

HEROINES OF THE  
FIRST AGE

# Holdfast



# Holdfast

*Enter an epic fantasy tabletop RPG about reincarnated monsters, endangered gods, and mutually assured destruction on the last world in existence.*

**We are what remains of the Five Worlds.** Forty years ago our gods destroyed our homes, killing themselves in the process. We escaped to Holdfast, a tiny speck of a world, where we could lie low and rebuild. This was not to be.

**We have nowhere left to run. Holdfast is in peril.** Our savior, the Multigoddess, lies dormant or dead. Our nations are at each other's throats. Our new gods are small, weakened things, and we are at war over whether we ought to exterminate them.

**We are chained by our pasts.** Many of us died with the Five Worlds. Others were snatched from the void and jammed into new bodies. Some of us have forgotten who they used to be. Others remember every grudge they held.

**But we will not surrender.** We are not the same people we were forty years ago. Our heroines now cross the sky in domesticated Bulbships. They bind themselves to spirits, gods, and Megabeasts. They swear their services to new powers and new nations.

**Together, we have a chance to survive.** Arrayed against us are zealots and reality-saboteurs, gods and monsters, broken relics and the sins of our mothers. We will face them as sisters or we will die on each other's blades.

**Heroines of the First Age: Holdfast** is an expansion for Heroines of the First Age, with a fully-fleshed setting and 21 new Races, 7 Archetypes, 70 Moves, and 46 Factions, Antagonists, Power Pools, and Creature Portfolios.



HOLDFAST  
A Campaign Setting for Heroines of the First Age by Voidspiral  
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And Powered by the Apocalypse

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# DEDICATION

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*"What we call the beginning is often the end*

*And to make an end is to make a beginning.*

*The end is where we start from...*

*And any action*

*Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat... "*

*—T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"*

Dedicated to Joseph Lee Bush, who created a place for this setting to exist.

With additional thanks to the invaluable editing duo: Adam Kraus and Pete Carrier.

And with sincerest gratitude to Associate Producer Ian Hamilton, the Kickstarter backers, and everyone who requested a commission, offered feedback, or spread the world about Heroines.

You all rock.



# HOLDFAST

---

Holdfast is a campaign setting for **Heroines of the First Age**.

It is about a war over the fate of the gods, the domino-line collapse of civilizations, and what bright hope can be found amid the swirling ashes.

Players take the roles of newmade and reincarnated champions thrust into a struggle where every decision seems like the wrong one, fighting to preserve the things that matter most before the flames of conflict consume them.

Play Holdfast if you want to tell stories about a world on the brink of cataclysm and the heroines that can claw it back from the ledge—or send it hurtling over, punching each other all the way down.

## OKAY, BUT WHAT IS THIS ACTUALLY?

---

This book is a pre-generated setting for **Heroines of the First Age** that exists to give you the tools to quickly put together a story within a specific setting and with particular themes. Always remember that you can modify the setting as needed for your own story. The core HFARPG book covers many ways to expand the setting.

To play, you'll need paper, pencils, a handful of six-sided dice (called D6's or simply 'dice'), some friends, and a copy of **Heroines of the First Age**—which this book uses for its system and as the rough foundation for its setting.

## Holdfast

You do not need to have previously played any other tabletop roleplaying games, although most players will probably have played one or two. If you've never thought about a dungeon or given a moment's notice to a dragon, then experience with improv theater, writing, art, anime, or fantasy is a perfectly good fallback.

If you haven't played any TRPGs before, it *is* recommended that you read all the way through **Heroines of the First Age** first, since it explains a lot of basic concepts and rules elements that Holdfast doesn't linger on. If you're a tabletop veteran, and particularly if you've already played anything that's Powered by the Apocalypse, you may just need to skim the Moves, Archetypes, and rules in **Heroines of the First Age**—although the Power Pools and Established Races may be of interest too.

For more of a background on where the Holdfast setting is coming from, and for a primer on the events leading up to the Second Creation, this book has a prequel novel: **The War of the Prophecy**. You don't need to read it to play or understand Holdfast, but if you like the writing in this book, you might consider checking it out.

Finally, if you'd like to try out some totally different systems, you are invited to stop by [voidspiral.com](http://voidspiral.com) where, at the time of printing, three other universes await.

**Inspirational Media For This Game:** Heroines of the First Age.

**Also:** Princess Mononoke, Monstress, Yggdra Union, Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, The Autumnlords, The Tenth Line, Centaur's Worries, Banner Saga, Fire Emblem.

**SIDENOTE:** If triggers are a thing that you or your gaming group need to navigate, flip over to Possible Issues for a quick rundown on the elements in Holdfast that could be a concern.

If you're not *absolutely certain* about whether you need to do this, flip over to Possible Issues anyway.

Holdfast is meant to be emotionally engaging and rich with conflict, but it's *not* meant to be a bad time for anyone at the table. This mantra will be repeated several times throughout the course of the book, but if there's anything in this book that feels like a bad fit for your story, change it. Nothing in here is so critical that it can't be modded, revised, redacted, or ignored.

## CHANGES FROM HEROINES OF THE FIRST AGE

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A few changes need to happen when translating Heroines of the First Age to Holdfast. Some parts of HFA translate well, while other parts need extension, revision, or explanation.

Holdfast is a pre-generated campaign setting, which allows it to bring a lot of pre-rendered culture, setting elements, flavor, and lore to a game that otherwise relies on making these details up as you go. Whereas the goal in Heroines of the First Age is to provide a lot of broad concepts and help you build the world around them, Holdfast hands you a pre-built world and asks you how you're going to destroy it.

Key differences between Holdfast and HFA are as follows:

- There are New Archetypes, Moves, Tags, Tragic Flaws, Physical Traits, and Races that can be used alongside those from HFA.
- Factions have been added, defining the major power blocs in the setting.
- Key Locations have been added, defining major places in the setting.
- All Power Pools and Creature Portfolios have been replaced.
- Threats have also been added to Locations, Factions, Pools, and Portfolios, providing fodder for soft GM Moves and plot hooks.
- Adversaries, which have expanded statblocks, have been added to further flesh out Factions, Pools, and Portfolios.



## CUSTOMIZATION

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This setting provides a specific world and setting for you to play in, but remember that the story is yours to do with as you please. If your group wants to focus on specific parts, throw out sections of lore, or rebuild the setting from scratch, keeping only the themes, selections, or rules, by all means: go for it.



# GENESIS (THIS SHATTERED WORLD)

---

Our world is not the first.

Our mothers say that Holdfast is made up of the wishes of dead gods and the mistakes of a previous universe.

Perhaps that is why our world is also heading towards calamity.

## A NOT-SO-DISTANT PAST

---

*In the beginning there was darkness, and so Buel made the light.*

*It was her first mistake. We were better off in the dark.*

*—Priestess of the Small Gods, deep in her cups*

A long time ago, there were the Five Worlds. They were places of conflict and triumph, prosperity and grandeur. They were also ruled by five powerful gods, each of which desired to supplant the others, becoming the worlds' absolute ruler.

For a time, the gods were kept in check by the Lightwings, mortals of unsurpassed magical power. However, as powerful as the Lightwings were, they could not breed. Their numbers dwindled until they were barely a memory, and then the gods roused from their prisons and made a bet.



Whichever god chose the strongest champion, they decided, could scrap everything, gods and Worlds included, and make a new reality in its own image.

In the ensuing war, called the War of the Prophecy, the mortal champions became aware of this scheme. They banded together and, with the help of an ageless advisor and the corpse of a half-dead god, claimed the right to make the new reality for themselves.

Those brave mortals are now remembered as the Multigoddess.

The making of the world is called the Second Creation.

Every Facet of the Multigoddess had a say in creating Holdfast, but when the Second Creation was over, she chose inexplicably to abdicate her role, incarnating as the Great Mountain—whose carved faces watch over all the world.

In the almost forty years since then, her presence has been sorely missed.

## THE FIVE WORLDS

---

*Five worlds were born in fire.*

*In fire, five worlds ended.*

*One world was born again in fire...*

*—Skipping rhyme, southwestern Otherlands*

Before the apocalypse, there were Five Worlds. Ethantar, a place of low valleys and fertile soil, was home to the mammalian Monsterkin. Urach, a land of high mountains, faith, and scarcity, was home to the reptilian and mechanical Monsterkin. Sasi, an underground network of caverns and predatory insects, was home to the sightless and strange Monsterkin. Axolozug, an inverted world that hung over an infinite drop, was home to winged and

## Genesis (This Shattered World)

demonic Monsterkin. Lastly, there was the Wastes, a baking desert that was home to every manner of Monsterkin.

When the Five Worlds came apart, the Multigoddess saw to it that women from each world were reborn on Holdfast.

These women are referred to as the First Generation.

## THE FOUR GODS

---

*Wreched tyrants all...*

*—Attributed to the Facet Valmetica*

The Five Gods are not well-remembered. Nevertheless, traces of their influence linger all over Holdfast.

The Ink was the Lord of Axolozug where it controlled language and writing. The Restless Depths dwelled in Sasi, governing its insects. The Everblood slept in Urach, transforming those that strayed beyond the mountain range, and the Nexus waited in Ethantar, biding its time in a prison-temple.

Ostensibly there was a fifth god, one that presided over the Wastes, but its name seems to have been lost in the cataclysm.

## THE NAMES OF THE GODDESS

---

*Do not believe the lies! There was only one goddess, and her name was Athena!*

*—Barennia, Archivist Errant, while being dragged away from an audience of her peers*

Scholars, nobles, and commoners alike argue over just how many women made up the Multigoddess. Because the Multigoddess is

now either dormant, or dead, or simply *gone*, there is no easy way to confirm anyone's guesses, and the topic has caused brawls in wine tents and tea houses from one end to the other of the Northern Continent.

Most people can agree that Buel, the noble Dragonturtle, was the Facet that made the world. It is also widely believed that she made the scaleless, tailless, wingless, and thoroughly *un-monstrous* Bare, causing many to see her as a capricious goddess—one who crippled the entire reincarnated population of Urach on a whim.

Most people also agree that the imperious Lightwings, Valmetica, was an integral part of the Multigoddess. Valmetica is known for breaking the power of the gods and for founding the Godhunters, and many Godhunters revere her as the *only* true Facet of the Multigoddess.

After Buel and Valmetica, another popular Facet is Kha. She is typically only considered a part of the Multigoddess by the people of the ocean. Land-dwellers see her instead as a Megabeast or a nautical ghost story. Supposedly, when she stirs in her slumber on the deep ocean floor, it causes earthquakes that are felt hundreds of miles away.

The four tricksters, Haula the Harpy, Mindry the Pangola, Captain Tressa, and the Demoness Ereba are rarely all considered to be Facets by the same person. In stories about the Multigoddess, they generally perform the role of comic relief, making wisecracks in between speeches by the other Facets—or introducing an element of physical comedy if the story is part of a stage performance. A few scholars acknowledge a potential fifth Trickster, Kismet the Mimic, although belief in her has not been widely adopted outside of the northeastern Otherlands.

Dorgana the True is believed in only by the tribes of the Bare. Some of their stories position her as a heroine who fought against Buel, ultimately sacrificing herself to prevent the people of Urach from being wiped out entirely by the insane Multigoddess. Others cast



## Genesis (This Shattered World)

her as a monster, a woman so wretched that the Multigoddess cursed every Urachian for her crimes.

Sometimes, someone will claim that there were dozens of other heroines who made up the Multigoddess, their names lost during the death of the Five Worlds. While possible, the idea lacks a certain narrative flair and is not very popular among storytellers.

Finally, fringe theories about the Multigoddess' beliefs and composition exist—although they are mostly bandied about by Archivists, who have taken a particular interest in firsthand stories of the Second Creation. Every so often someone insists that one of the Multigoddess' Facets was an owl, but these people are rarely taken seriously.

## MAGIC AND DIVINE POWER

---

*A Halo churns into being over the Godhunter's head, lightning blistering around the edges. "Drop the knife," she says forcefully.*

*Ignoring her, I cut my arm and begin to chant.*

*—Excerpt from "Song of the Godlands," seditious fiction*

The world of Holdfast is a single droplet of life and permanency suspended in a cosmic sea of colorless, reality-erasing fire. That sea is called the Firmament, and its chaotic energies are processed by the gods into the reality that makes up Holdfast. Without the gods, Holdfast would dissolve like a wadded up paper ball chucked into the fireplace. With the gods, Holdfast's outer layer is constantly being eaten away but is never destroyed.

Traces of that god-converted Firmament-energy, called aether, linger in every molecule of the world. A mage gathers this energy around her into an Aura, a loose haze of colored light that she can then shape spells from. A more powerful mortal is able to force her

## Heredity, Reproduction, and Affection

Aura into a single whirling disk of lightning that perches over her head. This is called a Halo.

Almost every living thing on Holdfast, and more than a few non-living things, have faint Auras that manifest from time to time. These usually show during periods of high emotion, stress, or physical exertion, although they can also be willed into being. Mages sometimes point to this phenomenon when they argue that anyone can become a caster—although they're just as likely to use it as proof that only *special* women are born with strong Auras, and therefore mages are a natural societal elite.

Ultimately, all magic and life on Holdfast stems from the Firmament, but only a scant few know about the roiling sea of fire outside of the world—or even that the existence of magic relies on the gods. Most see magic as something that is natural and innate to the caster; a personal will that can be exerted on the outside world.

By contrast, when a Priestess draws on a god's power to assist her in a task, she is not using her own Aura. The god is using its divine energy—often in return for a sacrifice or a bargain—and the Priestess is simply directing where it goes. Mages are adamant that this is *not* magic, and some even go as far as to say that it's a con.

## HEREDITY, REPRODUCTION, AND AFFECTION

---

*These are my daughters, Luquus and Atha.*

*—Proud Lamia mother of a Quetzalcoatl and a Diving Bird Harpy*

Within small communities of a single species, heredity is simple. Two Medusae give birth to a Medusa. Two Centaurs give birth to a Centaur. However, many of Holdfast's races are cross-fertile and this leads to an absolute confusion of competing theories on how heredity actually works.

