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SECTS OF KRALORELA

David Millians

Atyar the Horned Skull

Devourer of Knowledge

This sect is what remains of the chaos cult that washed ashore near Kralorela with the skull of an ancient demon, Atyar. Found by an evil scholar and enshrined in catacombs deep below a Kralori city, the skull whispered evil thoughts and practices to its followers, creating a subversive cult among students in particular. It took a command of the Emperor and a massive purge to destroy this cult, though a few followers fled abroad. The followers of the skull now lurk in a few degenerate urban area cells and in Ignorance, of course. They have forgotten the location of the skull and survive through violence and fear. Most Kralori understand them to be servants of Sekever.

A common initiation requirement for a cell of the cult is to murder a noble or scholar, decapitate him, and throw the head into a house, preferably inhabited, that the initiate then sets alight.

Entry Requirements: Literacy 13

Abilities: Darktongue of Atyar, Doctrine of the Cult of Atyar, Doomed One of Atyar, Sneaky, Symbolic Sight, Use Garrote



Virtues: Cannibalistic, Cruel, Quiet, Suspicious, Violent

Grimoires:

Killer in Darkness (Final Garrote, Shadows, Silent Blade, Skin of Pitch)

The Vile Learning (Consume Mind, Dismiss Magic, Devour Book, Ingest Scroll, Mindlink)

The Whispers of the Horned Skull (Grow Horns, Heliophobia, Pyrophobia, Strike Fear)

Secret: *Summon Voice of Atyar* (This is a form of divination, in which the priest summons an avatar of the demon, which will answer three questions cryptically.)

Secret Requirements: All three grimoire ratings of 1 or 2 each.

Talismans: Followers of Atyar construct their talismans from bone (especially skulls) black stones, and scalps.

Holy Days: Night of the Skull (6/7/6)

Other Side: The Shadow Hell

Other Connections: Atyari develop few relationships outside of their cult.

Disadvantages: The Kralori government destroys them upon discovery.

August Dragon of Ting Shui

The Dragon Oracle

Imin Long, the Great Oracle of Ting Shui, sleeps near the city in its lair on the northern end of Hum Chang Island. He has woken four times in the last two millennia to prophesy freely for all and is expected to awake again soon.

Entry Requirements: Literacy 13, Pious 13

Abilities: Follower of the August Dragon of Ting Shui, Symbolic Sight

Virtues: Proud, Wise

Grimoires:

Words of the Dragon Oracle (Cast Fortune, Glimpse Future, Perceive Present with Clarity, Plumb Past)

Secret: *Hear the Words of the August Dragon* (This places a follower of the August Dragon

into deeper communion with it and acts as an automatic augment to all trait associated with the dragon.)

Secret Requirements: Grimoire, Proud, and Wise at 1⚡2 each.

Talismans: Followers of the August Dragon usually use talismans in the form of jade images of the dragon.

Holy Days: Words of Wisdom Festival (6/2/3) celebrates the anniversary of the August Dragon's most recent appearance. It is a time of supplication and prophecy.

Other Side: The August Dragon Node is the source of inspiration and magic for all of its followers.

Other Connections: The August Dragon is the patron and guardian of its city. All Kral-ori respect it for its wisdom and dedication to them.

Disadvantages: None



Bei Feng the Muter

Keeper of Secrets

Bei Feng is an ancient entity. Springing from the lips of the Cosmic Dragon before the creation of the universe, he lay quiescent until called upon by later Dragon Emperors to keep secrets safe. He closes the mouths and even the minds of those who would divulge mysteries to those not ready for such knowledge. Only the greatest dragons can access that which he guards. Bodkartu is sometimes said to be his daughter.

Bei Feng exists in every silence and in every mute—his special servants—born to the Kralori. His image guards every major temple in the land, but he has no formal priesthood himself. Commoners and nobles alike have been known to call upon him in times of need, though not always with righteous or lofty goals.

Entry Requirements: Must undertake a silent vow of silence, at least for the duration of the magic sought from him.

Charms: Confuse Mind, Seal Lips

Spells: Erase a Thought, Wither Tongue

Bodkartu

Bodkartu is the fearsome sister of beloved Halisayan, so the sister-in-law of Emperor Thalurzni. When the emperor married his loyal wife, Bodkartu also joined his household, though she remained in her sister's shadow, thus mostly out of sight. No one ever speaks of what happened to her, but she has always been wronged and vengeful. She nurses her anger and mysteries in the darkness, and when a target for her wrath becomes apparent, she strikes without remorse. Many times she preserved the dignity of her kinswoman and family, often at great sacrifice for herself.

Bodkartu is the goddess of secrets and forbidden lore, especially women's lore. She answers the prayers of oppressed women with disease, poison, strangulation, and mysterious disappearances. Only six official, legal temples exist in Kralorela, but any woman may enter them, beg their intervention for some misdeed suffered, and know that her prayers will be answered. Small cells of her followers hide in most communities of any size, and they have been known to take matters into their own hands.

During the reign of ShangHsa May-His-Name-Be-Cursed, followers of Bodkartu, sanctioned or not, spearheaded much of the covert action against the False Dragon Ring. Emperor Godunya acknowledged their invaluable contribution but wisely maintained the ancient conditions upon their activity. They are said to guard some of his most secret plans and mysteries.

Mystically, Bodkartu is the guardian of secrets, and the wise often implore her mercy before their deepest meditations.

Entry Requirements: Be a wronged woman or a female guardian of secrets.

Abilities: Brew Poisons, Garrote, Initiate of Bodkartu, Mythology of Bodkartu, Member of [Coven], Strangulation

Virtues: Remorseless, Secretive, Self-Sacrificing

Affinities:

Curse (Curse Bowels, Curse of Fever, Curse of Impotence, Curse of Sores, Curse of Weakness)

Revenge (Extend Suffering, Find Oppressor, Sense Wronged Woman, Strike Fear Into the Hearts of Men)

Secret (Hide from Authority, Ward Place)



Secret: Secret of Bodkartu (Success against a challenge of 10 ω 3 hides a secret forever; it is unknowable unless someone chooses to heroquest into Bodkartu's Realm itself.)

Holy Days: Women's Night (1/7/7) follows a day of role-reversals and feasting. Men know that their women judge them at this time, and few are willing to walk about on such nights.

Other Side: The Well of Darkness is said to contain Bodkartu's lair, but no one is known to have returned from this place.

Other Connections: Other than those few in the official temples, Bodkartu cultists are loath to reveal themselves as what they are, but they often have connections throughout their area. A few are involved with the highest levels of government and the greatest secrets.

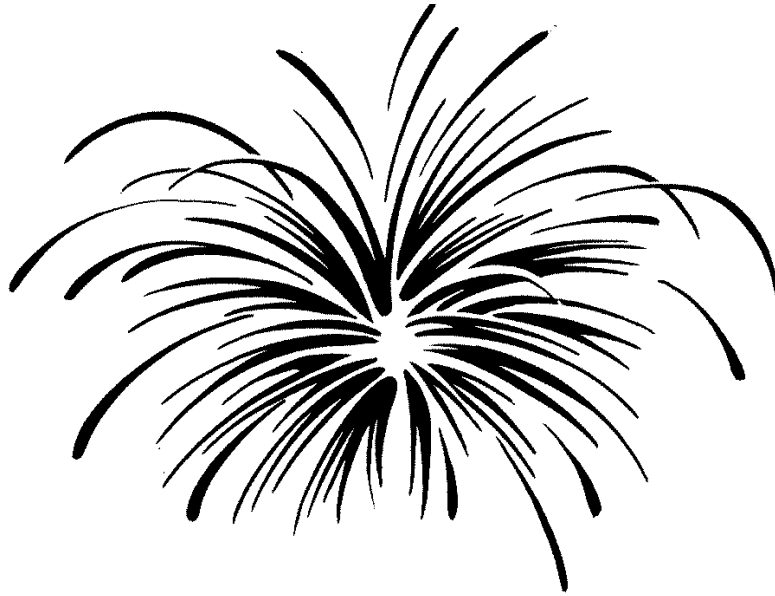
Disadvantages: Men fear them, and officials destroy illegal cells and their members whenever they find them.

