HP 22 · Def 4 · Armor 1 · +3 (4) · Speed 6 (flying). A vast, ancient bird of the far mountains, wise beyond any beast, who nests above the world and gives counsel, healing, and a single feather that calls her once at need to those she judges worthy. Roused to anger she is terrible, but the point of her, like the Sphinx, is the meeting, not the kill.

Div — HP 34 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +4 (6) · Speed 3. A pale, horned mountain-demon of the eastern wastes, the bane of the old hero-kings. *Resist* (halves non-magical harm beneath its stone-hard hide). It hurls boulders and men alike, and its roar can *blind* a foe (Endure or be unable to see, striking at -4, until it clears). Cunning as it is strong, it bargains and lies, and lairs in a cavern hung with the arms of those who came before it. Dire.

Roc — HP 36 · Def 2 · Armor 1 · +4 (6) · Speed 7 (flying). A bird great enough to darken a valley and bear off an ox in each talon. *Snatch and drop*: a Success Grabs you and carries you aloft, out of the fight and a long fall from safety unless you are freed fast; from on high it looses boulders and the wreckage of past meals. *Fearsome*. It nests on the one peak no one dares climb, atop a fortune in bones and cargo. Dire.

TITAN-SPAWN AND GREAT BEASTS

The Dire-tier terrors. Give each room to breathe, a lair, a counter, and a reason the company cannot simply trade blows until it falls.

Play the great ones with cunning, not just bulk. A warlord or beast-king lets its retinue bleed the party first, hanging back to taunt, harry, and pick off the wounded, and steps in only when the tide turns, or quits the field to hunt the company another day. Bring it in early against a larger band, late against a small one. Run flat, the same fight is a slaughter one way and a pushover the other; run with tempo, it becomes a set-piece the company remembers.

A lone foe is a fair fight for only about one party size at a time: more hands cut a fixed thing down faster, so scale a solo to your table by its HP and a retinue (see the Musa entry's *Scaling the duel* for the worked method).

Chimera — HP 32 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +4 (5) · Speed 3. *Three heads, three threats*, and while all three live it acts twice a round: the **lion** bites (Multiattack, two strikes), the **goat** gores (Knockdown), and the **serpent** breathes fire in a line (+3, 4 damage, sets **Ongoing 2**, hits all in its path). *Counter*: the heads can be cut away one at a time (about a third of its HP each); drop a head and lose a threat with it. Dire.

Hydra — HP 40 · Def 1 · Armor 1 · +4 (4 per head) · Speed 2 (swimming). *Many heads*: it starts with three, each a separate bite (Multiattack, three strikes). Sever one (track about a third of its HP a head) and **two grow back** next activation, more mouths, more attacks, unless the stump is seared. *Counter*, telegraphed by the old charred stumps along its neck: bring fire to cauterize, or it cannot be killed, only fed. Dire.

Cyclops — HP 36 · Def 1 · Armor 1 · +4 (6, club or hurled boulder) · Speed 2. *One eye*: it sweeps with great blows and flings rocks that knock you down (Multiattack; a solid hit is Knockdown). Strong and slow and not at all clever. *Counter*: blind the eye, a called shot, a brand, the old hero's ruse, and it flails at -4, striking nothing it cannot grope. Dire.

Mountain Giant — HP 44 · Def 1 · Armor 1 · +5 (7) · Speed 2. *Stone-skinned* (Resist, halves non-magical harm). A sweep of its arm catches two foes side by side; the distant it answers with boulders, and the Prone it tramples. The tallest and hungriest thing on the frontier short of a dragon. Dire.

Drake — HP 36 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +4 (5) · Speed 5 (flying). A lesser dragon, and lesser is relative. *Resist: fire*, but the cold its furnace-blood hates bites it hard (*Weakness: cold*). Every other round it breathes a cone of fire (+4, 5 damage, **Ongoing 2**, hits all before it). *Fearsome*: foes who first see it loose must Endure or be Frightened. Armored, winged, and coiled atop a hoard of titan-gold in some ruin it has made its own. Not every dragon is a hoard-wyrm: see the **guardian zmaj** below for the warden-kind that protects a land rather than ravages it.

Guardian Zmaj — HP 32 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +4 (5, claw and fang) · Speed 7 (flying). The zmaj is a warden, a wise, ancient serpent of storm and sky, taken in the old songs for the soul of a great ancestor, that keeps watch over a valley, a bloodline, or a town and its grain. *Lightning breath*: every other activation it spits a bolt down a line (ranged, +4, 5 damage, hits all in its path; a solid hit is Knockdown). *Resist: fire*, and the cloud-demons of the air can do it no harm. *Warden's wrath*: where it guards its charge it strikes at +1 and will not be driven off. *Counter*:

like the Simurgh, the point of the zmaj is the meeting, not the kill. It would far rather weigh a trespasser with a hard question, or take up a worthy cause, an Ala come to ruin the fields, a defiler loose in the tombs, and fight *beside* the company rather than against it. Win its favor with honest dealing and offerings and it is the frontier's mightiest ally; come as a thief, or defile what it keeps, and its lightning is the last thing you see. Dire.

Aždaja (Azhdaya) — HP 38 · Def 2 · Armor 2 · +4 (5 per head) · Speed 5 (flying, swimming). The guardian zmaj's black twin, and the truth behind every drowned-village tale: a vast, foul, many-headed serpent, three heads or seven or nine, that lairs in fen-pools, flooded caverns, and lonely mountain tarns and crawls out to burn the fields and devour the folk and their flocks. *Many heads*: it bites with each living head (Multiattack, one strike per head), and once a round all of them together heave up a single roiling gout of fire (+4, 5 damage, **Ongoing 2**, hits all before it). *Devouring maw*: a Critical, or a bite on the Grabbed, gulps a man-sized victim whole (Ongoing 3 inside, the swallowed can only claw to get free). *Pure malice*: where the warden-zmaj parleys, the aždaja knows only hunger and ruin; it cannot be reasoned with, bribed, or turned. *Counter*: sever its heads (about a fifth of its HP each) to thin its bites and choke its fire, and its old enemy the guardian zmaj is the surest ally against it; but cornered and burning, it fights to drag the whole company down into its black water with it. Dire.