## Genesis (This Shattered World)

As best as the Archivists have been able to determine, it works like this. A pair of parents of the same species will produce a child of the same species one hundred percent of the time. A pair of parents of different species, however, will either be incompatible; will produce children belonging to either parent's species; or will generate a third divergent-and-sometimes-completely-unheard-of race. Many children of this third type are able to reproduce normally, but some are born sterile.

Complicating things further, there are species like the Lightwings that cannot reproduce at all. At the same time, there are the Bare, who can have children with anyone—although these children are inevitably Bare.

Romance, obviously, isn't limited to pairings that would be fertile—although fertility can be a concern for the heads of dynasties, Mercantile Consortiums, and hereditary positions among the Priestesses of the Small Gods. Among sailors, soldiers, wanderers, and wayfarers, affection is shared whenever time and circumstances permit, with no thought usually given to whether that pairing is viable.

Although the exact mechanism behind conception is not fully understood, a small group of very dedicated Archivists has theorized that it involves a temporary, voluntary joining of Auras. This seems to in turn suggest that babies begin their lives as aether, which has worrying implications for mages.

After all, if babies are aether, does that mean aether is some kind of arcane child-energy? And if *that's* true, then what happens when a combat caster throws a fireball?

Research mages don't get a lot of sleep most nights.



## TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFACTS

---

*Found this wagon sunk in a bog by the plowfields. Can't figure the material that was used to make it, but it was all shiny and silver. Hooked my Swampfoot right up to it, thinkin' to take it for a turn across the soil, and durned if the wagon didn't take off with her. Lit off right over the treeline, it did, her webhooves kicking all the while. Last I heard she was brayin' somethin' fierce, her throat-pouch all bulgin' and green, and then she was gone.*

*—Agatha, Gigasborn farmer, in conversation with the town ostler*

Technology in Holdfast is decidedly anachronistic. While the remote regions of the world hover around a Bronze Age tech level, major cities have sometimes made it all the way to the late Medieval. To further complicate things, during the Second Creation the Multigoddess seeded Holdfast with artifacts and filled at least one major city with instructions on how to use them. When the instructions can be matched to the right artifact, the results are often society-transforming. A plow that plows by itself, all day and every day, automates local agriculture. A leather pouch that is always full of bread alleviates resource scarcity.

On the other hand, when these artifacts malfunction or are misused, the results can be catastrophic.

Depending on where a character is from, they may be impressed or indifferent to the domestication of herdbeasts, the forging of metal weapons, the milling of grain, the idea of sewers and city-planning, mechanical timekeeping, schools of magic and medicine, written language, or the building of monuments.

Similarly, they may regard artifacts with superstitious fear or familiar contempt.

## MEMORY AND FLESH

---

*I used to be seven feet tall, with hair that matched my moods. It would snap at bugs when I was feeling playful and hiss when I was startled and it would bask in the sun on hot days when there was nothing in Urach to worry about.*

*The thing on my scalp now is lank and dead. I stand barely as tall as a child. I had thought that the three weeks during the end of the Five Worlds would be the worst of my life, but nothing could have prepared me for this bitter epilogue.*

*—Lilalla, formerly a Medusa, now a chieftain of the Bare*

When the Five Worlds ended, nearly all of its people were lost in the cataclysm. In the time that followed, called the Second Creation, the Multigoddess was able to restore many of them, but not everyone came back in familiar bodies—or with their original memories intact.

These women are called **Direct Reincarnations**.

To make up for the sudden drop in population, the Multigoddess was also forced to create new women to ensure that Holdfast had a stable number of Monsterkin. These women had never existed before and were instead pre-loaded with memories. These memories let them do things like feed themselves, communicate, and survive on their own, but they also occasionally came with snapshots of a childhood that couldn't possibly be real—even if they couldn't prove they had never experienced it.

These women are called the **Newmade**.

Anyone who was present for the Second Creation, Direct Reincarnations and Newmade alike, is part of what is called the **First Generation**.

Direct Reincarnations, totaling up both their lifespans on the Five Worlds and their time on Holdfast, can be as young as their mid-forties or as old as five hundred and forty, depending on their race's lifespans. Some have adapted to their new life easily, but many others (particularly those who changed bodies but retained their old memories) have had a much harder time. Due to their age—and also because many of them are walking troves of memories of the old worlds—Direct Reincarnations are commonly seen as knowledgeable, but also off-putting and difficult to predict. In the plays and stories of The Second and Third Generation, they are cast as wisewomen and mystics. In the stories and plays of The First Generation, they are cast the same as anyone else.

Opposite the Direct Reincarnations, the Newmade don't have the trauma of having lived through the apocalypse or the disquieting feeling of reawakening in the wrong body to deal with, but instead many are haunted by the nagging question of whether they're actually people. After all, people have childhoods. People have mothers. People come from people, not the whims of a compound goddess.

Newmade's memories, when they are not simply a sea of vague impressions and half-recalled impulses, are somewhat generic. Many of them share exact details, and this has led scholars to suspect that the memories are pulled from a pool of no more than forty childhoods. Most of their coherent memories prioritize basic survival skills, language acquisition, and feelings of warmth and belonging. Among Newmade, there are a wide range of competing beliefs about these memories, with some calling them "the lie", others defiantly believing that they really happened and represent a life before the Second Creation, and more than a few women privately suspecting that their memories come from the Multigoddess.

Even though the common assumption is that Direct Reincarnations remember the Five Worlds, not all of them do. Many have no memories at all. They are able to speak and reason and know basic facts about the natural world, but they have no history predating



## Genesis (This Shattered World)

the Second Creation. Other Direct Reincarnations call them **the Lost**.

Separate from the Direct Reincarnations and Newmade of The First Generation, there is the **Second Generation**, which consists of women who were born on Holdfast. The women of The Second Generation are slightly better adjusted than their mothers, but have had to deal with growing up during the settlement of Holdfast and the escalating Godwar. As old as forty or as young as this moment, members of The Second Generation have lived their lives surrounded by the problems of the First Generation. As a result, many are natural caretakers, reaching out to their elders and working to keep them safe and sane. Others ignore the concerns of their elders and focus strictly on the problems of the moment. Still others take the patchwork culture of their parents and try to synthesize it into songs, stories, and traditions that are uniquely theirs. The First Generation sees The Second Generation as ingrates and innocents, champions and diletants, women with a broken history and daughters with an alien culture. Most commonly, though, they see them as their children.

After the Second Generation comes the Third—the granddaughters of Holdfast's settlers. Members of the **Third Generation**, who are in their mid-twenties at the oldest, are almost fully defined by their allegiances to their peoples or to their peoples' roles in the Godwar. Unable to escape the conflict, most of The Third Generation has picked a side or passionately thrown themselves into the service of a cause. More than their mothers and grandmothers, members of The Third Generation are inclined to serve as soldiers, mercenaries, voyagers, and raiders. This has jaded some, but it has not dampened the idealism of others. Members of The Second Generation, who tend to be somewhat more cynical, often see The Third Generation as fools who don't give enough thought to their own survival.

No matter the generation, there are women who do not fit neatly into the stereotypes of their age bracket. Perfectly put-together members of The First Generation, fanciful members of The Second Generation, and cautious, reserved members of the Third

Generation happen as often ones that play into the public's expectations of them. To further complicate things, sometimes memories of the Five Worlds will skip generations, resulting in two and three-year-olds with full eighty-year histories of shepherding herdbeast lizards over the mountains of Urach. This happens most often to daughters of the Lost, although even among them it is not especially common.

With a few exceptions, people of every incarnation demographic can be found anywhere on Holdfast. Most of The First Generation in the Cities At Sea are Lost, with a few regular Direct Reincarnations thrown in. None of the Bare inhabit their original bodies, but nearly all of their First Generation are Direct Reincarnations. Lightwings, who cannot reproduce, are all First Generation and—with no known exceptions—are also Direct Reincarnations.

## PHYSICAL GODS

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*The corpse is there. Just over that hill. From the sky it fell,  
burning all the while.*

*Shame. She never did us any harm, but the Lightwings didn't  
stop to ask about that.*

*—Arletta Bryne, farmer, on the death of her god*

You can measure a world's health by the health of its gods.  
Holdfast's gods are not well.

Designed by the Multigoddess during the Second Creation, Holdfast's gods were made weak but numerous in the hopes that this would prevent them from causing a second apocalypse. Unfortunately, they were weakened so much that they could be tracked down and destroyed by legions of heavily armed mortals, and now the population of gods on Holdfast is in freefall.

## Genesis (This Shattered World)

An individual god, often called a Small God to differentiate them from the powerful gods that caused the end of the Five Worlds, generally looks like an animal made of starlight. It may be small enough to sit on a person's shoulder, or it might be large enough that an entire crew of priestesses can ride on its back. Each god is intelligent and self-aware but usually a bit self-centered. They are not communal creatures, but they have learned to tolerate each other when they need to be.

Gods feed off the energy of the Firmament, unconsciously metabolizing it into the ball of reality that makes up Holdfast. As a result, every time a god dies, the structural integrity of Holdfast weakens.

Few people know about or believe this, and the gods or Holdfast are either hated or loved, depending on a person's views.

They are loved because they tend to form symbiotic relationships with mortal communities. Although they feed on Firmament energy, they can also be strengthened with prayer and sacrifice, and so they tend to cultivate groups of worshippers, defending them from famine, warfare, and unequal trade—sometimes even going so far as to imbue a little bit of their divine power into particularly loyal champions.

The gods are hated, however, because they have the ability to *compel* belief, *causing* communities to worship them. This ability is more like whispering in the back of someone's head than it is forcible mind-control, but it terrifies mortals that were already given reason to distrust the gods by the power-struggle that ended the Five Worlds.

Someone who is aware of the god's influence, is already predisposed not to worship it, or who is undergoing great physical or mental strain is not likely to be heavily affected, but this has not prevented the gods from being seen as insidious manipulators in many parts of the world.



When asked point-blank about divine compulsion, priestesses tend to say that *their* god doesn't use this power. Only other gods do.

They are probably misinformed.

## TANGIBLE SPIRITS

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*There's a construction wisp that lives out in the fields. Builds itself little towers of rock when it thinks people might be watching. I reckon our work on the new bridge created it, and it seems desperate to stay, but we're not building anything else before winter. Best just to let it fade.*

—Marikh, Harpy tanner

Formed by the expectations of mortals, spirits are expressions of the way the natural world is perceived. A tribe that sees owls as kind will cause gentle owl spirits to slowly coalesce in their territory. A tribe that sees owls as calculating killers will have very different spirits inhabiting their lands. The same is true for spirits of fire, earth, warfare, loneliness, or any other concept that people have a word for.

Pact Mistresses, shamans, courtiers, and chieftains all frequently form agreements with the spirits in their lands. Spirits are, after all, quite useful. They are difficult to kill in combat, they make daunting warriors, and they need neither sleep nor sustenance, making them excellent sentries. In return for their service, sacrifices are made to them. As with the gods, these sacrifices give the spirits power. Unlike the gods, the spirits can only bargain for sacrifices—they cannot compel them.

Over time, forming bonds with mortal communities gives spirits nuanced personalities, deeper reserves of power, and visible definition. Not all spirits seek this, and many are found as parasentient ripples of energy around communities that do not choose to engage them. Those that do form bonds with towns and

## Genesis (This Shattered World)

tribes are either ardent patriots, believing in their ties to their community like it's a religion, or reluctant servants that cultivate opportunities to turn their bond against its holders.

Recently, some spirits have discovered that they can cut out the middleman and bond *each other*. Most of the world is too preoccupied with the Godwar to spend a lot of thought on the implications of this, but towns have been burned, their spirits stolen, and these autonomous spirits are rumored to be behind it.

## STORY FOCUS

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The world of Holdfast is diverse and complicated. It is also in the process of breaking, and that is what stories set on Holdfast are typically about. When the curtain rises, decide as a group what the focus (or foci) of the campaign should be. Each focus highlights a particular problem on Holdfast and helps set the tone and scope for your story. You can always change your focus later, but for now it will help the GM stay organized and narrow the field down around the ideas you're most interested in.

If you don't like any of the focuses on the list, then skip it for now and keep reading. You might find an idea later in the book that you'd like to explore in more detail, or you might decide to introduce entirely new content to the setting.

- **The Coming Apocalypse:** Politically and metaphysically, Holdfast is unstable. With the gods dying in droves, the world weakens, and new threats press in from the outside. Unless something changes, the end is just a matter of time.
- **Consequences of the Absent Creators:** When the Multigoddess constructed Holdfast, she set certain chains of events in motion. When she abandoned it, there was no one left to stop them. The Godwar, the artifacts, the return of the Power Pools; a reasonable woman would say they are all her fault.
- **Exploration of an Unfamiliar World:** Even with three generations of Monsterkin to explore it, there is much of

Holdfast that is still not understood. The sky, the ocean, the Southern Continent, the northern mountains, and all the wild places in between are largely unmapped. Who knows what mysteries wait within them?

- **Faith Versus Dogma:** Even among members of the same faction, there are considerable differences of opinion over what the women in that faction should be working to accomplish. The messages left by the Multigoddess give some clues as to what she might have wanted from the women of Holdfast, but the specifics of what she meant are troublingly open to interpretation.
- **A New Challenger Appears:** Conflict is the heartbeat of Holdfast. In a world only forty years old, the wounds of every war in its history are still fresh. As factions gain and lose territory, or are pushed into new frontiers by their rivals, any of them can end up at odds.
- **Memory and Identity Are Skin-Deep:** Not everyone on Holdfast existed before the creation of the world. Newmade have no past, and scholars worry that they and their daughters might therefore not have souls. On the other hand, sometimes girls are born with multiple sets of memories, and the implications are just as worrying.
- **History Returns To Haunt Us:** The powers that brought about the end of the Five Worlds were not all destroyed. Some were merely changed and have been waiting for just this moment to return to center stage.