Cho the Rocketeer

Order of the Magic Crystal

Master Cho was a dedicated servant of Emperor Thalurzni. Inspired by his master, he discovered the magic crystals of Kaisen Province and divined their nature and applications. He constructed many great creations, and his massive East Wind missiles and Eastern Sea rockets were instrumental in the many victories of Emperor Vayobi in his wars against the forces of corruption.

As tranquility returned to the heartlands of Kralorela, Master Cho turned his discoveries to more peaceful applications. Master Cho himself rode one of his rockets into the sky, where he still dwells today, and while the largest and most powerful crystals are no longer available, Kralori continue to use them in vari-



ous military applications and for fireworks and firecrackers in celebrations and to drive away evil spirits.

Entry Requirements: Literate 13

Abilities: Doctrine of the Order of the Magic Crystal, Membership in the Order of the Magic Crystal, Symbolic Sight, Withstand Burns

Virtues: Focused

Grimoires:

Book of Crystals (Extract Crystal Ore, Refine Crystals, Sense Crystals)

Book of Explosives (Add Explosive Esthetics, Create Explosive, Create Rocket)

Secret: Blast Vice (Successful use of this ability augments an explosion by 5 against anything foreign and 10 against anyone or anything hostile to Kralorela.)

Secret Requirements: Book of Crystals and Books of Explosives grimoires and Focused at 1W2 each

Talismans: Rocketeers construct their talismans as golden amulets containing a few of their precious crystals.

Holy Days: Almost every major Kralori festival makes use of fireworks, and many smaller ceremonies, exorcisms, and rites of passage also include firecrackers. Every one of these events is a celebration of Master Cho. His own followers strive to create the most impressive and novel effects at such times, but most of their creations are used by the millions across the land.

Other Side: Cho dwells in his Star Rocket, which is visible in the night sky on rare occasions.

Other Connections: The order works with merchants to sell their most simple creations across the empire and to convey their more dangerous works to the War Dragons.

Disadvantages: Rocketeer mines and workshops are dangerous places, shunned by any neighbors and usually located far from communities of any size.

THE KINGDOM OF SESHNELA

Hervé Carteau

THE SACRED ALLIANCE: ONE GOD, ONE CHURCH, ONE KING

The Kingdom of Seshnela is one of Glorantha's most powerful political entities. It rules over almost two million subjects and keeps on expanding. Seshnela is completely dominated by its King, working closely with the Rokari Church hierarchy. Both organizations are so tightly allied that one could not exist without the other. The Kingdom's main strength derives from a very efficient social control system of its population. Most of the peasantry is bonded to local nobles, cities or church institutions. Peasants are used as labor force and cannon fodder for the King's projects and as a source of prayer energy by the Rokari Church. Townsmen are enrolled in guilds; the army is under permanent watch by the Church.

Thus, Seshnela today is a powerful and repressive state, resting on a two-centuries old alliance between Crown and Church. But this alliance has sometimes been uneasy, and cracks are appearing between them at the end of this Third Age.



THE NINE GREAT SESHNEGI FIEFS

Duchy of Rindland (420.000 inh.), whose Duke has been King for two hundred years. The Duchy's capital, Segure, is also the nation's capital.

Duchy of Tanisor (350.000 inh.) Its Capital is Arlor but its biggest city is Leplain, the Holy See of the Rokari Church, where the King's edicts are second to those of Ecclesiarch Theoblanc. King Guilmar eliminated the old ruling family and became Duke.

County of Estaurenica (250.000 inh.), whose capital is Estau. Count Guy de Loimbard is the hereditary ruler of the County and the Kingdom's Marshall.

County of Deu (100.000 inh.) King Guilmar also became Count.

County of Noyelle (100.000 inh.) Capital is Hingswell and the county is still ruled by its hereditary talar family.

County of Voi (150.000 inh.) King Guilmar became the Count many years ago.

Barony of Vogai (100.000 inh.) The hereditary Baron cooperates fully with the King and his land is growing very rich from taxes on sea trade.

Barony of Gilboch Island (60.000 inh.) This island was recently obtained from the aldryami who are said to have abandoned it "for the sake of Lady Gwenelor".

Dangim March (150.000 inh.) Main city is Dangk and the King directly rules this conquered land. It holds the Holy Site of Hrelar Amali, where Flamal grew and was cut down, still the site of many pilgrimages by theistic pagans.

Seshnela is an agricultural land dotted by many towns and a few larger cities. Its social hierarchy necessitates having relatively small communities that are easier to watch and control by secular and religious authorities. The King strictly controls development of cities so they do not become impossible to manage. Only the Capital Segurane and the Holy See of Leplain are major cities with about 40.000 inhabitants each. Leplain holds the largest (but not highest) Malkioni cathedral in the World and is ringed. Segurane is still ringed by three successive defensive walls.

Seshnela's backbone is the Tanier River, but its delta is in politically independent Nolos. Thus, the coastal region of Vogai and the island of Guilboch, the only maritime access of the Kingdom, are strongly developing with the creation of a royal navy.

All of Seshnela's borders are dangerous. In the south, there is the duchy of Nolos with its very rich and corrupt, heretic, illegitimate rulers. In the east, there is the Tarinwood full of sinister elves and Safelster, a mosaic of crazed stygian city states. In the north, the trolls of Guhan and the brithini of Arolanit loom. In the West, the Kanthor Islands still hold the dreaded luathans and the western forests teem with obscene beastmen and the deluded Castle Coasters.



The Kingdom feels threatened on all sides and has always tried to expand its frontiers. The King's priority is now to conquer Nolos and Pasos, his richest enemies. However, skirmishes frequently happen on all borders as many horali seek glory in battle to be promoted as Paragons. They try to whip the masses of levied bonded peasants to attack but they make very poor soldiers – unless possessed by the **Spirit of the Crusade**, when they become unstoppable.

THE SESHNELAN CASTES

Dronari (commoners)

They make up over 80% of the population and their fate is quite different in the countryside and in the towns and cities.

Rural dronari are mostly bonded to a landholder, city or church institution. They are serfs who don't have the right to leave their lands or marry without the Lord's permission. They can be drafted for war by the King and his representatives. They aren't allowed to learn or cast any spell and must wear undyed clothes only. All must go to church every Sabbat, pray to Makan, confess their meagre sins to their Readers and then undergo more-or-less painful penance. However, many still follow the Old Ways in secret to get useful magics.

Only a few persons in each village are "free" dronari: the Readers, Craftsmen (smith, miller) and a few landed peasants maybe. Most are members of the Order of the Plow and actively cooperate with the authorities to keep their village in good order and enjoy their own relative well-being.

Urban dronari include artisans and tradesmen. They cannot read or write, touch any gold, ride horses or bear swords. They can only use spells appropriate to their caste.