Zduhać (Zduhach) — HP 18 · Def 3 · Armor 1 · +3 (4, staff or fist) · Speed 3. Not a monster but a mortal born with a gift, a weathered countryman, calm and brave, whose soul rides out in the storm. *Storm-flight*: when the hail-clouds gather his spirit leaves his sleeping body to battle the **Ala** and the cloud-demons aloft and steer their ruin off his fields; while he is gone his body lies cold and deathlike, and aloft he is a power, the surest enemy a storm-demon has. *Soul untethered*: do not move, turn, or wake the sleeping body, for then the soul cannot find its way home and the man dies, so his folk watch over him while he fights. *Warden's heart*: he comes far more often to help than to harm, an ally to any who keep faith with the land and a guide against the powers of the air. *A rival's wrath*: the storm-walkers of enemy lands meet in the clouds to fight over the harvest; a hostile one strikes at sleepers in their dreams, and steel finds him only while he wears flesh.

Ala — HP 34 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +4 (5, lashing wind) · Speed 7 (flying). A weather-demon of black cloud and many serpent-heads that rides the hail down onto the fields to beat the harvest flat and swallow what it can, children, cattle, even (the old folk swear) a bite out of the sun. *Hailstorm*: each activation it looses a battering squall on everything in the open below (ranged, +4, 4 damage, hits the whole front rank; the Prone and the roofless fare worst). *Body of cloud*: half-formed and storm-driven, it **Resists all harm but lightning** (blade and arrow only tear wind; the storm's own fire alone answers it). *Counter*, telegraphed by the dead-clear eye at the heart of its wrath: it is the dragon's old enemy. Rouse a **guardian zmaj** or a great eagle against it, call it by name to turn its cloud onto the barren mountains, or meet it with lightning, and it breaks off and flees rather than be unmade. *Fearsome*. Dire.

Baš Čelik (Bash Chelik, "Steel-Head") — HP 30 · Def 3 · Armor 2 · +4 (6, mailed fist) · Speed 4 (flying). A winged demon sheathed in steel from crown to heel, a thief of brides and a breaker of oaths, who once tricked a hero into freeing him with three cups of water and flew off with the man's wife. *Steel hide*: he **Resists all non-magical harm** (edges turn on the plate of him). *Snatch and away*: a Success Grabs a foe (or his chosen captive) and bears them aloft; next activation he flies clear of the fight to spirit them to his mountain hold unless they are freed at once. *Life elsewhere*: his soul does not sit in his body. Beaten to 0 HP he is not slain, only scattered to wind, and he reforms whole at his lair to come again, **unless his hidden life is first destroyed**. *Counter*, telegraphed by the one caged bird he guards too well, the fox no hound may touch, the spring he forbids: his life is hidden inside a beast inside a beast inside a far place (a

bird, in a fox, in a mountain). Hunt it down and break it, and the steel falls empty at a touch. Fight him before then and you are only buying time. Dire.

The Hidden Life (Baš Čelik's soul-vessels) — not foes to be fought but the puzzle his lair telegraphs: on the far mountain his *Life elsewhere* names, his soul is kept in a bird, the bird inside a fox. Run them as a chase, not a battle.

The Fox — HP 6 · Def 6 · Armor 0 · — · Speed 6. The outer vessel, impossibly quick and cunning. *Will not be cornered*: it cannot be run down by speed alone, only trapped, cut off by terrain, gulled, or caught with the help of a swift beast it cannot outwit (a loosed hound, an eagle, some creature the company once spared). It has no fight in it; the trouble is catching it at all. Brought to bay and slain, **a bird bursts from its body** and takes wing.

The Bird — HP 3 · Def 7 · Armor 0 · — · Speed 7 (flying). The life itself. *One breath to seize it*: freed from the dying fox it climbs for the open sky, and if it breaks line of sight it bears the soul away to a new hiding place and the whole hunt begins again. Catch it or strike it down, and in that same instant, however far off, **Baš Čelik drops dead where he stands**, his steel run empty. Wring its neck and the demon is unmade for good.

Musa Kesedžija (Kesedzhiya), the Three-Hearted — HP 36 (*three hearts of 12*) · Def 4 · Armor 1 · +5 (5, sabre) · Speed 4. A mountain outlaw and the finest blade on the frontier, a brigand by trade but a man of his word, who fights any champion fairly and scorns to be mobbed. *Duel of champions*: he is deadliest one-to-one, and honest single combat is how he answers a worthy challenger, as the songs remember him. *Three hearts*: the bards' old warning is true, he carries three. Track his HP as three bands of 12; empty one and he only reels a moment (loses his next attack) before the next heart drives him on. *The snake-heart*: in the third and last beats a coiled serpent, and as that heart wakes it he turns terrible, striking at +1 and twice an activation (Multiattack), fighting hardest when nearest death. *Counter*, telegraphed by every tale of him: you may spend everything and still not outlast all three hearts. It was an ally's aid, a vila's whisper at the last, that won Marko the day, so a timely distraction, a blessing, or a second blade as the snake-heart wakes will tip it. Honor him fallen, for he was a better man than his trade. Dire.

Scaling the duel: a lone foe is a fair fight for only about one party size at a time, so the three hearts above are pitched at a small band (one or two challengers). For a larger company, scale him by **hearts, not by a heavier blow**: give him **one heart (12 HP) per challenger who will trade blows** (a fourth or fifth heart for a big party), since more hands simply cut a fixed foe down faster. Past three or four attackers even that fails: one blade cannot threaten a whole party at once. Do one of two things. Either keep it a **true duel**, his own demand: one champion faces him while the rest are held off (his waiting men, a hostage, a clock), and the third-heart "ally steps in" is a second PC tagging in. Or make it a **fight, not a duel**: stand a few of his outlaws at his back, one real blade (a brigand-captain, not a common bandit) for each hero past the second, so the company cannot all fall on him at once.

Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk, the Fiery Dragon-Wolf — HP 28 · Def 4 · Armor 2 · +5 (5, sabre) · Speed 4. A living champion got by a zmaj on a mortal woman, born **dragon-marked**, a wolf's gray tuft at his nape and his blood running furnace-hot. A war-captain and a terror on the frontier, met as a rival warlord or, if his respect is won, the staunchest sword at your side. *Dragon-blood*: Resist: *fire*, but the cold his hot blood hates bites him hard (*Weakness: cold*). *Father's fire*: once in a fight he looses his sire's flame, a cone of dragon-fire (+4, 5 damage, **Ongoing 2**, hits all before it). *Wolf-born wrath*: the more he bleeds the worse he fights you: brought to half HP or below he strikes at +1 and *cannot be Frightened*, a snarling thing that does not know when it is beaten. *Counter*: mighty but mortal, he bleeds and tires like any man, and the cold undoes him: ice, a winter stream, a frost-ward quenches his fire and his fury both. A proud foe who honors a brave one; beat him fairly and he may yield, even swear to you, sooner than die. Dire.

Relja the Winged (Hrelja Krilatica; Hrelya Krilatitsa) — HP 24 · Def 4 · Armor 2 · +4 (5, lance) · Speed 5 (flying). A champion of the old court and a companion of Marko’s, a knight borne on wings, the gift (some say) of a daimon, others the Green Lady, won in a deed long told. *Winged*: he fights from the air and lights where he pleases; foes without reach or a bow strike him at –2, and he is gone before the blow lands. *Stooping charge*: a dive from above hits at +2, and the height he gathers before the lance goes home adds +2 damage and Knockdown. *Knight of worth*: proud and courteous, far more often met in parley or at your side than across the field, he keeps faith and scorns a coward’s trick. *Counter*: his wings are his whole edge, so ground them: a thrown net, a snare, a clipped pinion, or a fight pressed into a low cave or a close hall where he cannot stoop. Grounded, he fights on as a mortal knight, hard but no longer untouchable. Dire.

EQUIPMENT AND TREASURE

Gear is what a hero spends, and treasure is what refills the purse. Run them together and they become the quiet puzzle that gives a delve its tension: every torch burned, wound taken, and spell cast is a resource gone, and what the party hauls home is what lets them go out again. This chapter gives the market of the shining cities and a set of treasure tables to stock a delve.

Coin is the **drachm** (d), the common silver. A laborer earns a drachm or two a day; six small obols make a drachm, for the price of a torch or a cup of wine.

THE MARKET



ARMS AND ARMOR

Item	Effect	Price
Light weapon (dagger, hatchet, sling)	3 damage	2 d
Medium weapon (sword, spear, mace, bow)	4 damage	10 d
Heavy weapon (greatsword, halberd, maul)	5 damage, often two hands	25 d
Crossbow	6 damage, two hands, ranged, Reload 2	30 d
Windlass arbalest	8 damage, two hands, ranged, Reload 5	75 d
Ammunition (a quiver, a pouch of stones)	—	1 d
Light armor (leather, padded)	soak 1	10 d

Item	Effect	Price
Heavy armor (mail, scale)	soak 2, may lower Speed	50 d
Shield	+1 Defense	5 d

ADVENTURING KIT

Item	Use	Price
Torches (bundle of six)	light; fire against the dark	a few obols
Lamp oil (flask)	a lantern's night; a thrown flame	1 d
Lantern	steady, hooded light	5 d
Rope (50 ft), spikes, hammer	climbing, delving	5 d
Rations (one week)	food on the road	2 d
Bedroll and camp kit	a night's rest in the wild	1 d
Healer's kit (a few uses)	aids a short-rest recovery	10 d
Thieves' tools	quiet lockwork; disarm traps (Agility, plus Thievery)	15 d

SNARES AND FIELD TOOLS (CONTROL, NOT DAMAGE)

A handful of cheap tools that deal no damage but buy **control**, thrown at short range or scattered underfoot. Each is a **spent resource**, you carry only a few, so they win a moment, not a battle; the full effect is on the item's gear card.

Item	Does	Price
Net	thrown (short): Entangles up to four adjacent foes; each is held until it tears free (a save)	5 d
Bola	thrown (short): Slows one foe (half Speed) as the cords snare its legs	2 d
Caltrops (a pouch)	scatter a patch underfoot: a foe that crosses it is Slowed , picking its footing	3 d

Reclaiming what you throw. Gear that is *thrown or placed* rather than *drunk or burned*, a net, a bola, a scatter of caltrops, spent arrows and bolts, is **recovered after the fight** as a matter of course: the party gathers its tools before it moves on, so a net bought once serves delve after delve. The GM calls one lost only when the fiction demands it, no time to search in a running fight or a pursuit, or the thing is wrecked beyond use (a net burned through, caltrops trodden into deep mire). A consumable that is *used up*, a healing draught, a flask of fire, a torch, is simply **gone** once spent. (The combat simulator models this the same way: a thrown snare's charges refill between fights, not within one.)

REMEDIES AND ALCHEMY (WHAT REFILLS THE RESOURCES)

Each of these answers a resource the dungeon drains. Stock a party with too few and a delve bites; with too many and the tension goes slack.

Item	Restores / does	Price
Healing draught	4 Hit Points, one drink (the HP dial)	15 d
Tonic / smelling salts (3 uses)	clear 2 stress (the nerve dial)	8 d
Antitoxin	ends one Ongoing venom, or +2 Endure vs poison	8 d
Holy oil (a flask)	coats a weapon: counts as blessed flame against the dead and creatures with a Bane	12 d
Alchemist's fire (a flask)	thrown: 3 fire damage to a spot, sets Ongoing 2	10 d
Spell-component pouch	common reagents to anchor lasting spells; restock in town	20 d

SERVICES

A night's lodging, 1 d. A temple Tend from a Hand, a donation of about 10 d. A porter or torch-bearer, 1 d a day; a hired spear for a delve, 10 d and a share. Passage and a frontier guide, what the road will bear.