## THREATS

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Stories set in Holdfast are defined by the kind of conflict that they address. For example, one story might be about Samarna the Defiant leading the Priestesses into war with the Archivists. Another story might be about disease-maddened Megabeasts rampaging through the south. Each of these threats creates a different need for Heroines.



## Genesis (This Shattered World)

A story will typically focus on only a few threats at a time, with one occupying center stage as the story's Immediate Threat and the others lingering in the shadows as Background Issues.

All threats are usually encountered in small, specific ways rather than grappled with in their entirety. A normal session may involve fighting a single Megabeast, but rarely will it involve fighting every Megabeast at once.

Groups should pick one threat as their Immediate Threat. This is the issue that the curtain rises on. That doesn't mean that the group is limited to only interacting with this threat, or that the story can't end up being about another threat entirely, but the Immediate Threat is where the story begins.

Further detail for each threat is provided below.

## MORTAL AGENCIES

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*There are as many sides to a conflict as there are people in it.*

*—Sasta, Daughter of the Ocean*

The following are the largest groups of people on Holdfast. None of these Factions are entirely unified, and there is room inside each one for sovereign nations, splinter sects, separatists, heretics, and outsiders.

- **The Priestesses of the Small Gods:** Originally a series of competing god-cults, the Priestesses were welded into a coalition by attacks from the Godhunters. Their base of power is in the Godlands, but they have agents wherever the gods are found.
- **The Godhunters:** Charged by the Facet Valmetica with keeping the gods in check, the Godhunters are responsible for the wholesale slaughter of gods in the Mainland. Some Godhunters believe that they have gone too far, while others believe that they have not gone far enough.

- **The Archivists:** Researchers from the Otherlands, the Archivists control the City of Glass And Gold—the Multigoddesses’ greatest gift to her creation. Inside the City are the Archives, which contain all the knowledge of the Five Worlds as well as technological wonders designed by the goddess. Many Archivists claim to serve only knowledge and the betterment of mortal understanding, but more than a few sell weapons and information to the highest bidder.
- **Tribes of the Bare:** Stripped of everything that makes them Monsterkin, the tribes are all that remains of the people of Urach. They have clawed out a living in the cold northern plains by binding spirits and raiding the settlements to the south.
- **Mercantile Consortiums:** Each one an alliance made up of Holdfast’s wealthiest traders, the Consortiums are quickly swallowing up port towns, trading posts, guilds, and entire industries. The Consortiums can already provide everything from mercenary services to shipping and their power is only growing.
- **Peoples of the Southern Continent:** Reincarnated in an infectious metal wasteland, the Peoples of the Southern Continent are hardy, adaptable, and have only recently been discovered by northerners. Their technology, which involves integrating their body with the metal around them, is in demand by the north, where it could change the balance of the war between the Godhunters and the Priestesses.
- **Oceanic Ideologies:** The oceans are full of life. Sovereign nations born on the backs of (or inside of) giant beasts can be found above and below the waves. Some are aggressive military expansionists. Others just want to be left alone.
- **Heirs to the Sky:** In a bid to get away from the conflicts of the ground, many women have taken to the air using magic, technology, giant mounts, or simply their own wings. Stable societies have formed up among the clouds, with an ecology of high-altitude plants and floating animals to support them. Unfortunately, the Godwar has followed them here.
- **Landed Nations:** Overshadowed by the Godhunters, Priestesses, and Archivists, these nations nevertheless have their own holdings, armies, and political perspectives. Some have picked a larger power to support. Others do their best not to be noticed.

### POWER POOLS

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*Not a god, then, but something bigger?*

*Tell me, child, just what did you encounter down there in the stacks?*

*—Journeyman Archivist Rhea to the catatonic body of Junior Scribe Morid*

- **The Narrative:** Pure, elemental melodrama, the Narrative manipulates worlds and their inhabitants towards exciting catastrophes. It has recently set its sights on Holdfast.
- **The Firmament:** The energy that makes up the universe, the Firmament is both the thing that the gods metabolize and turn into reality—and the vast ocean of reality-destroying Voidfire that waits just outside of Holdfast, forever poised on the verge of pouring inside.
- **The Broken Constellations:** The former gods of the Five Worlds, now crippled and amnesiac, chained to the night sky.
- **The Devil In The Details:** A force that dwells in the Archives and infects anyone who reads the right phrases. It appears to desire conquest and is building itself an army of scholars.
- **The Quiet:** An entity that feeds on dying worlds, the Quiet has been drawn to Holdfast for obvious reasons.
- **The Convergence:** A slick of black metal that covers most of the Southern Continent, the Convergence infects mages who draw upon its powers. Those who are most reliant on it eventually become metallic hybrids.
- **The Hive:** A sentience made of bugs and parasites, the Hive partially controls anyone it infests. It intends to rule Holdfast, turning the world into a utopia of infested puppets.

### CREATURE PORTFOLIOS

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*Do not open your mouth. Not even to argue with me. If you breathe in, the pollen will enter you. Just run.*



*—Last conscious words of the apothecary Czo Lah to her apprentice*

- **Holdfast Megabeasts:** Mountain-sized monsters trundle across the quaking land, looking for settlements to devour. Some also have settlements on their backs.
- **The Small Gods:** Much weaker than their predecessors, the Small Gods look like animals sewn from starlight. Some are small enough to fit in a pocket and are no stronger than the creature they resemble. Others are as big as juvenile Megabeasts and still retain a fraction of their predecessors' cosmic might. All Small Gods, regardless of size, have the ability to plant the mental impulse to worship them in people around them.
- **The Southern Bloom:** An accidental creation of the Multigoddess, the Southern Bloom is a parasitic metal flower that hijacks its host's nervous system and slowly turns them delirious. Once confined to the Southern Continent, its pollen is now spreading in the north.
- **Maidens of the Winter Silence:** Otherworldly interlopers that look like thin, lost women, the Maidens are searingly cold to the touch. They haunt the edges of civilization, emptying small towns and settlements overnight.
- **The Iron Harvest:** Originally created to help the First Generation survive the harsh winter of Year 0, this collective of rustic automata would sooner water its fields with First Generationer blood.
- **The Wallbreakers:** Survivalist mages, convinced that Holdfast is on the verge of destruction, have begun to blow holes in reality, hoping for a way out. This is hastening the world's end.
- **Legion of Spirits:** Spirits that have learned to bond each other, the Legion seeks to conquer mortal lands, replacing mortal holdings with an empire of freed spirits.

## ANTAGONISTS

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*I do not sharpen my blades. I merely remind myself of how many gods have died at your hands, and suddenly every knife I own is keen enough to kill.*

## Genesis (This Shattered World)

### | –*Samarna the Defiant*

- **Avinia the Younger:** A minor Archivist who just happens to run the most advanced spy ring on Holdfast. Avinia has no formal power, but a word from her could displace any Senior Archivist.
- **Cloud Lair:** A drifting castle in the sky, Cloud Lair is haunted by crazed harpies—and inhabited by sleeping metal beings, even one of which could level a town on its own.
- **Dorgana Returned:** A warrior claiming to be the reincarnation of the Facet Dorgana, she wishes to lead the tribes of the Bare south, conquering everyone in their way. Thanks to a combination of sincerity and brutality, she already has considerable support.
- **Eater of Histories:** An extra-dimensional omnipredator, the Eater feeds on causality, devouring the past.
- **Emissary Maltrev:** A former rakehell from the Southern Continent, Emissary Maltrev has rebranded herself as an important diplomat and is now responsible for much of the Northern Continent's policies towards its neighbor to the south. Of course, she still only cares about leading a thrilling, decadent life, and she has a list of crimes to her name that—even with fine script—would be several feet long, so she does not appear to be leading the two continents towards a particularly peaceful relationship.
- **Garvana the War-Starved:** A Small God, maddened by the deaths of her kin, and surrounded by a cult of frenzied followers.
- **Hive Servitor:** Shapes made of swarming insects, the Hive Servitors direct the clandestine spread of the Hive's parasitic reign along the outer edges of the Northern Continent.
- **Hououndi:** A consummate escape artist, Hououndi is busy trying to extract herself from this reality. She believes that there is something beyond Holdfast, and is willing to blow a hole in the world to find out what it is.
- **Lady Maltabellia:** The high-handed ruler of a minor Mainland nation, Maltabellia nevertheless has the political savvy to be a major force in the region. Unfortunately, the only thing she really *wants* is to rain destruction down upon the Lightwings for what they did to her nation.

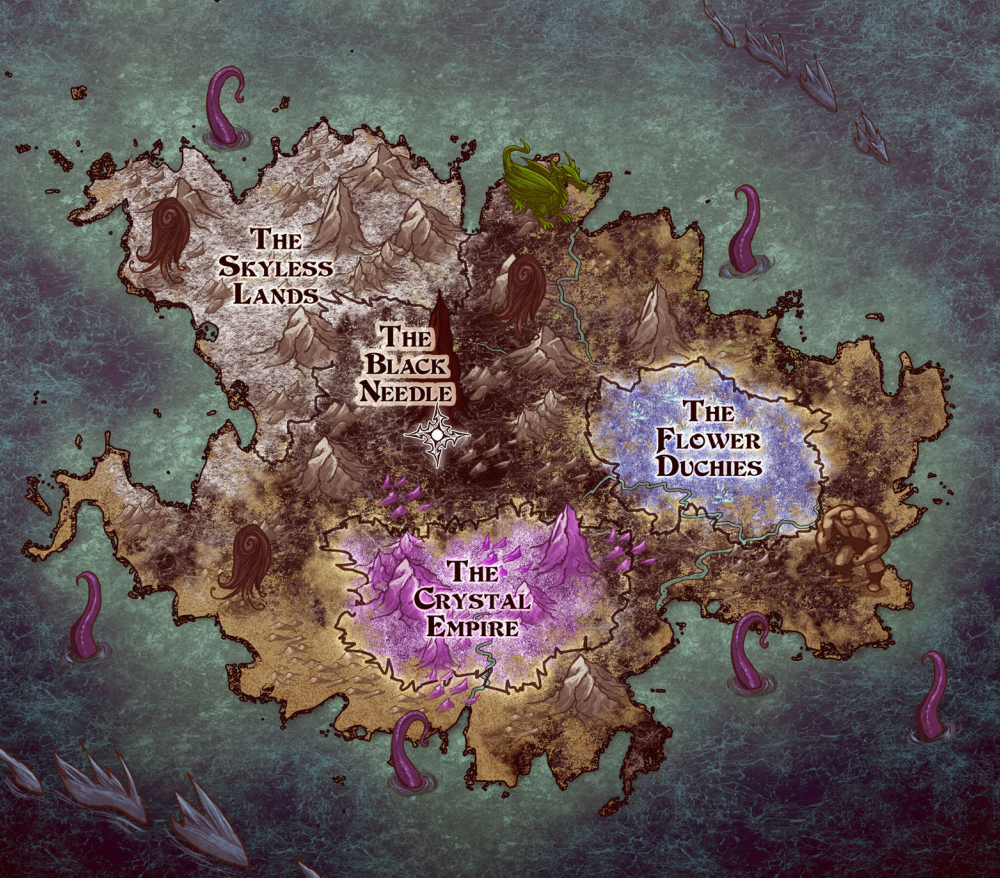
- **Mortal Furnace:** A hulking metal shape, the Mortal Furnace produces the automata of the Iron Harvest. Several attempts have been made to shut it down. None have succeeded.
- **Pyre of Your Hubris:** The titanic first member of the Legion of Spirits, Pyre is a towering elemental that despises mortals for what they did to its first bond-partner.
- **Queen Lathiolathiel:** An aspiring empress with a powerful army and loyal citizenry at her command, Lathiolathiel is nevertheless held back by the fact that her nation is built atop a giant snail. Still, she conquers what she can, when she can, and holds onto it for as long as she can—generally until the snail wanders away.
- **Quiet Manifested:** A person-shaped pressure in the air, the Quiet Manifested dissolves all that it touches, aiding the Quiet in its reality-erasing feedings.
- **Samarna the Defiant:** A priestess-assassin waging a one-woman war on the advance forces of the Godhunters. Samarna has taken a particular interest in targeting Lightwings, despite rumors that she might be one herself.
- **Sunken City of Abyssus:** A deep ocean legend, the city is a horrific Megabeast, peopled with vampire eel blood-magi. It is easy enough to discount as a ghost story—except when settlements over oceanic trenches disappear.
- **The Abiding Rupture:** A mouth-shaped anomaly that haunts the deserts of the Mainland, the Abiding Rupture spews torrents of Voidfire, utterly erasing those who wander into its path.
- **The Archives:** Apprentices and junior scribes sometimes claim that the Archives of the City of Glass and Gold are alive. Unfortunately for them, they're right.
- **The Fields Forever:** A critical mass of Southern Bloom flowers, their pollen is so dense that its glittering clouds blot out the sun.
- **The Silver Platter:** A weather phenomena linked to the appearance of the Maidens, it resembles a giant floating platter.
- **The Slinking Colony:** A massive, predatory lump that lives beneath the metal skin of the Convergence, it emerges only to drag travelers to their deaths.
- **Trademistress Harmonia:** The head of the consortium called the Cooperation of Bronze, Trademistress Harmonia can be found in conflict zones all over the Northern Continent, providing food, medicine, and smuggling out valuables by the wagonload.



## Genesis (This Shattered World)

If she has an objective beyond profit, it is currently unknown, but her support could tilt the balance of the Godwar significantly in either direction.

- **Trail of Broken Astronomers:** An insane rogue constellation, the Trail occasionally descends to Holdfast to eat stargazers.
- **Valmetica's Hand:** The Godhunter with the most confirmed god kills, Valmetica's Hand is constantly deployed into the field. Priestesses have died by the thousands attempting to stop her.