Dronari wear hose and tunics, and are associated with the color brown (work). Wealthy dronari wear fur-lined cloaks and tunics of bright colors (although never red, gold, white, or black). They carry their tools of work. In cities, many wear badges or trims from their guilds. Some may hold office in their cities.

Horali (Soldiers)

Seshnela's army relies on commoners' levies and horali, full-time soldiers are few in numbers. Many are NCOs who regularly drill the levies. Most follow the Order of Saint Iames (cavalry) or Saint Dalan (infantry). Horali wear baggy trousers and sleeved overcoats and must always carry their weapons prominently. They are associated with the color red (violence). There are horali in every royal county holding the office of Sheriff with the right of low justice; many also directly serve the Church as guards. The royal army



itself has a few fully professional units. Most others are made of a cadre of horali leading levies of bonded peasants, poorly armed and motivated.

Among the horali are found the **Paragons** the elite soldiers who lead the Kingdom's armies to battle. The Crown rewards chosen horali with this title for their valor and discipline. Paragons must always own a sword. Rich Para-

gons have access to iron armor and weapons, often unenchanted to dampen enemy magic. Rokari Paragons follow a strict warrior code (akin to Bushido). All must belong to the order of Saint Gerlant Flamesword.

Guilmarn promotes his best and most loyal Paragons to high offices, giving them fiefs and offices to replace unreliable nobles. Thus they are slowly becoming the new ruler caste in the King's lands. Most are absolutely loyal to the Crown and hope they will be allowed to hand their charges to their sons. They enjoy their new power very much, being ready to fight hard to protect it.

Talari (Lords)

They are hereditary families charged with leading the people around them, "ensuring their material well-being". Many talari families

have genealogies traceable only from the start of the Third Age since nearly all GL supporters were wiped out before that. Only the head of a family has rulership over its land. He assigns roles to the other members as he sees fit. Many younger sons must join the army as commissioned officers, or the Clergy as high servants. By Ancient Law, talari are the only ones with the right to trade with foreigners and many of them are merchants.

Thus the talari caste is as diverse as the others. Talari is a rank more than an occupation and there have been talari in all aspects of western society since it began. However, in Seshnela today, many traditional talari families opposed the growing power of the Crown and were dispossessed of their offices and lands. Many talari have been killed, others forced to enrol in the King's army. Only the Barony of Estaurenic and the Counties of Noyelle and Vogai are still led by their historical talari rulers.

Many, but not all talari, belong to the Order of Saint Gerlant the King and have access to Ruling Magic. They wear ornate long-sleeved,



coat-like garments that reach down below the knees and hats. They are associated with the color gold (authority). They carry a baton of authority. Ruling talari wear a jewelled ornament with feathers in their hat.

Zzaburi (Wizards)

They are the upper Clergy of the Rokari Church and must guide the Community in spiritual matters according to Malkion's and Rokar's Laws. They must never shave their beard (a symbol of intelligence), use common tools or do any menial labor. They wear robes and are associated with the colors white (purity) or black (discipline). They wear high hats often made of fur and sometimes fur-trimmed overcoats.

Seshnelan zzaburi are of two kinds. The ones belonging to the Rokari church venerate their Ecclesiarch Theoblanc who has made the Church so powerful. They must remain celibate. They focus on research on the

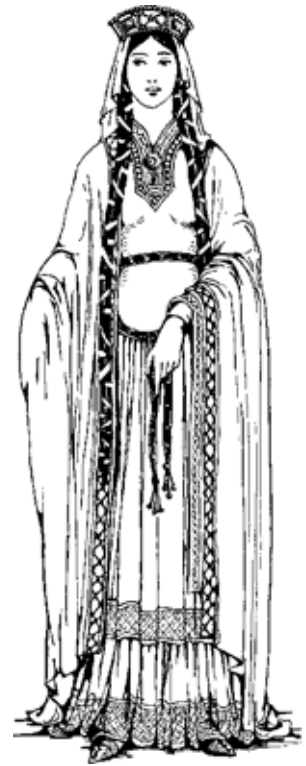


Sharp Abiding Book, both to better understand it and to find ways of recreating Dan-malastan. They are recruited in other castes at the age of 10-12 by wizards who examine all youths of this age.

Members of Saintly Orders and Schools not sanctioned by the Church are increasingly discouraged and persecuted. In fact, the Church lets a few run under constant watch by the Inquisition, only to use them as scapegoats when necessary. Some others have specific purposes which were approved by the Church, such as finding a way to fight off the Lua-thans.

Women

Women are from their father's, then husband's caste (which is, or should be the same). Rokari society is patriarchal and women are considered inferior to men. They are also the source of many temptations. They must obey their father, later their husband. They are mostly confined to domestic roles with a few exceptions such as the Order of Saint Elleish. Even the Order of Saint Xemela the Healer is under growing pressure by the Church and will someday soon be anathemized and disbanded.



THE ROKARI CHURCH AND ROKAR'S MESSAGE

Rokar was born in Leplain in 1320 and soon recruited by the wizards (Nobody knows who Rokar's parents were. Since Rokari wizards must remain celibate, they decreed Rokar himself had been adopted by the Church. Several regions claim to be his birthplace). He was Inspired by Malkion who gave him Knowledge of the Three Laws which had been lost during GL era. He said all pious people must venerate Makan, the One Mind, which separated matter and energy, the Creator from First Action, and uphold the caste laws spelled out Malkion the Founder (during Fourth Action) as a way to reach Solace after Life. Solace is accessible to all men who imitate the Prophet's self sacrifice.

Malkion's Three Laws given to Rokar are the following:

“Nature is unclean and fosters sin.”

Gross matter slowly corrupts the purity of Man by accumulating impurities in us which prevent us to reach Solace. These impurities are called Sin. They must be removed to get closer to God by confession and penance. Hrestoli Joy is such an impurity.

“Sin can be purged by observing proper caste rules.”

Purging our body of sins makes us closer to God. Sin is everything that's not in the Sharp Abiding Book. It opens the way to immortality as Theoblanc, Guilmar and others' very long lives prove this day. Caste laws approach perfection and bring us closer to God, they are our mean to salvation.

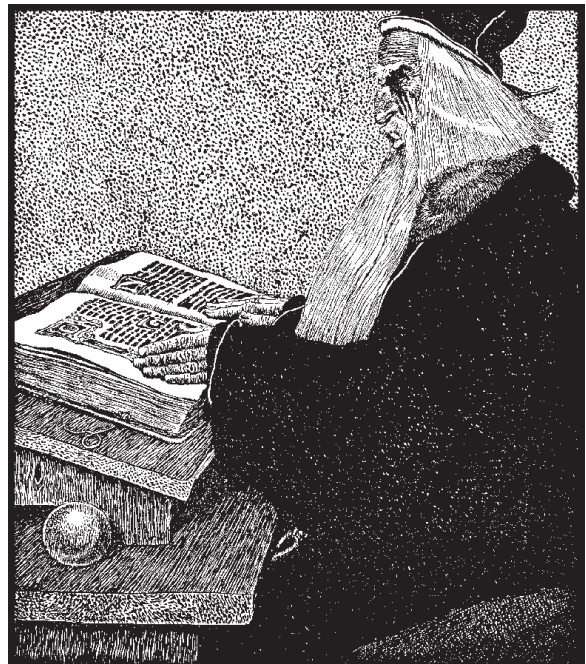
“The Church must be Purest among the Pure.”

The Church must be without any flaw and avoid the pitfalls of heresy, venality, simony and corruption. It must be under strict control all the time.