TREASURE

Treasure is the other half of the resource puzzle: it is how the party refills HP, stress, components, and consumables, and how it funds the **growing base** that an extended (West Marches) campaign is built on. Roll it, or pick from it; the dice are all ordinary d6.

COIN BY HOARD

Pick the tier from what the party just overcame, and roll.

Hoard	Coin (drachms)
A purse (one foe)	1d6
A cache (a den, a minor foe)	2d6 × 3
A lair (a standard delve)	3d6 × 10
A rich hoard (a Greater or Dire foe)	3d6 × 50
A titan-vault (a campaign find)	3d6 × 200

GEMS AND VALUABLES (1D6)

Portable wealth, easy to carry, sold in any city. Roll for what a hoard's non-coin worth turns out to be.

1. A string of river-pearls (10 d).
2. A set of carved ivory dice or a silver cup (15 d).
3. An old silver torc (25 d).
4. A gem-cut seal-ring (40 d).
5. A god's-eye opal (75 d).
6. A small titan-gold ingot (150 d), but it is marked, and selling it draws the wrong eyes.

THE CACHE (2D6)

The everyday useful find. The bell curve keeps the common things common.

2. Nothing of worth, or a cruel trick (a trapped chest, bait).
3. A flask of lamp oil and a bundle of torches.
4. An antitoxin and a clean bandage-roll (a short-rest aid).
5. A healing draught.
6. A handful of gems (roll once on **Gems and valuables**).
7. Coin, a second purse (roll one tier lower on **Coin by hoard**).
8. A flask of **holy oil** (blessed flame, the answer to the dead and creatures with a Bane).
9. A tonic of smelling-salts (clear 2 stress, three uses).
10. A fine piece of gear: a +1-damage weapon, or a non-breaking shield.
11. A pouch of rare spell-components (anchors one greater spell), or a one-spell scroll.
12. A wonder, roll on **Wonders and relics**.

WONDERS AND RELICS (D66)

Roll two d6, the first as tens, the second as ones (so 11–16, 21–26, ... 61–66). The deeper and older the place, the more the GM should let the party reach the high end. The titan-relics here are the occult prizes that the colleges and cults kill for, and the fuel of a campaign's great work.

Charms and trinkets (11–16)

11. A clay charm of the Walled Mother: once per rest, ignore the first point of a wound.
12. An everflame lantern: it never gutters, and wind and water cannot quench it.
13. Knucklebones that roll true: once per session, reroll a failed roll.
14. A cloak of Drymos-weave: +1 to hide and move unseen in the wild.
15. A signet of a fallen House: it opens certain doors, and certain mouths, in one named city.
16. A bone whistle: it calls one loyal hound or hawk, once.

Oils, draughts, and alchemy (21–26)

21. Two healing draughts.
22. A flask of holy oil (blessed flame for one fight).
23. Two antitoxins.
24. Two flasks of alchemist's fire.
25. A tin of Halkis smelling-salts (clear 2 stress, three uses).
26. A skin of Naiad-spring water: one drink ends Frightened and Charmed.

Fine and blessed gear (31–36)

31. A fine weapon (your choice of class): +1 damage.
32. A masterwork shield: +1 Defense, and once a fight it does not break when it would.
33. Light mail kept like new: soak 2 at no Speed penalty.
34. A blessed blade of a city-god: it deals magical harm, +1 against the unhallowed.
35. A dozen true-flight arrows: +1 to Shoot until spent.
36. A helm of the Lion-Throne: you cannot be knocked Prone.

Occult curios (41–46)

41. A full component-pouch and a rare reagent (anchors one greater spell).
42. A scroll: one free casting of a spell you can read (no stress).
43. A leaf of a ritual-book: teaches one ritual to a caster who studies it.
44. A diviner's mirror: once per rest, ask the GM one yes/no question about a place you can see.
45. A charm of warding: the first spell cast at you each fight is Resisted for free.
46. A jar of grave-salt: a line of it the dead will not cross until dawn.

Lesser titan-relics (51–56)

51. A titan-bronze nail: set in any surface it bears any weight; pulled, it never bends.
52. A shard of a titan's mirror: once, reflect a gaze-attack (petrify, fear) back at its source.

53. A coil of titan-sinew: nothing short of magic or fire can cut it.
54. A titan-glass lens: for one scene per rest, see in the dark and see the unseen.
55. A lesser ember-stone: light and warmth that never die (a small cousin of the Far Lamp's coal).
56. A canopic jar: the bound spirit within answers one question truthfully, then is spent.

Wonders (61–66)

61. A titan's coal: a true everburning ember, the prize that founds a city's lamp (see *The Far Lamp*). Worth a duchy.
62. A god-touched relic of a named patron: once per session, call a small miracle fitting that god.
63. The circlet of a fallen titan-king: those who hear your command Endure or obey one order, and it whispers back to you.
64. An automaton-heart: the ichor-core that powers a construct, a ward, or a great machine. Halkis would kill for it.
65. A map-stone of the titan roads: it reveals three undiscovered ruins on the frontier.
66. Roll twice and take both, or the GM's own wonder: the find that begins a campaign.

BUILDING A HOARD (AND THE RESOURCE PUZZLE)

Treasure is a lever, not a reward. To keep a campaign's resource puzzle taut:

- **Stock each delve with a coin tier, one or two cache rolls, and a wonder only on a milestone, a Dire foe, or a deep ruin.** That is plenty.
- **Match the loot to what the delve spent.** A barrow of the dead should yield holy oil and torches; a venomous lair, antitoxin; a caster's tower, a warding charm or components. This lets the next delve be survivable without dissolving the tension.
- **Withhold to tighten, give to release.** Dwindling torches and no draughts left is the dungeon's clock; that pressure, with the rest gate, is the whole game of a delve. When you want a breather, let a cache fall; when you want dread, let it run dry.
- **Give coin somewhere to go.** Once the party is geared, surplus coin should flow into the **growing home base** (facilities, hirelings, defenses) and city services, so money keeps meaning past the first shopping trip. A party with full purses and nothing to buy is a sign the base, or the next city, should open up.
- **Count it toward growth.** On the XP-and-treasure advancement track, a hoard carried home is progress toward the next level, and the seed coin for founding the next city.