# THE WORLD OF HOLDFAST

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*We had five worlds in the old days. And yet, somehow this place feels bigger.*

*—Krakenessa, Cecaelia scout*

The world of Holdfast is a toolkit for your campaign. It has high-magic and low-magic areas, pockets of settlement in the ocean, on land, and in the sky, and it gives each Major and Minor Faction a place where they hold the most sway. However, no part of the setting is mandatory, and you are encouraged to add or remove things, alter the lore, or advance the timeline when something doesn't feel right for your story.

If Lobsteropolis is too silly, skip forward a few years and say that every Megabeast in the caravan succumbed to an outbreak of parasitic fungus.

If the Southern Continent isn't something you want to explore, ignore it, rewind the timeline to before its discovery, or set your story in the tundra of the Bare on the opposite side of the world from it.

Ultimately, everything here is meant to be engaging, but different parts of the setting will probably call to different people. Stick with the ones you and your group like and don't be afraid to dive deep and add more detail when you need it.



## DANGERS OF HOLDFAST

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*Something's stirring in the wilds, making small incursions at the edges of our territory.*

*There have been deaths.*

*Thankfully, none of them have been ours. The dead are Lamias and Centaurs mostly—a mix of trained warriors and unsuspecting farmers.*

*The recruits believe this is godwork. I think they are correct. Moreover, I think we have been lax in our duties. It is not enough to simply keep the graven image of the Multigoddess contained. The Priestesses will ultimately find their way to her, in desperation and madness, and so we must destroy her instead.*

*We must prevent her resurrection.*

*We have warned the Priestesses of our intentions, but they refuse to listen. They do not think we can kill our creator. They believe our regard for her is so poor that we would stay our hands rather than follow her orders.*

*They do not understand the depth of our devotion.*

*Give the gods no quarter, the Multigoddess said, and so no quarter will be given.*

*Not even to her.*

*—Atillyra, Lightwings general*

These are the biggest issues faced by Holdfast. Each one, if left unchecked, is a threat to at least part of the world.

### FEAR, SPITE, AND DESPERATION

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*We lost the moment we let mercy enter our hearts. The Godhunters slaughter women on the suspicion of Deisey. Can we afford to spare what might be one of their assets?*

*—Two Priestesses, deciding the fate of a merchant*

Holdfast should have been a paradise.

Rich in resources, shaped by the hands of a caring goddess, steeped in the wisdom of the worlds that came before, it nevertheless promptly became a mire of armed conflicts, factional politics, food scarcity, and natural—or artificial—disasters.

The aggression of the Godhunters may have started this cycle of conflict and disparity, but as the Godwar occupies more and more of the world's resources—and as other peoples, fearing for their own safety, are increasingly driven to militarize—squabbles over the things that no one in Holdfast should have to fight over are becoming much more common. Worse, as civilization continues to bloom, Holdfast's expanding cities have become more and more dependant on trade to feed themselves. This means that if a week passes without caravans, a city begins to starve. After a couple days of that starvation, it begins to riot.

Of course, the impact of the wars, banditry, trade disruption, monster incursions, and other societal ills is felt only faintly by the powerful. Princesses, faction leaders, and the heads of Mercantile Consortiums often just see opportunities to expand their holdings, weaken their enemies, and enhance their profits during these times of conflict. Some cultures are bogged down in feuds that have been three generations running, while others are still entangled in the politics of the old world, but all are avid buyers of weapons. With the surplus of arms and armor comes a bumper crop of warriors, who turn to freelance work, drinking, and theft if not paid to do violence somewhere else.

Periods of relative peace are not entirely unheard of and not every city on Holdfast is at every other city's throat, but rarely is there a place that is untouched by the entirely mortal problems of the world.

Even the factions are not without their issues, being just as vulnerable to their own internal politics as Holdfast's nations. A war *within* the Archivists, the Godhunters, or the Priestesses would seriously reshape the nature of conflict on the the world and might even drag the other two factions into the fray—so long as it happens before the Wallbreakers punch a big enough hole in reality that all the voidfire comes rushing in.

## THE EXPANSIONISM OF THE GODHUNTERS

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*You may not be able to believe these words yet, but the gods are your jailors. We are doing more than just seeking retribution for the Five Worlds. We won't stop until every last Priestess is free.*

*—Ulla, Lightwings Godkiller*

It is widely agreed that the old gods were responsible for the destruction of the Five Worlds. Therefore, letting Holdfast's gods amass power would be inviting the same result.

So it is only reasonable to push them to the brink. To hunt them wherever they hide. To eradicate them from every region they settle in.

To say otherwise is to attract the attention of the Godhunters.

Although the women of the Grand Cathedral were created purely as a counterbalance, a check against the danger of beings that can twist the thoughts of mortals into mindless worship, barely a year had passed between the birth of the world and the beginning of the Godwar.



## The World of Holdfast

The Priestesses, servants of the Small Gods, have now been pushed entirely out of the Mainland save for a few remaining sleeper agents and covert scouting expeditions. With the Archivists refusing to ally with the Priestesses out of fear of Godhunter retaliation, the Priestesses have been forced to cede all territory west of the Shipwrights' Arbor and retreat into the last bastion of their power—now known universally as The Godlands.

The Priestesses say their war with the Godhunters is about survival, but the Godhunters say that their eradication of the gods is about the same thing. They claim that they are fighting for Holdfast's continued existence—to prevent a plague of rampant gods from sweeping across the land, converting as they go.

If the Godhunters must exterminate every single divine on the continent to ensure that the common people are safe, they have made it clear that this is what they will do.

Although both sides have been implicated in atrocities by this point in the war, the Priestesses' position has been steadily growing more desperate with every passing year. Now trapped in their homeland, unable to back down, the Priestesses are almost pushed to their limits.

It is only a matter of time before they risk everything they have on one last push to end the war—although what kind of weapons will be used in this final conflict still remains to be seen.

## DEPREDATIONS OF THE MEGABEASTS

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*She was standing there alone amid the rubble, a single Taurid girl, smeared in mud and wood splinters. I didn't ask what had happened to her parents. I just carried her out of there, making sure to face her away from the horizon, where the sloped back of the wolverine was still visible past the mountains.*

*—Hilde, Lightwings Beastkiller*

When an anteater the size of a castle ambles into town, its whipcord tongue gobbling up villagers as it snuffles at the doors to storage sheds and homes, commerce tends to be disrupted. Any woman with a settlement on terra firma, therefore, has a strong incentive to hunt rogue or dangerous Megabeasts—or at least to find ways to drive them from her territory. Often, bounties are posted. More and more commonly, however, armies are taking to the field to engage these apex predators.

Military action against the Megabeasts is made more complicated by the fact that they often have cities of their own atop their backs. Furthermore, even the completely uninhabited beasts sometimes attract cults of worshippers. Those who revere the Megabeast Kha often tend to venerate her children as well, and some even go as far as to try and emulate them—growing stronger by eating the weak. A few Priestesses of the Small Gods have tried to forge alliances with these beast cults, reasoning that they would make excellent footsoldiers against the Godhunters.

At the same time, some of the Godhunters have decided that the Megabeasts are Deisey, abominable for being godly, and pledged to destroy them.

Although reports of it are unsubstantiated, women on the frontiers are beginning to claim sightings of new, wild Megabeasts in their lands. These Megabeasts seem to be actively malicious, seeking out settlements and single-mindedly annihilating them.

A working theory among the Archivists is that they might have been infected somehow, contaminated with a disease that drives them to these acts of maddened destruction. If this is true, then if their contamination reaches more heavily settled lands, the whole world could be in peril.

## DANGERS FROM THE PAST

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*The Multigoddess wasn't the only divinity to survive the death of the Five Worlds and killing me won't change the truth. The*

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*old gods are stirring. They were never dead. Look to the edges of your territories. There you'll find—*

*—Vauntmyr Eibersdotter, Naga Eideticist, while the logs beneath her are being set alight*

The Archivists have a secret. Their most avid historians are going mad. The more lines of the Five Worlds' script a woman transcribes, the greater the chances of her having a break with reality. While so stricken, she forsakes food and water, working until she falls into a stupor. She assembles piles of unfurled scrolls and open books, carrying whole cartloads up from the archives to dump onto vacant library tables. When she cannot find what she is looking for, she stands lost amid the Archives, shrieking at the place where whatever she was looking for should have been. Trying to rouse her from this trance before it has finished has proven lethal, so the afflicted are left to their own devices while the rest of the Archivists try to figure out what is going on—or, more commonly, try to blot out the noises in order to concentrate on their own studies.

News of this problem has not been made public. Instead, it has been actively suppressed. Women at risk for these episodes are barred from associating with the general public and are kept by force out of the visitor wings of the Archives. Meanwhile, senior translators are often assigned illiterate aides to monitor them for signs of an impending break. There is an overall fear that, were news of this problem to reach the ears of the Lightwings, they would descend like a swarm of locusts upon the City of Glass and Gold and attempt to raze it to the ground. The Archivists, always prepared to hedge their bets, are sinking additional resources into weapons research in case this should come to pass.

Of course, since the creeping madness in their order is being caused by a broken fragment of the Ink called the Devil In the Details, perhaps the death of their order would be a mercy.

And worse, it's not the only Power Pool to have made the jump to Holdfast.



Although dramatically reduced in both its power and self-awareness, a piece of the Hive survived the death of the Five Worlds and took root in the wilderness. While only barely conscious, it had enough sense to lay low until the Multigoddess was dormant before it began the long, slow process of its recovery.

The Hive remembers little of its former identity except for a sense of betrayal by the Multigoddess. That sense of betrayal is now its guiding light. Everything that the Hive now is navigates by its rage towards the Facet Buel. It nurtures this hatred, day by day, as its power grows.

As of yet, only a few factions know anything about the threats posed by these forces. The Archivists are the most worried, but Godhunters and Priestesses of the Small Gods have begun to take an interest as well. In particular, there are Priestesses who see the Hive as an ally, another god to be worshipped, or else a potential weapon to be used against the Godhunters.

No doubt they would see the Devil In the Details the same way.

The danger of infection and subversion is real to them, but it's also a fair trade for the chance to protect their kin from extermination at the hands of the Lightwings.

## THE OLD GODS, DORMANT AND BROKEN

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*Back, foul predators! Back, ancient gods! A third time I bind you, and your chains will be the stars!*

*—Mimic street orphan dressed as the Multigoddess, performing Godhunter-approved play “The Birth of Our World”*

A healthy world needs both mortals and gods. Unfortunately, a world with powerful gods only lasts as long as it takes them to

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disagree with each other. And unchecked, a strong enough god can tear any world apart.

The Multigoddess was aware of this and took several steps to ensure that—while Holdfast would still have gods—none of them would be in a position to rule over the others. She broke the gods of the Five Worlds, stripped out their independence, and made them into constellations in the dark overhead. At the same time, she imprisoned herself and the other Facets in the Great Mountain in the Mainland, ensuring that she would not be tempted to meddle unless the women of the world truly needed her.

Unfortunately, by sealing herself away, she missed the opening salvoes of the Godwar. She missed the creation of the Blight. She missed the northward push of the Convergence and she missed all the other threats that emerged from the shadows the moment she retired.

While the Small Gods are hunted down and exterminated, while the Iron Harvest marches across the land, while the Petty Holdings burn and sister crosses swords with sister, the sundered gods are unable to do anything from their position in the sky but watch while the world beneath them comes apart.

## CONVERSION PLAGUES

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*We don't go to the Southern Continent. Not for money, and not for threats, neither. You put a knife to my throat and tell me to sail south, I simply tell you to cut. The results are the same either way.*

*—Estreskiel Cavette, Spidermoth merchant*

In one of her first acts of creation, the Multigoddess created the metal flowers. In her second act, which was by far the wiser, she built them a massive island prison, ringed it in gale winds, and thrust it as far from civilization as the boundaries of the world would allow.

Unfortunately for the Multigoddess, mortals are inquisitive creatures, and it was only a matter of time before one of them breached that containment.

Already, the southern shore of the Godlands is seeded with this invasive species. Mortal hosts shamble senselessly through sable fields of blooms, all life around them either parasitized or else withered and dying. A few Godhunters are considering sending a team to eradicate this threat, but because of the inherent risks in establishing a permanent base in the Godlands, most have decided that dealing with the flowers is not their mission. The Priestesses, their problem with the Bloom more immediate, have partitioned off most of the flower fields. Unfortunately, this has not entirely stopped their spread.

If the Bloom weren't bad enough, there is also the Convergence to worry about. The Convergence, an ink-black slick of metal that covers much of the land in the Southern Continent, has also been transplanted to places on the Northern Continent. Unlike the Southern Bloom, the Convergence cannot involuntarily infect someone, but that does not seem to be limiting it, given that people keep voluntarily choosing to be infected.

Where the Convergence goes, a pool of energy follows. To a mage, it feels like aether, but deeper and stronger. Dipping into it, even someone without a scrap of magical talent can channel powerful spells—at the price of having a small portion of their body overwritten with the metal. The more a person is overwritten with the Convergence, the less they can touch their own Aura and the more they need the Convergence to cast. At the same time, every spell-cast fueled by Convergence energy leaves a stain of black metal over the nearby ground. These stains can infect new mages, and so on.

Stopping the spread of the Convergence is as simple as choosing not to use it, but in a world riven by the Godwar, there is no shortage of people that need every advantage they can get.



### VISITORS FROM OUTSIDE

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*Even if they won't admit it, the other Perimeter Sovereigns suspect the truth. There is a place beyond the sky. The only question is: what are its inhabitants like?*

*—Dauphinia, Wallbreaker*

There are strangers in Holdfast. Although they may vaguely resemble locals, and although they may speak local languages, there is something off about them. There is an alienness to their expressions or a subtle vocal hitch that colors their words. Where they touch the edges of civilization, it is stripped away.

During the Second Creation, the boundaries of Holdfast were only partially sealed from the greater Firmament, and these visitors are true outsiders. They were not created by the Multigoddess. They do not have a vested interest in the world's survival. They are here to observe, to examine, and to pursue their own goals. Often these goals are to the direct detriment of Holdfast's inhabitants and—because no one on the world fully understands what these visitors are, or what their purpose is—the boundaries continue to remain unsealed and several different types of outsider have managed to find their way inside.