Rokar began preaching this but was defrocked and declared heretic. He nevertheless continued preaching to the serfs, who were weary of war and troubles, and gained a large following. Finally, he was martyred in 1349 by the church. Many witnesses saw his essence going to Solace when he expired on the pyre and his message spread further. In 1410 Bailifes, Duke of Rindland, converted to the Rokari faith and crushed his enemies in 1412, being crowned King of Seshnela by Ecclesiarch Maldron in 1413.

THE HOLY BOOKS OF THE ROKARI CHURCH

The first and most important is the ***Sharp Abiding Book***, rediscovered by Rokar and later Ecclesiarch Maldron (1413-1564). It was originally written around 650 by the Return to Rightness movement, combining part of the Abiding Book and combat spells from the Grimoires of older sorcery schools. It states the only Right Laws, edicted by Malkion the Founder during Paseren (Fourth Action). Only Wizards of the highest levels of the church have access to the full Sharp Abiding Book.



Rokar himself wrote the **Rule of Law** using parts of the SAB used by the Return to Rightness Crusade before God Learners' excesses. In it, he completely dismissed Hrestol's teachings as "clever spells wrought by a clever but flawed man" but gives access to the power of the Crusade nevertheless. This is the Holy Scripture used by the whole church, from which extracts are read to the masses.

Ecclesiarch Theoblanc also wrote the **Theoblanc Papers**. In it, he explains the role of the Inquisition: it makes sure the Church remains pure, that no heresy will develop and that the wizards will not make the same mistakes as the GL did. He also warned of the dangers of iconolatry. Finally, he did clearly state the Church's prerogatives. Theoblanc rails against *"the greased slope of chances, hopes and false dreams of success or power that slips into the infested and most base, putrid parts of our human souls. Hold to the Book."*

WHAT IS NOT APPARENT IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

To the Ecclesiarch and his close advisers, Rokar's message is meaningless. The wizards know the way to best serve God is to follow His Laws and live forever doing so. This is the only way to stop the infernal cycle of destruction and rebirth which plagues the world since Malkion's Sacrifice. To bring the world with God again, Humanity must be stabilized forever, for its own good.

The wizards, led by Maldron, picked Rokar's message two centuries ago because it is simple and insists on caste stability and immutability. It thus is a good first step towards recreating the Perfect Society. To them, "Solace" is a useful way to channel the huge prayer energies of the Masses towards the

New Danmalastan project. It has little, if any, spiritual meaning. But only the highest ranks in the Church are aware of that. It is an "inner circle" that has very different goals and philosophy from the rest of the Church.

THE ROKARI CHURCH'S HISTORY IN SESHNELA

In 1410, High Watcher Maldron converted the Duke of Rindland, Bailifes the Hammer, to the Rokari Church with its slogan "One God, One Church, One King". In 1412, the Church unleashed the Power of the Crusade against Bailifes' enemies, whom he crushed at the battle of the Asgolan Fields. The following year, Maldron was designated Ecclesiarch by the council of Watchers and crowned Bailifes King of Seshnela. The King's first edict was to make Rokarism the Seshnegi state religion.

Maldron, a zzaburi student of the Sharp Abiding Book, had always desired to bring back society closer to God by recreating Danmalastan. He recognized the difficulty of



doing so without strong support from the ruling caste. He and Bailifes made a pact: the King and his descendants would receive support and blessings from the Church, up to Crusade and possibly Immortality spells, as long as he gave the Church the necessary resources to help shape the future Land of Logic. Both swore powerful oaths which extended to their successors. Thus, the wizards had full protection and support from the crown to implement their program of bringing back the Land of Logic, the Perfect Society. The King gets extended Life and support from the Church to focus on rebuilding a powerful empire.

Church and State are thus bonded together and both depend on the other. None can break that pact easily. This pact's real aim is a closely-kept secret, known only to a few top-ranking wizards and to the reigning King, who discovers it when he assumes power (part of the Crowning Ritual is in fact the Revelation of the Pact with all its implications to the new King. In fact, this is the core of the Ritual, and renews the Bond between Crown and Church). It has served Guilmarn well as he is now direct overlord of nearly three quarters of the population.

However, while the Church tries very hard to establish an absolute caste system, Guilmarn needs some social mobility to further his political agenda, both upwards and downwards. He replaces the unreliable nobility with his Paragons, who become landholders, mayors and sheriffs while still horali. Also, the rich dronari city burghers actively support the King in exchange for more rights in running their affairs and protection from harrying clerics. These aspects do not fit well with the wizards' goal of stabilizing every man in his caste forever and created rising tensions between Church and Crown.

After the King's failure to conquer Nolos in 1622, the Church draws the line at his renewed demands of full and unquestioning support to continue the war. Guilmarn wants to take back or tax the Church's lands and Theoblanc formally opposes this. He calls for a Rokari conclave to discuss the issue in 1623. This stalls the King's actions against Nolos until 1624. Tense negotiations last for over one year, and end up with an agreement: renewed support and acceptance of the Horali Paragons' new role from the Church against total iconoclasm in the Kingdom. Theoblanc uses the King's need for support to implement one of his ends: focussing all prayer energies on the New Danmalastan project without any waste due to veneration of the Saints.

After this accord is reached, a new Conclave will be called and Theoblanc will declare total iconoclasm in the Kingdom. All Watchers who disagree will be killed overnight by "demons". All saintly orders and independent schools will be closed by the Paragons, their books confiscated and given to the new order of the **Monks of the Cryptic Library** .

Then, the Kingdom will attack Nolos and Pasos and conquer them, using the Power of the Crusade with great effect. For the coming years, the Church will temporarily tolerate Guilmarn's policy as it strengthens its own hold on Seshnela and, all things considered, brings Danmalastan closer.

The Caste issue will remain a thorny one between Crown and Church. Some factions in the Church argue for bringing to order the urban dronari, who become too worldly. The burghers fight back using the Crown's protection, based on the taxes they bring. Tensions are rising between about this subject. What will be the fate of Rokari townsmen?

THE ROKARI CHURCH TODAY

The Rokari church is at the top a philosophical order of wizards studying the Sharp Abiding Book. They advise the other Castes on how to conform to its Laws to “ensure the energetic well-being of the community”. For the Rokari wizards, this means bringing the community closer to the One Mind, Makan, by recreating Danmalastan, the Perfect Land of Logic. Thus they try to make everyone follow the Laws set in their holy books to the letter both as a way to harvest their prayer energies and to stabilize the social system.

The original message of Solace from Rokar is but “window dressing” for the masses: it is simple to understand and has the Crown’s support. But it means very little to wizards in the know. Few in the Inquisition know that, and only at the highest level. Most Rokari churchmen sincerely believe they are helping their wards to go to Solace after their death.

The Church’s second, immediate priority is to prevent the return of hell on earth (ice age, continents shattered, etc) by making sure the wizards never start experimenting again. It lives in great fear of the past’s catastrophes, especially the one which destroyed half of Seshnela. To control wizards, it has built the Order of the Inquisition which closely monitors all of them. The Church tries to concentrate all knowledge of sorcery and forbids any use of any other magic in Seshnela. This goal is well known and shared by the whole Church hierarchy, down to the lowliest village Reader.

The Rokari Church hierarchy officially focuses all wizardry studies on the Sharp Abiding Book. It organized four schools of wizardry: **Inquisitor’s School** (to help the Golden Lance inquisitors to root out heresy), **Defences of God** (to protect the Church inside Seshnela), **Iron Blood** (to help the King’s armies to conquer and convert new

lands) and **Lordly Advisory** (to advise and support the Crown, in fact keep an eye on it). The Church also tolerate a few independent sorcery schools as long they help specific, Church-approved purposes, such as finding a way to defeat the luathans, or are purely technical, such as the Humble Calligraphers.