THE COIN LOOP, END TO END

The prices, the hoard tiers, and the stronghold costs are tuned to one target: a delve should nearly pay for the next, with a little left to grow on. The whole loop, in average drachms:

The party...	...earns or spends
clears a standard delve (a lair)	~ 105 d coin, plus a cache or two, often a draught or antitoxin found in kind
restocks after a hard delve (four heroes)	~ 50–80 d : a few healing draughts at 15 d, oil and torches for coppers, an antitoxin or a flask as it was spent
banks the surplus	the tithe (10%) feeds the Treasury; vote a deeper share to build faster
raises a facility	Tier I ~100 d (about one delve's coin), Tier II ~400 , Tier III ~1,200 (a campaign's saving)

So the loop is self-funding yet stays taut: a draught is a real slice of a delve, not pocket change, which is what keeps the HP and stress dials honest. A working company is **one good haul from ready and one bad night from desperate**. The leaps up the stronghold tiers come from the rich hoards, a Greater or Dire foe's $3d6 \times 50$ or a titan-vault's $3d6 \times 200$, not from grinding standard delves. Keep that shape when you retune: if surplus piles up with nowhere to spend, open the next base tier or the next city rather than cutting the coin.

THE COLLEGE TOME

The **College Tome** is the great encyclopedia of workings, the master copy kept and forever added to by the **Artificers' College at Aegina**, its leaves and fair-copies the prize of every city's casters. A caster's reach is only as wide as the workings they have learned, and what they know, they copied from the Tome (or, rarely, added to it). This is the **recommended spell library**: the pool a caster draws from. A player copies the ones their character knows onto their **spell-book sheet** (the writable page in the playbook packet), gaining new ones as advancement Advanced Actions, from a teacher, or from a found leaf of the Tome, and may **invent new workings with the GM's approval**, priced against the magnitudes below.

What is **not** here: **cantrips and core class competencies live on the playbook**, not in this list. A tradition's signature cantrip, a cleric's **Tending**, a paladin's **Lay on Hands**, the small at-will tricks, are part of who the character already is. This grimoire is the open library of the larger workings a caster reaches *out* for.

CASTING, IN BRIEF



Cast a spell as a **Skill action** with the caster's attribute (Wits for the arcane): **13+** it works, **9-12** it works at a cost or +1 stress, **8-** it fails and may **Warp**. A **Spell costs 1 stress**, a **Greater Spell 2**, a **Ritual** none (worked over long calm minutes, never in a fight). Magic is **magical harm**, so it bites what shrugs off steel. A working that **lingers** is held by **Concentration** (it ends if you cast again, are **Stunned or Downed**, or let it go, no check) or **anchored** with the named **component**, so it stands on its own. See the core casting rules and *Authoring Magic* in the SRD.

SPELLS (1 STRESS)

- **Firebolt / Frostbolt / Spark-bolt** (*magical harm*) — the workhorse: a Wits ranged attack, **4 damage ignoring armor**. Reskin the element to your tradition.

- **Scatter** — a cracking blast of force shoves a foe back a step and knocks it **Prone** on a Success (Staggered on a Partial).
- **Tanglevine** (*Concentration*) — roots seize one foe: **Grabbed** while you concentrate. Anchor with a fistful of seed to leave it rooted and walk away.
- **Dread** — raw fear floods one foe: it must **Endure** (Wits) or be **Frightened** of you until it takes damage or the fight ends.
- **Brittle Bones** (*Concentration*) — name a kind of harm (crushing, fire, the cold); one foe gains **Weakness** to it, taking **double** from that kind, while you concentrate. The classic setup: brittle the ogre, then let the warhammer fall. Break a hostile caster's concentration and the curse lifts.
- **Wardlight** (*Concentration; anchor: a pinch of blessed ash*) — a standing shield of flame grants you or an ally **+2 Defense**.
- **Hold the Tongue** (*Concentration*) — one creature cannot speak, sing, or cast aloud while you hold it (an **Endure** to break).
- **Kindle / Quench** — start or smother a fire up to a bonfire's size at a distance; lights the dark, burns a rope, fouls a fuse.
- **Glamour** — a small false seeming over a person or object: a different face, a hidden door, a louder voice. It frays under hard scrutiny (an **Endure**).
- **Mend** — knit a broken tool, lock, wheel, or weapon whole; not flesh.

GREATER SPELLS (2 STRESS)

- **Starfall / Firestorm** (*magical harm*) — cold fire or flame falls across **one zone**: every foe there takes **4 ignoring armor** (a Wits attack against each).
- **Stone Binding** (*Concentration*) — the ground grips a zone: foes there are **Grabbed** until they break free or you stop concentrating.
- **Mass Dread** — *Dread* against **every foe** that can see you (each Endures).
- **Greater Ward** (*anchor: a chalk circle*) — a barrier rings a doorway or a small camp; nothing crosses it unbidden until the circle is broken.
- **Chain Lightning** (*magical harm*) — a bolt leaps to **up to three** foes within reach of one another, **4** to the first, **-1** each leap.
- **Banish the Borrowed** — a thing held together by magic (a bound spirit, a conjured beast, an *anchored* hostile spell) must **Endure** or be undone.

RITUALS (NO STRESS; LONG, CALM MINUTES; NEVER IN A FIGHT)

- **Read the Omens** — ask the near future one yes-or-no question; the GM answers truly but in the omens' own slant.
- **Speak with the Dead** — wake the freshly slain for a few honest answers.
- **Scry the Heavens** — see a distant place or person you have a token of.
- **Sanctify / Cleanse a Place** — drive the unhallowed from a room or threshold; the dead and the *Bane*-warded shun it for a day.
- **Charm of Welcome** (*anchor: a shared meal*) — bind a guest-peace: while it holds, none under your roof may raise a hand in violence.
- **Mend Machine** — repair a clockwork, a handgonne, a mill, an artificer's work.
- **Ward a Threshold** (*anchor: salt and iron*) — a lasting Greater Ward on a home or tomb that stands until the salt-line is broken.
- **Raise the Drowned** — over a night and a steep price (a costly component, named by the GM), call a *willing* soul back from a recent death. **A temple rite, not a lone caster's working**: the power is the patron god's own dominion over death, channeled in the temple by its priesthood;

the Tome records the words but cannot grant them. Its deepest form belongs to **Vodena's Drowned Saint**, who keeps the souls the first age's waters closed over, so a city that would call back its honored dead most often sends to her dockward shrines. The work of cities.