Marked not by their appearance but by their bearing and temperature, Maidens of the Winter Silence are rarely seen in the border settlements—and almost never outside of each others' company. People who have met them say that the feeling of frost rolls off them like pressure wave off the front of a storm. To touch them would probably be to lose the finger. To be touched by them would be to lose your life. And where they go, the abductions follow.

At the same time, while the Maidens are descending from the north, the Quiet is eating into the fringes of civilization. A god of decline, collapse, and decay, it sends its worshippers and proxies to engineer the deaths of cities so that it can pick at the bones. Unlike

some of Holdfast's other divine powers, it is not a jealous god. It sees every other threat to the world as a feeding opportunity. Where chaos grows, its agents sweep in with promises of salvation.

And should the Godhunters ever learn of its identity, they will be too mired in other threats and their own politics to be able to give it their full opposition. It is especially looking forward to their collapse and its rot is stealing closer to their homelands with every passing day.

### Apocalypse Troves

*On the fifth day, the Rakshasa brought us a flute. They said that it was cursed—that its song would bring rain. Skeptical of their claim, Senior Archivist Blakely blew a few notes. Instantly, the Rakshasa scattered. We were just recovering from our laughter when the rumbling beneath our feet began.*

*Eight days later, and still the magma flows after us. It has slowed considerably from those first few frantic hours, but that gives me little comfort.*

*Emotionally, I am unmoored.*

*Blakely was lost in the eruption.*

*—Message from a field research team, pinned to a triple-warded, lead-lined box containing a flute*

A common Archivist story goes like this: In the beginning there was darkness, so the Multigoddess made light. In the beginning the world was cold, and so the Multigoddess made heat.

In the beginning the people were curious, and the Multigoddess disliked this. *What if the people one day became as I am?* she thought. *What if they replaced me as gods?*

So she created the artifacts and answered their curiosity with destruction.

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Although given little credit as a historical account, the story is told to new Archivists regularly in the hopes that it will foster some caution. Whatever the Multigoddess' actual motive was, the caches of powerful artifacts found across the land have likely done more harm than good. Many seem to have been designed with a benign purpose in mind, but others were clearly meant as weapons—and even domestic artifacts can be dangerous if used improperly.

The weapons, some seemingly meant to kill bigger gods than Holdfast even has, have triggered small wars over who gets to control them.

The single biggest stash of artifacts is buried under the City of Glass and Gold—along with a detailed library of instructions for their use. This has helped to ensure the the independence of the Archivists, but it has also made a tempting target of them should they ever become momentarily weakened. The Archivists' library of guides to the use of each artifact requires careful deciphering, as the language it is written in is often inexact, obtuse, or maddeningly incomplete. The Facet that wrote it is believed to have grown bored with the details—and is soundly cursed for her unhelpfulness every time an artifact misfires. As a result, Archivist testing grounds are located far from their city and are strange, cursed places where the laws of physics no longer reliably apply.

These and other cautionary stories have helped to keep the major Factions from going to war with every artifact at their disposal, which is a relief for the Archivists, who are relatively certain this would end the world.

## MAINLAND

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*Of course they'd call it that. If this is the Mainland, then everywhere else is "that land over there where those other people live."*



*Never let the Godhunters draw the maps. They turn them into weapons.*

*—Letathia, minor princess, border of the Godlands*

Defined by its proximity to the Grand Cathedral and therefore the heart of the Godhunters' power, the Mainland's western edge stops at the sea beyond the Arid Mists and its eastern border is the ever-changing fringe of the Sigh. The Shipwrights' Arbor divide it from the Godlands to the southeast and the unexploited taiga of the Bare stretches into the far north.

Apart from a few holdouts, the Small Gods have largely been eliminated from this region. Megabeasts are also uncommon, although not unheard of. Capitalizing on this relative peace, dozens of small nations are flourishing in the places where the desert turns to grassland, mountains, and tropical lowlands. Although those on the Mainland are landlocked with the exception of a few large lakes and rivers, a few have sky-routes or beast-routes to the western coast. Wide stretches of the Mainland are dry, with water being drawn from vast underground systems or mineral-tasting lakes, requiring magical or mundane purification. Due to their relative isolation and their intense pride at being so self-reliant, the people of the Mainland often see themselves as representative all of Holdfast, and this intense geocentrism scales right down to the outpost level. A woman in a little town on the edge of a tiny border nation sees her town as representative of the whole world. As a result, travellers in the remote parts of the Mainland are often a source of considerable spectacle.

For the past thirty years, the Godwar has not touched the heart of the Mainland. Despite this, rumors are circulating of a vast host of the Priestesses' armies massing on the other side of the southernmost Sigh, where the thick grasses divide the Godlands from the Mainland. None of these rumors seem particularly likely, given how foolish it would be to challenge the Godhunters in their domain, but the rulers of the Petty Holdings are keeping an eye on the shoulder-high sea of waving grasses nevertheless.

## The World of Holdfast

### Threats

- All at once and without warning, the Bare migrate south into the heart of Godhunter territory. They are scavenging as they go, robbing and stealing, but this is no normal raid. They are bringing children and slaves. On the few occasions they have been spoken to, they have claimed to be fleeing something called The Unravelling.
- It has always been an open secret that the Godhunters meddle in the affairs of the Petty Holdings. However, a Lightwings warrior has been found dead in the court of Morgare, a Kitsune known for her sympathy to the Godhunters. Morgare claims innocence and the Godhunters have given her three days to prove it.
- The Arid Mists begin to expand past the cactus wall at a rate of several miles per day. Ahead of them, a tide of refugees marches, looting provisions and adding to their number with every settlement they pass. The Godhunters have no idea how to stop the oncoming fog, and the expansion of the Mists is not showing any signs of slowing.

### NPCs

- See [Godhunters \[page 124\]](#), [Landed Nations \[page 148\]](#), and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [Holdfast Megabeasts \[page 233\]](#), [The Iron Harvest \[page 244\]](#), [Maidens of the Winter Silence \[page 242\]](#), [The Hive \[page 230\]](#), and [The Quiet \[page 225\]](#) in *Adversaries*

## GRAND CATHEDRAL OF THE GODHUNTERS

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*It may seem odd that the Godhunters should name the center of their empire after a place of worship, but to get hung up on that little contradiction is to overlook the deeper truth of the militant Lightwings' order. The Godhunters do not believe that all worship is wrong, just that the worship of the gods is. They would be perfectly comfortable being worshipped as gods themselves.*

| *—Daskine, Priestess propagandist*

South of the Arid Mists, where the desert dries into bare sand, the Lightwings make their home. In a sprawling fortress complex built for them—they claim—by the Facet Valmetica, the leaders of the Godhunters sit in council. It is from within the Grand Cathedral that the armies, the scouts, and the heavily armed diplomatic corps of the Godhunters are directed in their unending war against the Deists. In addition to the facilities needed to house and feed five worlds' worth of Lightwings, the Cathedral has spellworks for the manufacture of arcane weaponry, enormous storehouses layered with preservation enchantments, and tremendous gathering halls to ensure that no member of the Godhunters becomes isolated from their community.

At the center of this circle of massive red marble buildings is the complex's namesake: the cathedral. With high, vaulted ceilings and stained glass depictions of the Lightwings shackling the old gods and subjugating the new ones, the cathedral is used for speeches and sermons to reaffirm the collective beliefs of the order.

Not all inhabitants of the complex are Lightwings, but nearly all of them are Godhunters. The rare exceptions to this rule are diplomats, merchants, or political prisoners that are pending interrogation or execution. These outsiders are severely limited in what they are allowed to see of the complex and all of them walk with a wing of Godhunters on their flanks at all times.

At no time during their long war have the agents of the Small Gods ever been able to breach the heart of the Godhunters' power, but there is a growing belief among both sides that just such a raid—regardless of whether it is a success—could bring the Lightwings up short, changing the tone of the conflict permanently.

### Threats

- The Lightwings have captured an important guest: Lathiolathiell of the Cities At Sea. Rumor has it that they plan to use her to



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install a Godhunters-friendly regent in her place. Numerous factions, above sea and below, are opposed to this.

- A political coup rocks the Godhunters. The Endbringers have assumed power. Godhunter policy is going to change dramatically in the upcoming months.
- The spellworks have failed. A pall hangs over the cathedral. Halos struggle to ignite. Is this the work of the Priestesses, or does the answer to this blight lie somewhere in the Arid Mists?

### NPCs

- See [Godhunters \[page 124\]](#) in Origin

## THE GREAT MOUNTAIN

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*A monument to oppression. A celebration of failure. If you look closely at the carved faces of the Facets, you can see their horror at the world they created.*

*—Selmat, Godsworn Heretic*

According to legend, this massive snowcapped peak is the final resting place for the Multigoddess, although whether she is dead or simply dreaming differs from story to story. What is certain is that there are distinct faces carved into the mountainside, each one resembling a Facet of the Multigoddess. There are also words carved into the base of the slope: *When we are needed, have your sorceresses awaken us. Until then, we rest.* How this is supposed to be accomplished is open to interpretation, but most people believe the method has been lost. After all, if the mortals of the world were truly able to rouse the Multigoddess, they would have awakened her long before now.

Historically, the Great Mountain has not seen many visitors. Until recently, the sparse vegetation in the surrounding badlands has ensured that, apart from the occasional pilgrim or member of the small, ragged tribes that live around the edges of the slope, the area is barren of foot-traffic. As it is a holy site—and one that is possibly

still inhabited by its goddess—Monsterkin have been reluctant to set up more than small, temporary camps in the mountain's shadow.

That has changed over the course of the past six months, with the Godhunters moving in to occupy it in force. Now their flash-built fortresses and armed encampments dot the wasteland, flying their colors and swarming with Lightwings. They claim that this is a move to prevent the Priestesses from violating the sanctity of the holy grounds, but at night when the purple lightning crackles over the peak, the Petty Holdings bordering the mountain have their doubts.

Since the Lightwings arrived, visitors have been routinely turned away, caught and interrogated, or simply vanished. Slowly, the Godhunters' presence has intensified, until the nearby nations—despite the political risks of appearing unfavorable to their cause—have begun to mutter about the army camped out on their doorsteps. However, thanks to the Lightwings' magic, a caravan that winds across the badlands, and a steady series of visitations from Bulbships, resupply has not been a problem for the Godhunters and they could be here as long as they like.

### Threats

- An unusual woman is found wandering the edge of the mountain, dressed in the fashion of the Bare. She does not seem to remember who she is, but some of the Lightwings react wildly to her, claiming that she's something from the Five Worlds—something called a Dragonturtle.
- A second army of Godhunters, apparently belonging to a rival faction, arrives from the sky. The two begin a long staredown with each other, Halos churning menacingly in the falling dusk.
- Agents of the Small Gods have removed the face of the Facet Valmetica from the peak. The sub-factions of the Godhunters are now united by an oath to burn the Godlands from the northern continent.

### NPCs

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- See [Godhunters \[page 124\]](#), [The Priestesses of the Small Gods \[page 131\]](#), and [Landed Nations \[page 148\]](#) in *Origin*
- **Amnesiac Reincarnate:** 3 armor, 6 health, Magic Ward, Aura, Unreasoning, 6 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Clutch Head While Power Surges Uncontrollably, Lash Out At Bystanders. Power: ★★

## THE PETTY HOLDINGS

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*Divided by rivers, mountains, ideologies, and allegiances, they've made good use of the years since the Second Creation. Between them, they've laid claim to every single inch of soil, cord of timber, and hectare of wine orchards in this region. They're constantly at each other's throats and every traveller through their lands is seen as either a spy or a catspaw to use against their rivals.*

*—Meera, Archivist. Ambassador to the Petty Holdings*

If the Multigoddess was a benevolent creature, then when she scattered Holdfast with natural resources, it was with the hope that its people would all be well-fed, warmly dressed, and rich when the first winter came. Certainly The First Generation agrees that, at the time of the Second Creation, Holdfast was a bountiful land.

Unfortunately, if the Multigoddess was like the gods of old, feeding on strife and conflict, then her work in shaping the Petty Holdings was a wild success. The pockets of timber groves, sweet water, healthy herdbeasts, precious metals, and other wonders scattered across the otherwise relatively barren Mainland gave the societies that clustered around them every possible advantage. Within days, the Holdings had palisades. Within months, they had houses and roads. Within a year, the Godwar was raging, breaking across the region like a wildfire, plunging them all into conflict with their neighbors.

At the start, many of the Petty Holdings remained on good terms with the Small Gods. Eventually, though, the Lightwings scoured



the area, enacting a policy of regime-change on anyone who did not kill every god claiming sanctuary in their Holding. Of the Holdings that balked, some were “liberated” from their rulers and allowed to continue as they had been—minus their gods. Many others were burned to the ground.

The upsurge in armed conflict, decimation of towns and cities, and displacement of refugees left many of the region’s resource pockets unexploited and so, after the Godhunters finished pacifying the region, there was an immediate land-grab by every surviving Holding. This produced a series of internecine pocket-wars, eventually leading to a bloody crescendo and an uneasy stalemate a few years ago. Although every Holding in the region knows that it exists at the mercy of the Godhunters, the Godhunters are too preoccupied with their extermination of the gods to do more than periodically interfere in the Holdings’ politics. As such, individual nations can skirmish, politic, and conquer each other with relative impunity, so long as they do not become Deists in the process—or in any way obstruct the flow of trade to the Grand Cathedral.

The Petty Holdings can be found everywhere in the eastern Mainland, and some even have footholds on the southern edge of the Shipwrights’ Arbor or the eastern side of the Sigh. The Holdings in the northwest typically believe, at least passively, in the cause of the Godhunters, while the Holdings on the south and east have Priestess sympathies.

Cuisine, culture, fashion and even which species make up most of the population differ heavily from Holding to Holding. Most Holdings have adopted one of the Five Worlds as their nominal host culture, reproducing what they understand to be its food, architecture, and social mores. Every so often, a particularly charismatic leader tries to unify the entire region, but the Godhunters are quick to put down any that seem like they might have a chance of succeeding.