Saintly Orders are ultimately seen as distractions from the veneration of Makan and will be eventually all banished, even Saint-Xemela’s. Only the Orders of the **Golden Lance** (inquisition), of **Gerlant** (paragons) and **James** (military) and the **Student Body** (for converts who have experienced Joy before) are sanctioned by the Rokari church. All



other orders (such as the Plow) are tolerated only, many others having been anathemized already. Theoblanc is becoming increasingly iconoclastic and has ordered many saintly images removed from sight or even destroyed.

The Inquisition continually searches for heresy in the Church and society. Their agents keep a close eye on all wizards, but also regularly check on Readings of all castes, often attending incognito. They also infiltrate Guilds, army units, etc. and watch over all castes. An agent uncovering heresy must report it immediately to his superiors. The Order will send the Order of the Golden Lance's members to crack down on it, either immediately or after a (terse) attempt to make the heretic see the Light. After purification, if the perpetrators are still alive and coherent, they are handed to the Crown's justice.

Religious Ceremonies are called *Readings* and held separately for each caste and sex by some of their own members called *Readers*. Readers are NOT wizards but members of their caste who have the duty to read their holy scriptures to their brethren in addition to their usual work. Some may know a few Prayers as well. Readers are also in charge of administering common sacraments (baptism, confirmation, marriage, funerals) and a few special ones (bless militia, bless project, etc.)

Readers all report to a Watcher who in turns reports to a High Watcher. There are nine High Watchers in the Kingdom of Seshnela, one per great fief, though religious boundaries do not exactly fit the political borders. They directly answer to the Ecclesiarch, Saint Theoblanc the Pious, who holds office since 1564. The Ecclesiarch has final and absolute say on all Church matters.

Rokari wizardry has some particular aspects; it scorns all visible displays and focuses on

efficiency. For instance, the Neutralizing of wounds looks and feels different from "regular" magical healing. Wounds did not exist in Danmalastan and thus have to be negated as they are not Logical.

HERESIES

Hrestolism is still alive even in areas dominated by the Rokari. Periodically people get glimpses of the Joy of Hrestoli and celebrate his Joy in confused ceremonies where people cry tears of joy, fall to their knees and pray to the Creator for allowing them just that glimpse of what awaits them. Plagues of frenzied (but very joyful) madmen wash through the rural lands until they are crushed by the soldiers of the inquisition or noble house responsible for that area.

Sometimes a noble or a soldier gets a glimpse of Hrestol's Joy. The lucky ones leave Seshnela. There have been some secret Hrestoli communities with surprisingly powerful patrons. The Judges root out these communities and crush them before they return the madness and horror of the God Learners.

Among the serfs who do not use pagan magics, the **flagellant heresy** is gaining ground. Having nothing to hope for except solace, its members constantly mortify themselves to emulate the sacrifice of Malkion and go to Solace faster. Their processions are becoming commonplace and the inquisition is working hard to keep this new heresy in check.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Jane Williams

They were neither one thing nor another, these travellers who had come seeking shelter. Their appearance showed little sign of riches, yet they bore themselves with the pride of nobility. There was no question but that they were friends, even distant kin, yet they brought more danger to the stead than anything else this season. There was no secrecy here, and yet they did not even give their names, much less their clan or tribe. If he was asked if he had seen certain people (and for the Lunar occupiers to ask the whereabouts of various rebel leaders was not unheard of) he would be able to say that no-one of that name had been here.

If the questioners were to ask by description rather than by name, of the woman who led them, her red hair braided into a crown, and of a certain gem, that would be another matter, but that could not be helped. Brol could never admit to having even seen his visitor, yet she went through the formalities of gifting their hosts as if the world were watching. Rich gifts, too, and welcome ones, yet he watched uneasily, reckoning the size of the debt to be paid that they represented. A cloak brooch for him, charmed to keep the wearer dry, daggers for his sons, a packet of needles for his wife, and one for his daughter, just come into womanhood. And then a frown. "You had another daughter, I thought?"

He clamped down on his feelings, using the wilful numbness that had become all too fa-

miliar, showing nothing. "We did. It was a hard winter, and spring came late, bringing fever with it. If the taxes had left us with more...." He shrugged: a man did not rail against the fates. "Hardest on the old, and on the young. The strong survived."

"We each fight this war, in our own way," she said, softly.

At least she realised that – so many warriors did not, sneering at those who fed them, and starved themselves to do so. But the resentment was still there. "The last time you came here, you spoke of the glory for those who fought, of how they might die, but their memory would live on. And indeed, how else can a man be great? But who will remember those who fight the quiet war? Who remembers even the name of a little girl who died because there was no food left for her?"

The warriors shifted uneasily, perhaps not wanting to admit that not only did they not remember, they did not care. She did not. "Alebard. You were not with us when we last visited this place, I believe?"

Not a warrior, the man who stepped forward, and bearded. Brol was struck again by the incongruity: a ragged outlaw who took it for granted that she had a loremaster in her entourage.

"Remember this, then." Her words were only for the man she was instructing, and yet she was addressing all of them.

"Her name was Sakira, and she was six years old. She had brown hair and green eyes. When we came here last year, it was her first time serving important guests, and she was nervous but trying not to show it, because a warrior never admits to being afraid. She wanted to be a Vingan when she grew up, but she was going to use a sword, not a spear, because spears were for cottars, her father used a sword."

Brol was startled into interrupting: shock that his daughter could have so insulted a guest mingled with pride that she thought her father's accomplishments more important than those of any visitor. "She told *you* that?"

"Oh, yes." There was laughter there, a fleeting ripple on the surface of something much deeper. "I don't think the implications occurred to her."

The formality returned, she continued. "Her cousin Jenna was here visiting, and was also serving. Jenna was a little older, but Sakira was the better rider of the two. Jenna lived in Swenstown, and had new hair ribbons from the market there. Sakira had no ribbons, and was firmly of the opinion that a would-be Vingan should have no interest in such things. We discussed the comparative merits of Kheldon and Poljoni saddle design, and the best grip for a shield, before she was called away."

He remembered the next morning, and his daughter's shining eyes, and didn't say it. You gave her five minutes of your time, and she gave you her heart. Was it a fair exchange?

She turned to the rest of the warriors. "Many of you were here, too – can anyone add to that?" Some embarrassed shuffling. They wanted to be able to answer her, but only one could manage it. "Dark-haired kid – was she the one who followed us half-way down the valley when we left?"

She nodded. "That's her."

"She was right about being a good rider, then."

The bearded man bowed and stepped back, and she turned to Brol. "And this is – would have been – for her," she said soberly.

He looked at the little bundle in his hand. "Ribbons? The thing she said she did *not* want?"

"Those were her words, yes. Her meaning was very clear: and ribbons given *by* a Vingan are probably free of any taint to her pride." That hint of laughter again, and again lasting only a moment. "As it is – put them on her grave-marker, perhaps."

He could not let tears show on his face, not here in public. She knew. She really had remembered his daughter, and thought about her. But this was a formal exchange of gifts and promises: he reached for the support of formality, yet knowing again that with this strange duality, this was no place for the normal cautious diplomacy, but rather for honesty.

"So. Shelter for the night you have, and as kin, for such you are, with what meat and salt we have to share. What is that *you* are going to deny wanting, that I will end up giving you before you leave?"