WHEN THE FIRE WARPS (A MISS MAY, GM'S CALL) — D6

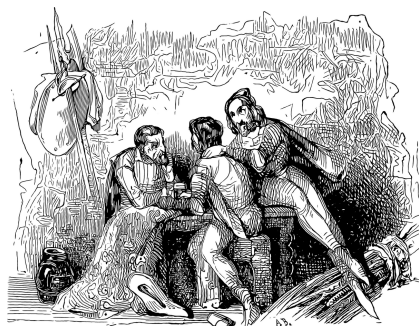
Overreach, or an 8- on a hostile casting, and the borrowed fire answers in its own tongue. Roll or choose:

1. **Backlash.** Take the spell's own harm, or 2 damage and 1 stress.
2. **Wild discharge.** The effect lands on the wrong target, an ally, the room.
3. **A door left ajar.** Something small and curious slips through from elsewhere.
4. **The fire clings.** You are **Weakened** (double from one kind) until you rest.
5. **It works too well.** Double the effect *and* the cost; you may **falter**.
6. **A mark left on you.** A lasting omen, scar, or whisper the GM names; cosmetic now, a hook later.

FOUNDING A CITY

A company that holds the frontier long enough will face the oldest work in the world. Beyond the bigger fort and the deeper vault lies the one thing the living gods themselves did at the dawn of this age: **the founding of a new city**. It is the mythic capstone of a West Marches campaign, the moment the points of light spread one march farther into the dark, kindled by mortal hands.

This chapter is the full rite. The frame is in the stronghold rules (supplements/30-stronghold.md, *Founding a city*); here is how Theogonia plays it out. It changes no character mechanic. Heroes still cap at **level 5**; what grows is the **company**, the **map**, and the company's place in the world. A founding is told in the same coin the campaign already runs on: the fortnight, the downtime project clock, the 3d6 ladder, and the expeditions between.



WHEN A HOLDING IS READY

A stronghold cannot simply declare itself a city. The work begins only when a holding has truly come of age:

- **A town, not a tower.** The hold has grown to its height: top-tier facilities, a standing garrison, walls a raid breaks against. The marches around it are **tamed** enough that ordinary folk will live there.
- **People to fill it.** Settlers willing to come, drawn by the cleared frontier, a craft, a road, or a promise. A city is its people first.
- **A high place for a god.** A consecrated site for the temple-to-be: a Tier III **temple complex**, either already raised or raised as the first phase of the work.
- **A patron in reach.** The company knows *which* power it means to make the city's god, and *how* (one of the three rites below). Naming it is the start of the quest.

If any of these is missing, the founding is not yet a project. It is a list of adventures to go and earn.

THE GRAND WORK, IN FIVE PHASES

Founding is a **grand project**, far larger than any facility. Treat it as **five great works in sequence**, each its own **grand project clock** (the eight-segment clock of the downtime rules, *project clocks*), filled over many fortnights by the company, its hired hands, and its allies. No phase fills by labor and coin alone: each is **gated on an expedition**, the way a Tier III facility is gated on a won component. The clock is the building; the adventure is the key.

Phase	The great work	Its key (the expedition)
1	Lay the foundation. Choose and consecrate the site; raise the temple shell and the first walls.	Clear the chosen ground of whatever already haunts it: a frontier delve to break the old claim on the place.
2	Raise the temple. Build the high temple and the first ring of the city around it.	Win the temple's heart-relic: an altar-stone, a titan-bronze keystone, a sacred fire (a <i>titan's coal</i> ; see <i>The Far Lamp</i>).
3	Draw the god. Secure the patron by one of the three rites below.	The rite's own arc (Awaken, Bind, or Draw); the heart of the whole work.
4	Draw the settlers. People the city; set its rule and its economy; open its market and its roads.	Earn a population: escort a caravan of colonists, break a road, strike a charter with a mother-city or a guild.
5	Repel the challenge that comes. A founding never goes unanswered. Meet what the new light has stirred.	A set-piece defense or reckoning (below), run on the core skirmish.

A founding takes a **campaign's final arc**, not a season. The GM paces it, interleaving the great-work clocks with ordinary play, so the city rises in the background and the keyed expeditions become the headline sessions.

SECURING A PATRON: THE THREE RITES

Phase 3 is the heart, and the choice that shapes everything after. There are three ways mortals have brought a god into a new temple, and they are not equal. Each is a different adventure, a different kind of god, and a different price.

AWAKEN

Rouse a sleeping or local power: a half-forgotten godling, a *genius loci*, the spirit of a spring, a mountain, an old battlefield, or an ember of the deep past left burning on the frontier. You do not bring a god from elsewhere; you wake the one already here and make it patron.

- **The work:** find the slumbering power, learn its true name and its want, and perform the waking. Largely a **lore and Skill** quest (Old Lore, ritual, parley).
- **The god you get: weak at first, and bound to the place.** It grows with the city, as the city grows with it. A fragile beginning, a patron wholly your own.
- **The risk:** a woken thing has its own old will and older grudges. It may remember a wrong, or want a thing the founders will not like to give. Treat a bad waking as the seed of the next campaign.

BIND

Take a wild or **titan-remnant** power and bind it to the temple by rite and relic, as the conquerors of the elder age bound what they overcame. The fastest road, and the most powerful god.