### Threats

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- Soldiers from Atrasia, a major power in the west, descend on Evaria, an agrarian nation. Evaria calls in its closest allies for support and Atrasia offers shares of the plunder to its neighbors if they join in. Within a fortnight, half of the Holdings are at war.
- A shepherd girl in the remote mountains discovers stone tablets and claims that they are a message from the Multigoddess to her creation. Quickly a cult forms around the girl, including members from many neighboring Holdings. Initially the Godhunters are split on whether worship of the Multigoddess makes her a Deist, but then she simplifies the matter for them by preaching about their corruption.
- In the mountains, women are disappearing. A few days later, they come back claiming that everything is fine, but they work mechanically, eat mechanically, and occasionally seem to forget to breathe for minutes at a time. This is all happening within the exact cartographical borders of a single Holding, and the Godhunters are preparing a team to investigate.

### NPCs

- See [Landed Nations \[page 148\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Iron Harvest \[page 244\]](#) in Adversaries

## LANDS OF THE BARE

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*Anyone else would see the deep peat bogs, infrequent rain, chilly summers, and migrating Weavehorn herds as a blessing. Trust the Bare to think that they live in a barren, freezing hellscape.*

*—Luko Wolfblood, Archivist surveyor*

The wide swath of the north inhabited by the tribes of the Bare is made of plains, taiga, and low, rolling foothills. Its climate is temperate in the south, but shades into tundra as it creeps towards the mountains in the farthest north. On the western edge of the

territory lie the impassable Arid Mists and eventually the ocean. To the east is the rippling border of the Sigh. Only at their southernmost point do the lands touch sedentary, non-migrating civilization. This is typically where the wealthiest tribes can be found—taking slaves from the outskirts and selling them to the caravans that pass quietly through the area.

Among the tribes of the Bare, the oldest women are deeply divided on the question of whether this practice is an abomination. Among the younger members, there is debate on whether the Multigoddess even notices. Members of the First Generation of Bare are typically wisewomen and elders, so they have a firm hand in steering the politics of their individual nations. However, as they die off, the views of their daughters are coming into greater prominence. Many of the younger Bare, afraid of being outcompeted by the tribes that do take slaves, push for aggression. To the outside world, all Bare are often assumed to be slavers, but there are a number of tribes further north that are committed isolationists, war only rarely, and spend their time hunting and singing histories of the worlds that came before into the vast grassland night.

Megabeasts and beast cults are rare in these lands, except on the northernmost boundary. Outsiders are also uncommon, although the Godhunters have sent settlers to the tundra hoping to exploit its deep veins of metals. Archivist Errants are sometimes found among the tribes conducting linguistic research, and as a result a few tribes seem to have developed the beginnings of an odd, language-based religion. Their babbling becomes almost a dull roar as the entire tribe calls out random sounds, trying to spontaneously and accidentally compose coherent strings of words. Against all odds, this *does* happen from time to time, and the members of these tribes treat every sentence as a message from their invisible god. Their neighbors, disquieted by the chanting, have begun to superstitiously avoid their camps.

### Threats

- Maratta, a newly appointed leader of one of the interior tribes, has decided to lead her people out of isolation by unifying every



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last tribe of the Bare. She has conquered three other Bare nations already, but has allowed them to fly their own banners so long as they still fight at her side. Outside observers are worried about what a unified north could mean for the rest of civilization, but at present the Godwar is keeping this from being taken very seriously.

- All at once, the Megabeasts of the arctic begin to journey south. Archivists believe they're fleeing something, but the question of what could frighten dozens of wild Megabeasts is lost in the more immediate challenge of not dying underfoot. Tribes of Bare, pushed from their usual ranges, are following the Beasts—and the southernmost tribes are sharpening their hatchets, ready to treat this disruption as an opportunity to raid.
- A third generation Bare claims to be the reincarnation of Dorgana, a great national hero of the lost world of Urach. She also claims to be able to see which Bare harbor the souls of Dragonnewts and which have the souls of Dragonturtles. She is using this knowledge as a justification for making slaves of the other Bare, increasing her personal power considerably, but no one outside of the North seems to be taking her claims seriously.

### NPCs

- See [Landed Nations \[page 148\]](#) and [Tribes of the Bare \[page 134\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [Legion of Spirits \[page 249\]](#) and [Maidens of the Winter Silence \[page 242\]](#) in *Adversaries*
- **Greater Steppeland Hunting Weasel:** 4 armor, 7 health, Stealthy, Impressive. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Undulating Pursuit, Savage Prey With Adorable Jaws. Power: ★★

## THE SHIPWRIGHTS' ARBOR

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*Centipede kites! Brightthroats! A thousand different sorts of venomous ants! We'd never set foot among the trees if it weren't for those damned bulbs.*

### | *–Shark-hybrid Bulbship-trainer*

A treasure beyond mortal comprehension, the massive old-growth rainforests of the Shipwrights' Arbor sprawl across the land, joining the Mainland, Otherlands, and the Godlands with a green, living suture. Rich with both edible and medicinal plants, these resources are often overlooked in favor of the region's namesake. The tallest growths, the eponymous trees, are more than just cyclopean columns of wood, leaves, and sap. Very rarely, and with no predictable rhythm, they give birth to the Bulbships. These semi-sentient vessels tread the sky as easily as they do water, and with careful training they can sometimes be taught to tolerate a mortal crew.

Every faction has a vested interest in the Bulbships, but the trees have proven remarkably difficult to tame. Much of the forest is filled with brightly colored peril, ranging from the herds of predatory crested lizard-birds that roam the mulch-covered floor to the centipede kites, chameleoscorpions, and walking leeches found in the understory layers. The canopy has poison dart hawks, balloon ants, and tribes of feral, apparently pre-lingual Angels, ensuring that even aerial surveys of the region aren't without considerable risk of predation.

Of course, surveying is the only way to identify prospective bulbs before they open, and only at the very beginnings of their lives can the Bulbships be reliably acclimated to mortal crews, so any faction with the resources to devote to combing the forest simply grits their teeth and accepts the casualties. A few have tried hiring freelancers, but with the value of a Bulbship far exceeding their prospective payoff, this has only encouraged a sudden boom in air piracy.

Recently, hoping to avoid losing another heavily armed research team to the forest, the Archivists have begun experimenting with ways to force a Shipwright's tree to bulb. Experiments with gas and photosaturation seem promising, but the ships produced this way are often bizarre, willful things, and their hatching reliably kills their host trees.

## The World of Holdfast

### Threats

- Following a midair skirmish, two competing groups of surveyors have become stranded in the jungle. In their company is a princess from the Petty Holdings. A reward is being offered for her return, although the incentive may be too little, too late. The walking leeches, having scented mortal blood, are already descending from the middle branches to investigate.
- A strange pollen mists out of the trees all at once, causing Bulbships that are exposed to it to fight their crews' commands and return home at breakneck speeds. Upon reaching the forest verge, they burrow prow-first into the ground and begin to incubate.
- A massive nation of Psionic Symbiotes is found in the heart of the jungle. Their culture is nothing like that of their other kin. In addition to bonding insects, they also bond gods, elementals, and other women.

### NPCs

- **Walking Leech:** 0 armor, 7 health, 5 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Vampiric. Moves: Envelope Upper Body And Vacuum Out Blood. Power: ★
- **Centipede Kite Flock:** 1 armor, 10 health, Flying. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Toxic. Moves: Glide-Sting, Infest The Canopy. Power: ★★
- **Brightthroat Raptor:** 3 armor, 6 health, Stealthy. 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Hunting Rush, Always Another Raptor. Power: ★★
- **Hoary Chameleoscorpion:** 6 armor, 8 health, Stealthy. 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Toxic. Moves: Coil Unnoticed Around Something You Own, Decloak And Ambush. Power: ★★★
- **Newborn Bulbship:** 10 armor, 11 health, 0 harm, Natural Weapon, Flying. Moves: Lurch Away, Shake Off Boarders. Power: ★★★
- **Balloon Ant Floatilla:** 0 armor, 15 health, 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Flying, Toxic. Moves: Congest the Airspace, Sting Whoever Touches Them. Power: ★★★





## THE ARID MISTS

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*From overhead, it looks like just another bank of clouds, but this one runs from the end of the foothills all the way to the ocean—a week's flight—and it's at ground level. It's far better to fly overhead than to set foot in the stuff. The fog closes over you like a stifling blanket, dampening sound, chilling your skin, and drawing visibility back to a few inches in front of your face.*

*There're no animals, hardly any vegetation that's not covered in spines, and if anyone lives in that mess, they're not worth meeting.*

*—Vissa Trent, Bulbship captain*

Ringed by a sprawling hedge of spiny, fruiting cacti and succulents, the Arid Mists are a vast fog desert located in between the lands of the Bare and the western ocean. They are cold and damp, but also entirely without groundwater. The plants that live in the mists subsist off of condensation and rare sunlight, straining what few minerals they can get out of the barren ground. Animal life, apart from a few insects, is relegated to a few skittish foxes and the occasional horned lizard. Mostly, they congregate around the

## The World of Holdfast

plants, which defend themselves by being fundamentally unpalatable, covered in spikes, and frequently hallucinogenic.

Despite all of this, there is mortal life in the mists. Colonies of slow-moving, migrating Xerophyte Alraune drift like phantoms through the deepest banks of fog. Their cultures are organized around mutual survival, with water sharing being a gesture of love, of kinship, of reverence, and of respect. Gathered water is never spilled, not even as a libation, and the health of a community is tracked by the health of its weakest member.

In the mists, the landscape never really changes, but the Alraunes see constant visions in the obscuring gray. They tell these visions as stories to one another, cultivating characters and set-pieces that hardly seem like they could be imagined by a people that never sees the outside of the fog.

Although their contact with outsiders is so infrequent that most consider the world outside of the desert to be a legend, the few women from outside who have met an Alraune from the mists are shocked by the accuracy with which these visions describe places like the Grand Cathedral, Ichthya, or the shores of the Southern Continent. They might describe other places as well, but if there is a world-spanning city of alabaster buildings and suits of golden armor, or a noisy, angry metropolis where the streets are black with smeared tar, then these have yet to be discovered on Holdfast.

Recently, Xerophyte Alraunes have been leaving the mists in ones and twos. They cannot stand the visions anymore, they claim. All of them have grown too apocalyptic. Meanwhile, the Godhunters, concerned that the Alraunes are serving some higher power hidden in the mists, have been stemming this exodus by capturing the Alraunes and suppressing their stories. Their containment measures are working for now, but the Godhunters only decisively control one border of the mists. Should the Alraunes make contact with the Cities at Sea or the tribes of the Bare, word will get out.

### Threats

- Deep in the heart of the mists is a complex of stone buildings as old as the world. The Alarunes avoid it, saying it belongs “to the flying woman.” The Archivists believe that a Facet called Haula created this desert, but have multiple competing theories about what the complex could mean. No one, no matter how much of a sensationalist, thinks that Haula could still be in the desert. Still, the Alraunes speak about her in the present tense.
- The Priestesses of the Small Gods have abducted a family group of Alraunes and are trying to collect as many stories as they can from the women. The Priestesses are certain that the Alraunes’ visions hold the key to turning the tide in the Godwar. Perhaps the Godhunters believe it as well, because they have dispatched an elite squad to correct this problem.
- The Alraunes’ visions are now including images of the sky at night; a thing that none of them could possibly have seen. Nevertheless, a skilled astronomer could use the alignment of the stars in these visions to calculate when they are supposed to take place. One of them shows the end of the world, and it’s only a few months from now.

### NPCs

- **Delirious Alraune:** 2 armor, 5 health, Unreasoning. 4 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Shriek, Stumble And Claw. Power: ★
- **Dream-Addled Alraune Tribe:** 2 armor, 10 health, Unreasoning. 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Formation. Moves: Surround And Claw, Hunt Through the Mists. Power: ★★
- **Nightmare-Tripping Alraune Shaman:** 3 armor, 10 health, Unreasoning. 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Indirect, Aura. Moves: Call Up Swirling Illusions, Drag Into the Nightmare. Power: ★★★

## OTHERLANDS

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*It's true. There's less open conflict here. Fewer armies. Fewer brigands. In some ways, though, that almost makes it worse.*



## The World of Holdfast

*You get stabbed in the Otherlands, it's almost certainly going to be in the back.*

*—Ylvetta, Third Generation merchant consortium trademistress*

Originally named for their isolation from the Godhunters' capital, the Otherlands quickly became the biggest trade hub and center for learning on the Northern Continent thanks to its non-participation in the Godwar. Curated by the Archivists, the Archives of the City of Glass and Gold hold the keys to many powerful artifacts, magics, and technologies. Although the Archivists are somewhat tight-fisted, releasing the fruits of their research in dribbles over the course of decades, the ideas and technologies that have trickled out of their stronghold have strengthened the entire region economically and militarily, making it an unappetizing target for invasion.

To the west, the Otherlands are bordered by the Sigh and to the south they stop at the Shipwrights' Arbor, but to the east they have unrestricted ocean access, resulting in a series of small ports and trading settlements that run up and down the coast. These settlements, despite being barely more than wooden palisades with a warehouse and a pier, attract vast numbers of trade ships, all desperate for a taste of the Archivists' commodifiable secrets.

The climate of the Otherlands runs a wide gamut, from subtropics in the south to temperate in the middle and arctic in the far north. An anomaly, the Bonded Wilds, takes advantage of the non-trivial volcanic activity beneath the region to maintain a pocket of swampy, humid jungle in the middle of the snow.

Almost every faction mingles here, and trade consortiums take advantage of that dynamic to fish for contracts with ambassadors from around the world. Gatherings of mages are also common, with some looking for apprentices and others for challengers. While the Godhunters technically claim the right to exterminate all Small Gods they find, regardless of whose land they are found on,

visiting delegations from the Priestesses are tolerated and to some degree sheltered by the Archivists.