She smiled. "I am not six years old.... but true, I did come here to ask more of you than a roof for the night." She met his eyes straight on, no deception there, not between kin, no matter how distant. "I came to ask you for your sons."

He held himself frozen, not allowing himself to feel. "To lead them to fame, and glory, and renown that will last for a hundred years?" And lives that would last a season, perhaps two...

“No. As scouts, and guides, to watch the enemy and report on their movements: and to return to their home at night with no-one knowing that they have acted in any way that would bring danger upon you.”

“And no fame.”

“They *will* be remembered. I promise you that.”

In Memory of all those who served

SOLUTHOR THE CREEPING DEAD

Roderick Robertson

Soluthor is a disembodied Chaos Demon, an undead monstrosity that animates the bodies of the recently dead. It can be summoned by those that know the proper rituals, and its coming has doomed many towns.

Soluthor entered Glorantha during the Great Darkness, a foul scent of decay and corruption, which encountered one of the many bodies of the recently-slain gods, and found it to its liking. It also found that it could spread from body to body by a means of a soul-bite, splitting its essence between all the bodies it inhabited. The bite would infect the host with the soul-killing essence of the Demon, and the body itself would first die, then rise again.

Soluthor was only somewhat entangled by the Net cast at the dawn, and can be summoned to the Inner World of Glorantha by those who have the knowledge.

When summoned, Soluthor animates a single dead body (killed during the rite of summoning). As that body attacks the living, the spirit of Soluthor attaches itself to the victims, dispersing the demon over many bodies. Soluthor is transmitted by the bite of an "infected" corpse, and Soluthor takes over the victim's body once it dies (which is relatively soon after being bitten).

Summoning Soluthor

Knowledge of the summoning ritual for Soluthor is held by only a few chaos cults and debased churches. Actually summoning Soluthor has only occurred a few times in history, and the mages and shamans who summoned him have rarely survived to tell the tale. As such, Soluthor is summoned only as a last-ditch revenge.



The summoner must have a fresh victim available to summon Soluthor. The body must be killed as part of the Summoning Ritual. The Ritual may only take place at night, when the sky is at least 50% overcast, but not more than 75%. It must be completed before the sun rises. As the rites take a minimum of 6 hours to complete, this gives the summoner a small window of opportunity in which to perform the rites.

At the end of a successful summoning, Soluthor enters the corpse and animates it. Soluthor will only attack other beings of the same type as the host body – if summoned into a human corpse, it will only attack humans. If summoned into a cow, it will only attack cows, etc. There are no known spells or rites to Command Soluthor – once summoned, it will attack the nearest being of the appropriate type. If summoned into the same species as the summoner, he is advised to be well warded, or to have a captive close at hand. Once summoned, Soluthor will head toward the nearest concentration of victims.

Zombie Plague!

Once Soluthor is embodied, it will attack living creatures of the same type as its body. The normal method of attack is the bite, which injects a type of “spirit poison” into the wound. The only easy way to remove the poison is to amputate the bitten limb within a minute of the bite.

Once bitten, the wound site begins to swell and turn black, with bruising and dark juices visibly running up the veins. The victim will normally succumb within minutes of being bit-

ten, though some individuals can hold out for much longer. When the poison reaches the heart, the victim dies and becomes an empty vessel for Soluthor to fill. Soluthor settles in the head of the victim, and spends a few minutes “getting comfortable” in the body, during which time the body lies quiescent. The first signs of “unlife” are the eyes opening and/or moving, and the gnashing of teeth. However, within seconds to minutes (depending on how many other bodies Soluthor fills), Soluthor is in complete control of the body, and it staggers up to attack more victims and spread the plague further.



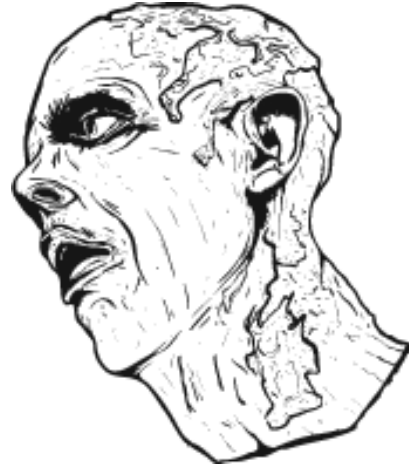
When first summoned, Soluthor’s host body is incredibly fast and cunning, able to use weapons and open doors. As the plague spreads, however, Soluthor loses its focus. The bodies slow down and become less intelligent, until they are simply shambling corpses moaning their hunger.

Soluthor is embodied in every animate zombie – if one body is killed, Soluthor knows where it happened, and may send additional bodies towards the site. Zombies will work together to break down barricades or even climb walls (clambering over bodies and turning them into mush if they must).

Fighting A Soluthor Zombie

The smarter, faster Soluthor zombies can handle weapons, are eye-blindingly fast, and will ambush zombie-hunters with incredible cunning, not to mention their super-normal strength. As the bodies accumulate, the cunning and speed decline, and eventually, a zombie plague becomes a mass of shambling undead with nary a thought.

Soluthor Zombies have few vulnerabilities. They are immune to poison, asphyxiation, and most other “non-violent” means of death. They *can* be burned by fire or ripped apart by weaponry, though the surest means to kill one is to chop its head off. Broken bones will merely slow it down, though completely severed limbs do not retain an “unlife” of their own – once they are removed from the body, the Unlife force of Soluthor no longer flows through them.



HeroQuest

Soluthor

Chaos Demon

Soluthor is a Nearly Impossible opponent to completely defeat.

When embodied in only a few bodies, the demon is supernaturally fast and cunning. Demonic energies make it significantly stronger than the host body, and it feels no pain. As the plague spreads, individual zombies become slower and less cunning.

Each zombie after the first slows all zombies as Soluthor’s essence is spread thinner and thinner. Around 5 zombies, the difficulty of facing an individual zombie drops from Nearly Impossible to merely Very High. At around 25 zombies, the resistance for facing a single zombie drops to High, etc. as shown in the table below:

Zombies	Resistance to fight 1 zombie
1-5	Nearly Impossible
5-25	Very High
25-50	High
50-100	Moderate
100-250	Low
250+	Very Low

The problem is that the zombies are always multiplying, as long as there is a food source.

The decline in resistance is gradual – it doesn’t just jump from one resistance to another, the zombies get slower and less intelligent as they convert victims. You can either just describe the lowering of resistance (but leave the resistance as it is), or you can actually reduce the target number. Zombie Strength remains enhanced, no matter how many bodies Soluthor inhabits, it’s just that the zombie can’t use it properly any more.

Anti-Undead and Anti-Spirit magics work well against Soluthor zombies, casting the spirit out of the body on a success. Sever Spirit works just fine, though other Death magics might or might not, depending on the actual way the magic works. The Spirit Poison of a zombie bite is not a typical poison, so will *not* be purged by most Cure Poison magics.

Ending the Plague

A plague of Soluthor zombies can be ended by killing every single zombie (but remember, each individual zombie gets stronger as its mates are killed), or by an arcane ritual known by a mere handful of sorcery schools and cults. The ritual must be cast at high noon on a Holy Day of the caster, within 1 mile of the original Summoning. The ritual requires a successful summoning of Soluthor into another host body; but Soluthor will be aware of the new ritual, and will resist not only physically with any zombies it currently inhabits, but also with its own not-inconsiderable will.

The Ritual, in essence, summons Soluthor into another (usually less-dangerous) body, which can be killed with relative ease – a frog, for example. Users of the rite are cautioned to have the new host body restrained and incapacitated – if the new host body escapes during the summoning, Soluthor will simply start another plague in its new body!