- **The work:** hunt the power down, gather the **binding-relics** (titan-bronze, a sealing rite, a name torn from a grimoire), and master it in a dangerous rite. A **combat and occult** quest, the most lethal of the three.
- **The god you get: strong from the first day.** A bound power does not wait to mature; the city begins under a real patron.
- **The risk, and the line:** a bound god **resents the binding**, and a bound titan-thing may be a monster wearing a god's shape, a chain that strains every year (a standing campaign hook, and a fine slow doom). And the line no founding may cross: **to bind a living neighbor's god is the forbidden work**, the empire-making the whole age is built to prevent. That road ends the age and wakes a new dominion of titans with a living face. A GM may dangle it; a company that takes it has become the campaign's villain.

DRAW

Petition an **existing living god** to extend itself into a new house: to send an aspect or a scion, or to sponsor a **daughter-city** under the mother-city's patron, as the shining cities have always sent out colonies. The safest road, and the most political.

- **The work:** win the favor of an established temple and its city, prove the new site worthy, and carry the god's fire from the old altar to the new. A long **social and political** campaign of patrons, rivals, and promises, with little blood and much obligation.
- **The god you get:** an **aspect of a known patron**, steady and proven, with a ready cult and ready settlers.
- **The risk and cost: obligation.** The daughter-city owes its mother: tribute, allegiance, a say in its affairs, a call it cannot refuse. You have a safe city and a leash. What the leash is worth is the rest of the campaign.

The three are the founders' real decision, and they map onto the kind of company making it: the lore-seekers awaken, the warriors bind, the players of the great game draw. None is wrong; each is a different city, and a different story after.

THE GOD'S PRICE (D6)

Whichever rite, the new patron **names a price to stay**, a binding on the city for as long as it wants the god's light. Roll, or choose what fits the power.

1. **A sacrifice each year:** a festival the city may never let lapse, costly in coin and effort.
2. **A law:** a thing the city must always do, or never do (no iron in the temple, no gate shut at dusk, no oath broken within the walls).
3. **A champion:** one sworn servant bound to the god's hand, renewed when they fall. (Often a founding hero, a fine end for a retiring character.)
4. **A tithe outward:** a share of the city's wealth owed to a mother-temple, a college, or the god's own far cult.
5. **A forbidden thing kept:** a relic, a prisoner, or a sealed door the city must guard forever, and never open. (The next age's ruin, planted on day one.)
6. **A secret:** the truth of what the patron truly is, known only to the founders, which the city must never learn. (Especially a bound or woken thing dressed as a proper god.)

THE CHALLENGE THAT COMES (D6)

Phase 5 is certain: a new light on the map is seen, and contested. Build the threat from the core **Build a Foe** table at a tier worthy of a campaign finale, and give the defense a clear objective (hold the temple until the rite completes, protect the patron-fire, drive off the captain).

1. **A rival claim:** another power, mortal or temple, wanted this ground and comes to take it.
2. **The dispossessed:** whatever the founding displaced (the thing cleared in phase 1, or the kin of a bound power) returns in force.
3. **A jealous neighbor:** a nearby city-state fears a new rival on its frontier and moves to strangle it young.
4. **The frontier itself:** a great beast or a titan-haunt, stirred by the noise of a city rising in the wild.
5. **A flaw in the rite:** the patron is not fully seated; the founding must be finished under attack, the clock filled while the walls are stormed.
6. **The god's own test:** the patron will not stay for a city that cannot defend itself, and sends, or permits, one last trial to prove the founders worthy.

WHAT YOU HAVE MADE

A founding that holds turns the holding into a **city-state**, a new safe haven on the map, and **opens a new frontier beyond it**. Settle the rest as the campaign needs:

- **Rule and economy.** Decide how the new city is governed and fed, the variety that makes each shining city its own (a warrior-monarchy, a merchant republic, a guild oligarchy, a clan confederation; feudal, market, tribute, or gift). The founders' choices, and the god's price, set the shape.
- **The company's place.** The founders are the city's first names: a council, a founding House, the patron's chosen, the makers of its law. Retiring heroes find their end here; the next party may begin as their heirs.
- **The balance kept.** A new patron is a **new guarantor**, not a new empire. One more god checking the others, one more city that defends its own. So long as the forbidden work is left alone, founding a city honors the divine balance rather than breaking it; it is the age renewing itself, not ending.

And it is never quite finished. The price must be paid each year, the bound thing strains, the leash pulls, the secret waits to be found. A founded city is not a trophy on a shelf. It is the next campaign's home, and the next campaign's trouble, kindled with your own hands.

Beta: not yet playtested. This is a working draft (version 0.7). Its numbers and procedures are reasoned and simulation-checked, but unproven at the table, so expect them to change between versions. Play it, push on it, and report what breaks.

THE FAR LAMP

A starter adventure for a new company of level-1 heroes, one evening's play. It teaches the whole loop, a parley, a climb, a fight you should not fight head-on, a puzzle-guardian, and a real choice, and it makes a fine first node of a West Marches map: a frontier holding to return to, with more dark around it.

The situation. Above the watch-hamlet of **Straza**, on the frontier of **Dritsa** (city of the Lamplighter), an old beacon called the **Far Lamp** has burned every night for longer than anyone's grandmother can remember. It stands on a hill that was a battlefield in the god-war of the titan age, and as long as it burns, the dead of that field stay down. Three nights ago it went

dark. The lamp-keeper, old **Castor**, has not come down the hill. And now, after sunset, the dead are walking.

The party's task is simple to say: **go up, find Castor, and relight the Lamp**. What put it out is the adventure.

THE HOOK: STRAZA

A dozen turf-roofed houses behind a thornwood palisade, every hearth and lantern blazing though it is barely dusk. The folk are frightened and have lit everything they own. They will tell the party, between them:

- The Lamp went dark three nights past. Each night since, *the field walks*. Two herders are missing. Nobody will go up the hill.
- Castor was old but sure-footed; he would not simply fall.
- The headwoman, **Bryda**, offers what the hamlet has: a few coins, a night's shelter, oil, rope, and **as many torches as they can carry**. She presses the Lamplighter's creed on them as they go: "*Carry your own light. Cold things fear the hearth.*" (This is the adventure telling the players how to beat what waits. Let them hear it plainly.)