The Otherlands are home to one of the Northern Continent's biggest caches of artifacts, most of which belong to the Archivists. This discourages the Godhunters from taking a geopolitical swing at them so long as they don't outright swear support for the Priestesses, but the land bears the scars of regular artifact testing. A fairly wide swath of the north is growing into a magically irradiated hellscape, although it is still too convenient a test-site for the Archivists to have even begun discussing what to do about it.

The advanced civilization of giant burrowing owls that has emerged on the southern plains seems, fortunately or unfortunately, to be unrelated to anything the Archivists have done. For once happy not to poke something dangerous to see what it does, researchers have generally left the Owls alone.

### Threats

- A group of shut-in researchers calling themselves the Megabeast Appreciation Society have discovered a way to turn ordinary animals into city-sized macro-fauna. Their first experiment, Fidelis, is now over seven hundred feet tall and wants nothing more than for them to Throw The Ball. Valiantly, they have rigged up a catapult, but there are still some concerns over the townships that might be in the way.
- Fleeing persecution, a force of Priestess and gods several thousand strong retreats across the Sigh and into the Otherlands. An army of Godhunters arrives not long after, but with enough of a time lag that the Priestesses have sold a few of their gods to the Archivists in return for formal protection. Attacking now could potentially drag the Archivists into the Godwar, but the Godhunters are considering it all the same.
- All at once, every artifact in the Otherlands falls dead. Without their artifacts, the Archivists have no easy way to repel invasions. They must keep word of this silent until they can fix it, or they will have the armies of the Priestesses and Godhunters on their doorstep in an instant.

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### NPCs

- See [Archivists \[page 128\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Wallbreakers \[page 247\]](#), [Holdfast Megabeasts \[page 233\]](#), [Maidens of the Winter Silence \[page 242\]](#), [Legion of Spirits \[page 249\]](#), [The Iron Harvest \[page 244\]](#), and [The Quiet \[page 225\]](#) in the Adversaries chapter
- **Mutated Semifauna:** 2 armor, 3 health, 4 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Opossum Hiss, Rabid Lunge. Power: ★
- **Foldwolf:** 4 armor, 6 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Unhinge Entire Body And Engulf, Summon the Pack. Power: ★★
- **Cablewool Tarantula:** 2 armor, 6 health, Stealthy. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Trap, Toxic. Moves: Weave Mile-Wide Steel Cable Web, Follow the Vibrations And Strike. Power: ★★
- **Roaming Artifact-Warped Aberration:** 6 armor, 8 health, Hated, Hazardous, Unreasoning. 8 harm, Melee, Indirect, Natural Weapon, Toxic, Slow. Moves: Eerie Wail, Spray With Quills. Power: ★★★

## CITY OF GLASS AND GOLD

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*They claim they're neutral, but spend five minutes with an Archivist and you'll know that's a lie. They won't dirty their hands saving the gods, but they're more than happy to profit off of the conflict.*

*—Deummo, Priestess in exile*

Cast by the Multigoddess from unbreakable glass and inlaid gold, the city consists not just of the high spire of the Archivists and the sunken vaults of the Archives, but also a vast urban area inhabited by close to a million cityfolk. The city is ringed in high walls, but their defensive value is mitigated by the fact that they do not have portcullises, murder-holes, arrow-slits, or another other way of discouraging an army from pouring in. More importantly, the city has already overspilled its walls, resulting in a thriving sprawl of



tents and semi-permanent houses built just outside the stuck-open gates.

Despite its vulnerability to a siege, the city is militarily one of the most powerful places on Holdfast. The Archivists are not formally at war with anyone, which means their armies are at full strength, and no one particularly wants to pick a fight with the faction that controls the majority share of the world's artifacts. This does not mean the city is conflict-free, as its inhabitants are intensely political, hailing from all over the world and representing most factions. There are refugees from the Godwar, traders, wanderers, mercenaries, Priestesses, and Godhunters all living cheek to jowl with local militia, merchants, pickpockets, and spies. Crime is prevalent in the city, and the appearances of wild creatures, predatory gods, and rogue spirits are not unheard of either. The Archivists maintain a city guard, but its only real function is to keep disruptions from spilling into the nicer parts of town. Some of the bigger local criminal operations are even rumored to have deals with the Archivists, accepting small handouts in return for keeping their members from disrupting anyone's research. The gold that covers much of the architecture is utterly impervious to being scraped away, and many are lured to the city with false promises that they can make a living gouging gold scraps off the walls.

Being largely translucent, areas of the city have been made more habitable by its residents with wall-hangings, rugs, and slathered-on coats of tar or black paint. In places where there isn't enough money for even this, the sun turns swathes of the metropolitan area into an oven. Its inhabitants leave at dawn and return after nightfall, laying down to rest on the cooling glass and hoping that their fortunes will change on the next morning.

Even in neighborhoods where money is not a concern, the unbreakability of the glass makes ventilation a challenge, especially during the central Otherlands' baking summers. The rich hire fan-wavers and temperature-mages to control the climate in their homes, but lower class areas rely on rugs and wall-hangings, which often swarm with moths. As a result, locals refer to cheap or unpleasant areas as "moth-stews" and more than a few middle-class

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families have domesticated hogtoads or gallows spiders as pets to keep the insects' numbers down.

The Archives, buried far beneath the city, are cooled by the dirt around them. While nominally open to the public, they are divided into sections for records, artifacts, and Archivist housing. Nearly all of the Archives are forbidden to women who are not known and recognized as Archivists. Visitors who sign the appropriate documents and make the appropriate donations are allowed access to an enormous public reference library, but despite its size it only contains a fraction of the books, scrolls, and graven tablets found in the Archives. Everything in the public library is cleared to be read by outsiders, and the Archivists offer a reference librarian service to paying customers who can't afford to spend months figuring out the layout of the place.

To an outsider, one of the most interesting features of the city (and therefore one of the most banal features to a long-time citizen) is the tiny script that covers every inch of cityglass in engraving. Flowing from missive to story to record-keeping tally, the scrawl appears to contain every sentence ever penned during the time of the Five Worlds. Teams of Archivists can even be found wandering the city, documenting it. According to rumor, they believe that there is some secret truth buried in it. When they encounter districts that have been tarred or painted over, they have been known to scream at the defacement, then return with press-ganged mobs of mages to strip it away.

### Threats

- A team of Archivists has found a fascinating portion of scrawl in the lower levels of a Priestess-aligned slum. They are willing to pay a considerable sum to anyone who can ensure that they are not robbed, stabbed, or hassled during their research process.
- The glass of the city seems to amplify not just sunlight but also some other energy, referred to by the Archivists as "Firmament radiation." Properly focused, it seems to be able to retroactively cure diseases, miscarriages, and missing limbs. Improperly focused, it redacts people and pets from existence. The other

factions are growing increasingly worried that the Archivists will decide to use it as a weapon.

- Over the course of a week, trade ceases with the northeastern quarter of the city. Its population, having withdrawn from interactions with the rest of the city, now apparently speak their own language. Listening to it makes their neighbors' heads buzz, and these same people are typically gone a day later, having vanished into the northeastern quarter.

## NPCs

- See [Archivists \[page 128\]](#), [Landed Nations \[page 148\]](#), and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Devil In The Details \[page 224\]](#) and [The Narrative \[page 217\]](#) in *Adversaries*
- **Mothstew Cutthroat:** 1 armor, 4 health, Poorly Equipped. 5 harm, Melee, Blinding. Moves: Fight Dirty, Call Out Easy Prey. Power: ★
- **Mothswarm:** 0 armor, 3 health, Insubstantial. 3 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Flying, Blinding. Moves: Occlude Vision, Fill Up Lungs. Power: ★
- **Possessive Hogtoad:** 4 armor, 7 health, 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Defend Delicious Pile of Garbage, Goring Rush. Power: ★★
- **Gallowspider Dregreaper:** 3 armor, 8 health, Stealthy. 10 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Toxic. Moves: Strike From Above, Bundle And Drag Into the Shadows. Power: ★★★

## OWL BARRENS

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*Before you start laughing at the idea, remember that they're as tall as a Centaur, they have talons like butchers' knives, and they can both burrow and fly. They don't need to cooperate to hunt. Each is a monster in its own right. But they have an eerie habit of all just showing up together whenever one of their kin is in danger.*



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*They don't speak our language, but I wouldn't take that to mean they're not intelligent. If anything, it just means they don't think we say anything worth listening to.*

*—Helvetica, Consortium Trademistress, to a wide-eyed apprentice*

It is unclear what the Multigoddess was trying to accomplish when she created this arid region and the owls that dwell within it. Without the mouthparts to communicate as Monsterkin do, and without seemingly any interest in written languages, the Owls have nevertheless carved a massive dirt-walled metropolis beneath the surface of their quarter of the Otherlands. This allows them to travel for miles underground, appearing suddenly in fringe settlements and terrifying the locals.

Their ability to know where they are needed, seemingly without any communication, and their unblinking inkwell stares have made them unappealing candidates for both trade and subjugation. The Archivists by and large have a policy of non-interference with the Owls, which seems to suit the Owls just fine, as only on rare occasions do they welcome a Monsterkin into their city. When they do, they treat her exactly as if she were an Owl; beak-grooming her hair, providing her with dry basins for dustbathing, and offering her the choicest organ-meats from the fresh corpses of the massive voles, lemmings, and groundhogs that live a life of constant fear on the surface.

Since the start of the Godwar, both Priestesses and Godhunters have been trying to leverage the support of these rare Owl-favored women, but none have so far convinced the Owls to pick sides.

### Threats

- A passing merchant discovers the burrow city empty, the Owls having vanished overnight. In the rush to loot it, three details are overlooked. One: the Owls don't have physical possessions. Two: the burrow city has since been occupied by a feral Mega-rattlesnake. And three: the first of the Owls has already begun to

arrive at the Great Mountain, their eyes turned expectantly towards the peak, as they begin the chant.

- Archivists are beginning to crack the Owls' communication system and their proof-of-concept involves passing messages to each other non-verbally from dozens of miles away. Unfortunately, the Archivists involved in these tests now believe that they are Owls and, even more unfortunately, have been welcomed into the burrow city with open wings. The women of the City of Glass and Gold are unsure where the experiment went wrong, but they are offering a handsome bounty to anyone who can bring their errant researchers back.
- Famine strikes the Owl Barrens and it dissolves. Not quite beggars and not quite brigands, massive Owls begin going door-to-door across the Otherlands, demanding meat.

### NPCs

- **Bentwinged Outcast:** 2 armor, 5 health, Stealthy, Nightvision, Flying. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Steal Provisions And Flee, Strike In Fear. Power: ★
- **Huddle of Owls:** 2 armor, 9 health, Stealthy, Nightvision, Flying. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Formation. Moves: Panic Beasts of Burden, Root Through Provisions. Power: ★★
- **Solitary Killer:** 5 armor, 6 health, Stealthy, Nightvision, Flying. 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Stalk At Night, Attack When Alone. Power: ★★★
- **Talon of Athenia:** 6 armor, 10 health, Stealthy, Nightvision, Flying. 9 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Knockdown. Moves: Swoop-Strike, Tear Away Armor. Power: ★★★★

## THE BONDED WILDS

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*If that miserable place hadn't been here since the beginning, I would've thought we caused it.*

—Ziane, Archivist Artificer

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In the far north, the skies are gray with promised snow, the air is cold, and what little groundwater doesn't belong to vast, freezing lakes or rushing rapids is a crust of ice on the withered grass or a frail bracket of needles between lichen-speckled rocks. Therefore, the second most surprising thing about the Bonded Wilds—which are at a longitude that has week-long winter nights—is the fact that they are a lush, humid swamp. Heated by thermal springs, which carry mineral-heavy water up from deep underground, the Bonded Wilds are an oasis of subtropical climate in a desert of freezing tundra.

Travellers are usually quite grateful for this, right up until they run into the *most* surprising thing about the Bonded Wilds: when a whipscorpion the size of an oxcart comes thrashing out of the mire to meet them, hunger radiating from every chitinous inch of its armored form.

The Bonded Wilds are full of horrors like this, and their fauna have kept them free of exploitation by anyone who is not sufficiently motivated, malaria-immune, and capable of forging psychic links with giant predatory bugs for protection. The swamp does not generally strike outsiders as a pleasant place to live, but it is rich in protein, medicinal plants, and water. It ranges from pleasantly warm to scaldingly so, fed by a series of geothermal springs, and it is dominated by huge, old-growth trees—all of which were formed during the creation of the world.

The women of the swamp—who are mostly Grappelts, and mostly Psionic Symbiotes on top of that—have built their communities on wooden scaffolds shaped around the skirts of those old-growth trees. Despite their geographical distance from the rest of the Otherlands, they are usually friendly towards outsiders, and their interest in (and fear of) trade goods from the Archivists has inspired them to send many of their own to scout the world beyond. A few of their daughters do so and return, but many more are caught up in the sectarian struggles of the major Factions. Others are seduced by the Archivists' artifacts, which their swamp-dwelling families regard as abominations. But how could they be, when so many outsiders are safely using them?



When a Symbiote does return home to stagnant waters and dragonflies the size of kayaks, she is therefore welcomed as if she had returned from the dead. This ceremony involves feasting, a new name, and over an hour of ceremonial shrieking to drive away any clinging phantoms of artifact use.

### Threats

- The hot springs feeding the wilds suddenly go cold. Within days, so too does the swamp. With the waters freezing and the swamp's predators dying, the culprit seems clear. With resigned grimaces, the entire population of the swamp sets out to make war on the Archivists.
- A warm spell in the tundra has led to a number of the swamp's creatures migrating south into the Sigh—and then breeding explosively. Supported by the frequent rainfall, a population of giant mosquitoes is edging closer to critical mass, at which point it will pour out into the Mainland, denuding it of residents and blood. The Godhunters are sending a delegation to the swamp to encourage the Symbiotes to intervene.
- Swamp cough, a disease that dwellers of the wilds get briefly as children, has infected a trade caravan heading south. By the time the traders realize what they are carrying, they will be halfway to the City of Glass and Gold.