Protection from Soluthor

There are some specialized cults/practices/schools/Orders with knowledge of antidotes for the poison, but they are few and far between. Typically they will be nowhere near a Soluthor outbreak, but will be called in to deal with an on-going Zombie plague.

RuneQuest

Soluthor

Chaos Demon

Zombie Characteristics

STR +12

CON As Host

DEX 35

SIZ As Host

INT 18

POW 25

CHA —

STR: This strength is added to all bodies inhabited by Soluthor

DEX: This DEX is reduced by 1 for each 5 bodies currently inhabited by Soluthor.</br>

INT: Reduce INT by 1 for every 5 bodies inhabited by Soluthor.</br>

POW: Reduce POW by 1 for every 5 bodies.

Use the Hit Locations of the appropriate body type for Soluthor's current zombies.

Weapons

Type	Weapon skill	Damage
Grapple	50%+	1d3+
Bite	65%+	1d2+

Zombies may use weapons until INT is reduced to 6.

Obviously, being able to grapple depends on the body type of Soluthor's host body.

The Weapon Skill listed is a minimum. If penalties from reduced stats would reduce these ratings, they remain as shown.

Humakt protects his worshippers from raising as undead, but does nothing against the poison in the first place. But at least a bitten Humakti will only die, not rise up and attack his compatriots.

Notes

Soluthor is an attempt to combine two typical “movie” zombies - the “ragers” of **28 Days Later** or the **Resident Evil** films, and the classic slow zombies of **Night of the Living Dead**. It also follows the rule of **Conservation of Ninjitsu** (<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ConservationOfNinjitsu>. Warning! - this site is safe for work, but highly addictive).

A typical scenario involving Soluthor would be for the Adventuring Party to encounter a “Town of the Dead”, filled with shambling zombies who have killed everyone who didn’t have the sense to run away. At first killing zombies is easy, since they don’t have the sense not to walk into traps, and are slow enough for head shots to work. But as the number of zombies diminishes, they become more and more crafty. At first they seem to “learn” not to shamble down the main street *en masse*. The players won’t be expecting them to actually be getting smarter! The final showdown between a few Ragers and the Heroes may mean more zombies. And Ragers are smart enough to head off cross-country to find yet another Village...

The other typical scenario involves the Heroes being in the town when Soluthor is summoned. The newly-dead victim returns to town, seeming only to be a bit sick, until it goes on a rampage, biting everyone it comes in contact with, like a rabid dog. Remember that the typical Zombie movie features people (often the spouse or parents of the victim) who “just don’t believe that he could

act like that”, which is the cue for “him” to attack - usually through the wall or window with incredible force.

Bringing in an army to combat Soluthor is a **bad** idea...



THE GREAT TEMPLE OF RUFDAYEN

Greg Stafford

Note: This is the draft of a part of my unfinished Lunar Novel. Its protagonist is Greya, a survivor of Sheng Seleris' reign of terror who became famous in the Fifth Wane. One of her particular powers was her ability to listen to rocks, and to speak to them with magical songs which changed their shapes to whatever she desired.

The Great Temple of Rufdayen, Raibanth

I was used to buildings now. I'd seen them enough now. I now expected every building to be roofed; tall public buildings did not make me stare in wonder; and the tall towers that the stargazers used did not make me fear for the clouds any more.

But I had never been to a Lunar Temple before. Holy places, shrines, revival tents, sacred sites, but never to one of the places made to house the place of Her Holiness.

We, who had been chosen to rebuild the cities, were going to visit it to see the best example of what we wished to build again. The group of us, the whole study, went with a guide among the twisting streets of Raibanth. We stopped at the gate, beyond which lay the Temple Court. The six arched door ways were each crowned with a face. Between each two doors was a small statue.

Janaren, our assigned guide, had a somewhat impish streak to him, and his delivery to us was occasionally teasing, or delivered with unconvincing zeal. For instance, he insisted on using the Dara Happan "Long Count" Calendar, telling us that She came to Raibanth in 112,235, only adding if we asked that it was 0/17 by Moon Count, when in fact it was really 0/15. When someone, usually that dullard Sharmara, corrected him he would smile and nod. Nonetheless, his information was generally accepted by everyone. It was a good place to begin, even if some of his facts turned out to be wrong.

We began our tour at Yelmgatha's Square. Yelmgatha was a great and loyal friend of Rufdayen, an avatar of the sun just as she was an incarnation of the moon. He was Lord of Truth and Light, and bore the Power of Yelm and became Emperor of Dara Happa. He remained heirless, "for no mortal woman or nymph could bear the fire of his seed in her womb," said Janaren. "The Empire was his bride. When he transcended, he gave the ancient empire to the rule of Takenegi, Our Blessed Father, who has ruled it like a god ever since."

The inscribed stone wall that stood around the plaza was already scrubbed clear of Kazkurtum grime, but it was still chipped from the iron hooves of the demon horses. New marble panels were in place to replace the ones that the demons had destroyed when

they camped here, but they were blanks. The square had an odd look of ancient and new. The new marbles were not yet shaped and each shined bright in the daytime sun. All about, even among the new slabs, were old, broken ones panels that showed the Sun God and his heroes in scenes of epic battle, divine splendor, or godly protection.

Two circles of statues stood around the plaza. The gods had come anew to Raibanth after Our Father killed Sheng Seleris and drove away the demons. They gave orders for their best idols to be brought here, as of old. These had been brought in from afar and from many holy places to stand mute witness to the holy affairs of the Imperium. They were a mismatched set. The originals had been pulverized by Sheng Seleris, the demon emperor.

Only the ancient Pillar of Raibanth seemed unhurt by Kazkurtum, and that was only because it had been so crude to begin with - hardly more than a rock. I had seen others like that near our hiding places, but the demons often leapt atop them to look for us, so we avoided them. I studied this one up close. Forty two or forty six feet high, depending on where you measured; shaped like a cylinder but irregular, and ten yards diameter, or so.

Janaren saw me walking around it. He said, "That is Raiba, the Old Father who sheltered Jenarong. This is the god that walked out those gates and surrendered to the Red Moon Goddess."

Janaren did not call Her Rufdayen, as we all did. He instead used the words which said Red Moon Goddess. I thought he was mocking when he rolled his eyes upward towards her every time that he said that label.

"Well, maybe not walked, but maybe it turned over and rolled," he added. A couple of people chuckled.

The hard grey stone was not like most stones of the city, which were all tan like the local earth above the flood plain. The city stone hummed peace to me. This one, though - when I touched it my fingers were seared with blue gathered from my throat.

"And where is this from?" I asked loudly.

"Lord Raiba was born here, on this very spot. I know three stories about his mother, and one about when the Sun God's seed spilled." He glanced about the crowd. "Perhaps you'd like to hear one, for a copper?" He was always asking that, and often got it.

We went east down the huge Imperial Way, towards the Square of the Sun. From any place on that wide road we could see the Selshena. The huge pyramid was mounted by a tower. Atop that, on holy days (I am told), the column of light called Antirius appeared once again to bath Our Father, and begin anew the cycles of appearing every seven years. But that site, resurrected by the gods themselves, was not our destination. We turned left, to the Red Quarters.

"When the Red Moon Goddess came into Raibanth in *235 she came as a companion to the Yelmgatha, the Man God Hero. Later he was the Great and Glorious Emperor. She and her entourage stayed in a vacant palace set aside for the most honored guests. It stood from approximately the edge of that cindered wall over there," and he pointed so we all swiveled our heads, "to the far side of the pit, over there. Nothing whatsoever remains of her sacred resting place in our world. The ruins will be preserved to show the horror of King Kazkurtum to future generations and encourage them to obey."