A **Skill** roll (Interaction, Streetwise) to draw Bryda out: on a 13+ she also recalls that a stranger, *a soft-handed southerner asking after old shrines*, came through a week ago and went up to see Castor. On a 9-12 she remembers it only as the party leaves, too late to ask more.

UP THE BATTLEFIELD



The path climbs across the old field. By day it is only a sad meadow of grass-grown mounds and a few green-bronze blades still standing in the earth. After dark, it **walks**.

Crossing at night, the party meets the restless dead. This is the teaching fight:

- **2 Shades** rise from the mounds (scale to the party; one for a cautious group, three for a bold one). A Shade's **Bane is fire**: ordinary steel passes through it like smoke, and its chill touch saps the warmth from you. Against it, **fire, a torch thrust into its heart, a flaming brand, a blessed flame harms it** and drives it off. A party that brought torches solves this in a round; a party that left them behind learns *why* the hamlet begged them to carry fire, and should run.
- The Shades are slow to gather. A company that simply **runs the path** (a Move and an Endure or Athletics on the worst stretch) can reach the tower without a stand-up fight. Reward that; not every danger is a fight to the death.

Either way, they reach the hilltop and the dark tower.

THE FAR LAMP

A square stone tower, Dritsan work, raised on a far older foundation, the cyclopean black stones of a **titan-age watch-shrine**. The Lamp itself is a great iron brazier at the top, cold and black.

1. The Lamp-Chamber (top). The brazier sits dead. There is no fuel-store, no oil; the Lamp never needed any, which is the first clue. Castor's cloak is here, and his cold pipe, but not Castor. A lit hearth or brazier the party kindles here makes a **safe place to short rest** (clear 2 stress, catch a few HP) before they go down. Use it; what is below is harder.

2. The Keeper's Fate. On the stair, Castor, three days dead, struck down by something that hits like a falling wall (a clear sign: no blade did this). A **Perception/Medicine** roll: on 13+, the wound is a single crushing blow, and his hands are burned, as if he tried to carry something far too hot. On 9-12, only that he died hard and afraid, facing *downward*, toward the cellar.

3. The Broken Seal. The stair winds down into the titan foundation, into a round vault of black stone. Its floor is a great disc carved with a sun, and at the sun's heart is an empty **socket**, scorched, the size of a fist. From the socket a hairline of cold light spreads in cracks across the floor. *This seal held the field's dead asleep, and the Lamp above was lit from what sat here. The socket is empty.* Someone pried the ember out.

4. The Vault Guardian. When the ember left its socket, the shrine's watchman woke. A **Bronze Sentinel** stands between the party and the socket, and it will let nothing approach. It is mindless, tireless, and its heavy bronze **Resists** ordinary blows (halve non-magical damage), so trading hits is a long, losing game.

The counter is on its body, and the room shows it: a thread of the same cold light leaks from a **seam at the nape of its neck**, an ichor-seal. A called shot to the seam (an attack at -2, or set up by a Maneuver, a grapple, the high ground of the stair), or magic, or fire, bypasses the Resist and ends it quickly. A clever company drops it in a round or two; a company that only swings drops it eventually, badly hurt. Let them learn the difference.

5. The Ember-Socket. Past the guardian, the truth: clutched in the dust lies the **southerner**, the soft-handed stranger from Bryda's tale, also dead, his hand still around a fist-sized **ember that burns and is never consumed**, a **titan's coal**. He pried it from the socket to steal it, the Lamp went dark, the seal cracked, the dead rose, and the guardian killed him before he reached the stair. (He carries a letter of credit drawn on a **Halkis** college, his employer, your seed for next time.)

THE CHOICE

The titan's coal is the whole adventure in the party's hand:

- **Set it back in the socket.** The cracks of cold light close, the seal mends, the dead of the field lie down for good, and the Far Lamp above kindles itself, burning once more over a frontier made safe. Straza is saved. This is the hero's ending, and Drita's Lamplighter remembers it.
- **Keep it.** A titan's coal is worth a duchy to a college or a cult, the deepest occult prize. But the socket stays empty, the Lamp stays dark, the dead keep rising, and Straza will be a haunted ruin within the year, one more dark place on the map. The party may tell themselves a story about it; the frontier will tell another. Let the cost be real and let them choose anyway.

There is, of course, a third road, take the coal *and* find another way to seal the field (a god's blessing, a Halkis-made replacement, a deeper bargain). That is a whole next adventure, which is exactly what a starter should leave behind.

AFTERMATH AND REWARD

If they relight the Lamp: Bryda's promised coin and supplies; the standing welcome of Straza as a frontier base (a West Marches home node); a token of the Lamplighter's favor at the GM's discretion (a small blessing, a lamp that will not gutter). If they kept the coal, the reward is the coal, and the consequences.

Either way they leave with the **southerner's letter** and its Halkis seal: someone paid good coin to have a titan-shrine quietly robbed, and they will want to know why their agent never came back.

WHERE NEXT

- **Halkis** sent the thief. Who in the artificers' city covets titan-coals, and what are they building? (A patron, or a villain.)
- The field had **two** missing herders. Did they rise as Shades, or are they somewhere below, alive and hiding?
- One titan-shrine on one hill. The frontier is full of them, and now the company has a map, a base, and a reputation.

THE CAST

Full entries for the Shade and Bronze Sentinel are in the bestiary; the numbers you need at the table:

Shade: HP 10 · Def 4 · Armor 0 · +3 (4, chill touch) · Speed 3 · *Bane: fire (a torch or blessed flame; ordinary steel passes through); cannot be Grabbed or knocked Prone; a hit marks 1 stress, slow to clear.*

Bronze Sentinel: HP 16 · Def 1 · Armor 2 · +4 (5) · Speed 2 · *Mindless; Resists non-magical harm (halved); the glowing ichor-seal at its nape is the counter, a called shot there (−2), a Maneuver, fire, or magic bypasses the Resist.* (Starter-scaled from the bestiary's HP 20.)

Risen (if you want more dead in the tower): HP 5 · Def 2 · Armor 0 · +2 (3) · Speed 2 · *cannot be Frightened; falls to one solid blow.* A handful, no more.