"Nonetheless, much of this surrounding region was spared the demon's wrath. After she flew up and became the Red Moon Goddess in the Sky, all these buildings and that this whole area of the city turned red in her honor, as you can see. Now the ground and the walls and the roofs are all red for Her."

I stopped to listen to the walls, hoping to hear their song of creation. I had seen even from a distance that these buildings were not like the brown Old City mud buildings, neither in shape nor feel. Now, grazing them as we walked, they made a noise inside my fingertips. First the music showed me Our Father, the Emperor, driving the Cart God to carry these buildings to this place. Then, in a bass sound with a hook, the brisk brick told me it had come from westward from where the first bricks were made, carried by wagons to make the first buildings built here by the Red Emperor. I rejoined the rest of the party, in the courtyard of the temple.

We entered into the Court of the Moon. Six gates entered it. I looked upward, noting that we were passing under the white northern gate. A child's face, carved softly from the pure marble, smiled and watched over our backs. I wished we had gone under one of the red gates, to either side.

Before us, across the paved court, was the Great Temple. From here we saw Her temple first. It stood alone, lofty and magnificent. Lesser temples surrounded the circular court, ignored.

The great temple was not brick, but red marble. Several reds, in fact, different for floor, ceiling, and pillars. And not all reds either, I realized as I gazed, for white and some black and even grey appeared in places. Nicely proportioned, not garish or startling. The perfect example of what we sought to restore. The fluted columns, Benhayac capitals,

and stepped stylobates showed itself to me. It was beautiful enough to gaze at across the square. Just like I had been told: entablature exactly two and a half times the height of the columns, forty nine rows of terra cotta roof tiles, and the six living statues perched atop the acroterions. The pediment showed the Seven Mothers at the nativity of Our goddess.

"This great temple was raised in seven days," said Janaren. "I was here then, and I saw it happen. The Moon Emperor came, and with his imperial and lunar powers, raised this edifice from fragments and dust to be this precise structure which you see here."

"You saw it?" asked one man.

"Yes, Sir," he said, "through a hole in the fence. I peeked first, and was entranced to watch it all at the end. It was fast, taking seven days. Grand."

I paced across the courtyard, ignoring the paving underfoot which was laid with hexagramic fired tiles. Only She overhead caught my glance once, and I felt Her looking upon me here, inside Her. I stopped, straightened my robe about my knees, and went on more slowly. Others from the group walked alongside, or followed.

The stairs were twice their height in width, forty-nine in all, to the portico. I had to look up at the Guardian overhead, looming upon its acroterion to stare at us far below. It was the Huntress there, bow in hand, watching us. If we were false, her arrows would slay us. I feared nothing from that.

Seven long steps here, and seven steps past each of the two rows of pillared columns. I saw many other people there, servants and lords, acolytes and armed guards, among the colonnades. Business held within whispered of Her presence. Not my business.

I paused upon the threshold.

"He rebuilt it the same way that She had done," said Jareden. "Some say that it was easier for him because all the materials were already here, but in fact they weren't all here. And is it easier to fix something or make something anew? Our lives of suffering are a fix, our new creations are a joy without pain. The Red Emperor came here and fixed this, with his own suffering, for the joy of us who had never experienced this before."

"When She first came here, at the side of the Hero Lord Yelmgatha, this whole quarter was in ruins. It was burnt down in one or another of the disturbances which the Raibanth citizens inflicted upon their overlords. Those lords were the ruthless Karmangs, and they were maybe as evil as the demons which most lately leveled this neighborhood."

"As She did when She came, I saw the Red Emperor and his assistants erect a great tent over this entire site. The poles of it were each elaborate and decorated with carvings or paintings, each of them ringed with precious metals. They were fifteen feet high, eight of them around the perimeter, and with one great central pole which was three times that. It stuck way up above everything. It was brought there upon the shoulders of thirteen painted men, and I will assure you they did not come here through the city gates. They came out of an ornate crate, a gold-bound black box carried by two red men with black goat horns. The thirteen men, with little strings used like ropes, raised the central pole. They went back into their box. The two carriers, guarded by a hundred soldiers, departed the next day through the eastern gate.

"The Goddess herself, the first time, sat and slept on a small rug at the base of this pole.

That little rug is, today, in the chapel of the Duke of Kitor. The Red Emperor, this time when I watched, had his own rug, and gave it away at the end of the rites.

"The next entire day they spent with some little men digging. I still say they were dwarfs, but I am told to tell you they were earth men, and they came from Jeski Varadoki. They had shovels instead of hands, and pick axes instead of feet. They scooped out a horizontal cave from the ruined basement of a palace which was long burnt to nothing. It was wide enough for five wagons side by side, and just as high. I could not see how deep it was, but it went out of my sight into darkness. At the end of the day they drew a curtain across it.

"The third day, when the Goddess did it, a low rumbling hum came from the ground. Oria's priestesses can do that too, and so we know it is the voice of Grandmother Earth. From this grew the perfect cubical block of the temple foundation. Only part sat above ground, and around that they laid the marble steps to reach its top, which is the temple floor.

"When the Red Emperor did this temple, he made the same sound, and it tickled my feet until I could not bear to stand still, and hopped around for a while, laughing. When I looked back I saw the floor forming, rising from the dirt and ashes in small patches, then growing together into a single slab. The steps grew then, too.

"On the fourth day, I saw nothing. I ate then. Someone had pity on me and brought me food. I had barely slept and eaten nothing since becoming transfixed at that peep hole. All day, though, nothing changed.

"The fifth day was the Pillar Day. Out of the cold stone base they rose from nothing.

"On the sixth day I saw seven people in black and white or red clothing come to the pit. They came from someplace inside the city, not from that magic pit in there. At noon each was joined by seven more, and they stood side by side where the walls of the temple are now. They stood there, hands joined, and when the sun rose the next day I saw the walls, and no people.

"On Her seventh day She sat upon Her throne, and took upon herself the shape of a statue, larger than life, and radiating Her holy power through the whole of this Temple.

"When the Emperor made this one, he summoned Firmaxus, the great servant of the God of Art. I know his name because it was in my mind as I watched. Firmaxus scooped up bits of ash and dust, and with it he made a crude shape. Then he sang over it, with his handsome voice, and from that shape came the Goddess once again, as of old."

I went to see Her.

Atop a man-tall pillar sat She. The statue was simple beauty: Clean lines, naturally draped clothing, and a relaxed, natural pose as she sat upon her stool. This statue was from pure white marble by Uranafus, shaped by the artistic magic of Firmaxus or, as other insist, either chiseled and polished. Firmaxus was a living treasure, for he captured the true likeness of any person, and he reproduced it in whatever medium he chose. And here sat She, larger than life, cross-legged and modest. Her head was hairless. I saw that her gown, pure white like the marble, was of actual clothing. Perhaps the statue was dressed by attendants in different clothing, for different seasons.

A single rune decorated her: a bi-color round medallion, red on right and black on left, with a silver rune, the sacred Rufdayen Rune

(ie- R-shape). Her left hand, held upright with palm visible, signaled the gesture for kindness; her right pointed upward with the two outer fingers, while the two inner were folded and crossed by her thumb. This ancient gesture signaled health.

Her eyes were open, looking at me. Brown eyes, like humans have. When I stepped to the side those eyes followed me. I saw She smiled then. I felt, there, what an artist can do when she brings the life out of a stone.