### NPCs

- **Midge Cloud:** 0 armor, 12 health, Insubstantial, Flying. 1 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Thicken the Air. Power: ★
- **Greypelt Isolationists:** 2 armor, 8 health, 5 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation. Moves: Rain of Spears, Drag Into the Swamp. Power: ★★
- **Giant Mosquito:** 1 armor, 6 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Vampiric. Moves: Grating Whine, Siphon Vital Fluids. Power: ★★
- **Bonded Ravager:** 6 armor, 7 health, 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Knockdown, Flying. Moves: Tearing Jaws. Power: ★★★

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- **Whipscorpion Tyrant:** 8 armor, 12 health, Nightvision. 11 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Hardy, Knockdown, Shield, Toxic.  
Moves: Smashing Strike, Bitter Spray. Power: ★★★★★

## THE BLASTED LANDS

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*This used to be pristine. Snow and grass and wind as far as the eye can see.*

*That was before the testing began. Now even the Archivists are cautious when they set foot out here.*

*—Theremisa, Centaur Outlander*

Forty years of artifact testing, aether research, and experimentation with divine and cosmic energies has not been kind to this swath of tundra. In addition to being haunted by broken automata, disembodied gods, fused animals, and distorted spirits, the place is plagued by magical and gravitic anomalies. Some are thankfully stationary, only affecting those that blunder into them or think about them too hard, but others are migratory and have in recent years been detected as far afield as the outskirts of the City of Glass and Gold.

The Archivists still use the Blasted Lands as a testing site, but they do so more carefully now that they have lost a few scribes to the region. Outsiders typically keep well away from its borders, although there is a small but thriving subculture of bandits, mercenaries, and thrillseekers that scavenges the zone for curiosities. The Archivists derisively call them picnickers.

### Threats

- The Blasted Lands might be the one place on Holdfast where the Wallbreakers could do some good. They have a major test planned there today and, depending on the results, they might make the region a little bit worse—or improve it considerably.

- A colony of harvesters is found in the Blasted Lands. They are polite and amicable and they share their harvest gladly with anyone who asks. The Archivists claim that the automata are part of a project to “infect” the rest of the Iron Harvest with more peaceful behaviors, but others worry that the introduction of these new harvesters to the ones in the wild might just make the straw reapers smarter. Of course, no one is asking the harvesters what they think about their role in all of this.
- Gods can be found in the upper atmosphere and in the lower ocean, so why not also the depths of the earth? A team of Archivists has decided to go looking for them in the only place that no one will mind dozens of mile-wide tunnels. Their colleagues, however, worry that this work may be correlated with the increasing volcanic activity in the region.

### NPCs

- See [Archivists \[page 128\]](#) in Origins
- **Crawling Automata:** 6 armor, 2 health, Slow. 4 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Hardy, Unreasoning. Moves: Reanimate And Crawl After. Power: ★
- **Gravitic Strangeness:** 9 armor, 1 health, Insubstantial. 7 harm, Melee, Ranged, Indirect, Natural Weapon, Knockdown. Moves: Drift Through An Occupied Space, Cause Debris Storm. Power: ★★
- **Picnicker Team:** 4 armor, 7 health, 5 harm, Ranged, Poorly Equipped, Stealthy. Moves: Crossbow Volley, Retreat Into Dangerous Terrain. Power: ★★
- **Sapient Ruined Future:** 10 armor, 17 health, Insubstantial. 15 harm, Melee, Indirect, Natural Weapon, Cursing. Moves: Harry With Apocalyptic Visions, Drag Into Another Now. Power: ★★★★★

## THE SIGH

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| *Rippling grass as far as the eye can see.*



## The World of Holdfast

*When the wind's alive, it looks just like an ocean.*

*What's an ocean?*

*Well, it's a thing that looks just like the Sigh.*

*—Enetta, Gigasborn merchant, to her third child*

Between the Mainland and the Otherlands lies the Sigh. Blessed with fertile soil and regular rainfall, its grasses climb well past head level, making it all but uncrossable to the casual explorer. Even without the banks of thick, high grass and patches of swampy ground or the ambush predators that occasionally trickle in from the Bonded Wilds and the Shipwrights' Arbor, the Sigh is vast, making journeys through it as much a matter of endurance and spirit as good navigation.

A few tribes of Monsterkin call this region their home, although they are such committed isolationists they might as well be ghosts to the interlopers who occasionally pass through. They glide through the grass like water, gauge directional headings better than a compass, and can supposedly sense the movements of nearby women and animals just by the singing of the wind through the grass.

Communities that live on the borders of the Sigh have picked up a few of these tricks for crossings, but they also make use of the Skipping Stones; massive, mile-wide bare patches where the grass sea turns to open rock. These dapple the Sigh, making an interesting pattern from high up. If there is significance in the strange stone mandala that they form, no one can say what it is.

### Threats

- Wildfires sometimes sweep the region, but the regular rains keep them in check. It has been a long, dry summer and now the whole southern half of the Sigh is burning.
- Sightings of fugitive gods have been reported among the grasses. Strangely, these gods claim to be fugitives from both the

Godhunters and the Priestesses. Both sides are currently sending women to investigate.

- The princess of one of the more expansionist Bare tribes has been abducted and carried into the Sigh. The perpetrators of this crime are a tribe of Rakshasa from the other side. They insist that they do not have her anymore, although their addition of “but we wouldn’t return her if we did” hasn’t won them any friends among the Bare. The affected tribe, furious at this goading, is preparing to wage war across the Sigh—something only the suicidally reckless would do.

### NPCs

- See [Tribes of the Bare \[page 134\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [Legion of Spirits \[page 249\]](#) and [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#) in the *Adversaries* chapter
- **Grassrunner Tribeswomen:** 3 armor, 7 health, Stealthy. 7 harm, Melee, Ranged, Indirect, Aura. Moves: Set Fires, Fade Back Into the Grasses. Power: ★★
- **Deepgrass Basilisk:** 5 armor, 9 health, Hazardous, Cursing. 9 harm, Ranged, Natural Weapon, Hardy. Moves: Lazily Sun Itself, Molecular Petrification Ray. Power: ★★★

## THE GODLANDS

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*Forty years ago, this whole world was the Godlands.*

*What we live in now is a prison.*

*—Auberra, Coalitionist*

Beginning on the southern verge of the Shipwrights’ Arbor and stretching to the southern coast, the Godlands are the last redoubt of the Priestesses on the Northern Continent. The territory’s climate ranges from tropical to temperate and, while most of it is flatland, there are tall mountains clustered around the eastern coast. Everywhere in the Godlands the soil is fertile and the game animals

## The World of Holdfast

are plentiful, allowing the region to support the hordes of displaced Deists that have converged on it from the Mainland, Otherland, and adjoining wildernesses. These refugees have established cities, farming operations, and trading posts, and they are busy converting everything with a pelt into food, offerings, or profit.

Architecture in the newly settled parts of the Godlands is a still-evolving thing. The capital of the Priestesses is called Jubilee—a migrating festival city where the inhabitants rotate in and out, taking with them their artistic flourishes. The gods and representatives of the most influential cults gather there to feast and issue dictates—and to bask in the envy of every other Priestess with mainstream political aspirations. Raw goods flow into Jubilee in a constant tide, and most leave as smoke, burned to enhance the gods in residence.

Much of the trade into and out of the Godlands comes through the Cities at Sea—particularly Lobsteropolis during its bi-annual southern migration. The Godhunters have technically embargoed the whole region, but god-wrought trade-goods are appealing enough to merchants that they trickle out anyway, often at a premium for their scarcity elsewhere in the world.

The least-visited area of the Godlands is its southeastern peninsula: a combination execution grounds and ecological disaster site, cordoned off with a curtain of channeled divine energy that is maintained by a series of perimeter outposts housing powerful gods and cults. Beyond this region, which is simply called 'the Blight,' is the Southern Continent, which the Priestesses also tend to avoid due to its parasitic metal inhabitants. Occasionally, things will emerge from the Blight or from across the sea, and then the cordon is shifted to contain it—slowly paring off sections of the Godlands with every move. As of yet, there is not much worry about the pace that the border is making towards Jubilee, but perhaps this is because all of the Godlands has its breath held, wondering when the Godhunters will swarm in and eradicate every last trace of life in the region.

### Threats



- The western Godlands, covered in thick jungle and sparsely inhabited, have been reporting sightings of Lightwings both alone and in teams. Is this a ploy by the poorer, rural westerners to solicit soldiers and aid from Jubilee, or is this the beachhead for an invasion?
- A daring raid by a team of Priestesses has secured an Archivist artifact cache. The Archivists want it back and are looking to hire a team to infiltrate the Godlands and reclaim it. The Priestesses, who have a spy in the Archives, are hiring other mercenaries to infiltrate that team and use it as cover to steal more artifacts.
- Women from the southern coastline claim the Blight is leaking into the ocean. This will obviously need to be verified by a sanctioned team of explorers, but it does explain the reports of half-Monsterkin, half-god creatures emerging from the warm waters to waylay coastal shipping.

### NPCs

- See [The Priestesses of the Small Gods \[page 131\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#), [The Broken Constellations \[page 222\]](#), [The Wallbreakers \[page 247\]](#), [The Hive \[page 230\]](#), [The Quiet \[page 225\]](#), and [The Southern Bloom \[page 239\]](#) in *Adversaries*

## JUBILEE

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*You wouldn't know there's a war on from all the festivities, but they're a quirk of how the gods work and therefore they're a quirk of how we do, too.*

*We don't ever get to just stand still. We always have to be celebrating, commemorating, feasting, mourning, or praying. Every hour of the day, we channel our adoration into the gods, and every hour of the day we hope that it will be enough to sustain them against the Lightwings when they come for us.*

*–Trallbjorn, sacred dancer*

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Jubilee is a city in constant carnival. Formed during the Priestess' exodus into the Godlands, its inhabitants are among the most influential women in their faction. The migrating city is therefore a hub of economic, political, and spiritual influence for the Priestesses, and the decisions made in its brightly colored tents have consequences that carry across the region.

Visitors to Jubilee are often surprised by the festival atmosphere in a nation under siege, but each ceremonial parade, feast, or day of prayer bolsters the gods that congregate there. All gods and all Priestesses are welcome in Jubilee, although in practice only the powerful spend any amount of time there. Mortals in Jubilee are required by city law to pay an escalating daily tithe to remain. The tithe starts at nothing, but quickly ramps up into formidable sums. It resets only after a full week out of the city, making politics in Jubilee a game of chicken. Priestesses with deep pockets, many allies, and popular causes always have someone in the city to represent them. Meanwhile, women with limited funds, few friends, or uncomfortable ideas rarely spend much time in court. Particularly skilled orators pay monumental daily tithes with the help of their factions, and all of the tithes in turn feed the festivals, feasts, and other demonstrations.

When a woman has to bow out for a week, she often relocates to a place in the semi-permanent procession behind the city, where her family, businesses, and other assets commonly ride. This procession is called the Tail, and it is just as bustling as the city, although it has fewer gods.

Gods, with thousands of guaranteed worshippers in the city proper and no obligatory tithe to pay, rarely visit the tail except to talk with important members of their cult who are taking a week in exile. This tendency has led some to refer to the Tail as "the agnostic snake", although doing so is generally considered rude.

Apart from the Priestesses, the most well represented group in Jubilee is the merchant class. Bringing luxuries and sacrificial offerings to trade for charms and miracles, they can be found throughout the city and in many of the wagon-trail enclaves of the

Tail. Dealing with Jubilee is inexcusable in the eyes of the Godhunters, but it is profitable enough that no Consortium can outright refuse it.

### Threats

- On its third day of performances, the Dance of the Silks is drawing quite a crowd. The money flowing into the city's coffers is welcomed earnestly, but the gods are beginning to grumble. The dance seems to be powering not them but the dancers.
- The women of Jubilee have obtained a Lightwings. They mean to sacrifice her, even though she insists that she is on their side. Her sisters want her back, but strictly to stand trial for her crimes against the Godhunters.
- The rules on tithing are suddenly rescinded, eliminating the mandatory fees. Within a week, the courts are swamped with fringe Priestesses trying to drum up support for their crazy views. Everyone blames the Godhunters for the change, but none of the previous power blocs are able to secure enough speaking time to commission a formal investigation.

### NPCs

- See [The Priestesses of the Small Gods \[page 131\]](#) and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#) in Adversaries

## FRINGE CAMPS

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*It is a mistake to assume the Priestesses are all brainwashed barbarians. Like us, they have a hierarchy. At the fringes of their territory live the servants of minor gods, the champions of unpopular ideologies, and more than a few curious outsiders. Strangely, these women are some of the most willing to die for their beliefs, and an invasion that crosses these fringes is likely to sustain significant losses.*

*—Astrid, Godhunter Apologist*



## The World of Holdfast

On the northwest verge of the Godlands, the Fringe Camps are found. Ranging in size from small, temporary mushroom-circles of tents to enormous canvas camp-cities, habitation on the fringe is part refugee camp, part bivouacking army, and part colonizing nation. Law is loosely enforced, god-allegiance is varied, non-Priestesses are common, and fear of the Godhunters is high.

The fringes are a softer political exile for Jubilee Priestesses on a career downswing than being sent to the Blight. As such, they are also a hotbed for dissidents and philosophers. Views that would be scandalous in the mobile capital of the Godlands can be casually announced here and sometimes more important Priestesses use the fringes as a testing ground for political maneuvers.

Infrastructure in the fringes is often connected to the gods, and visitors to a camp are typically expected to offer prayers in return for working plumbing, fresh food, warding circles, and other municipal enchantments. In a camp with more than one god, one is usually designated as the utility god and its cult prospers above all others.

### Threats

- The Godhunters have planted a network of spies in the Fringe Camps. Unfortunately, most of that network seems to have unravelled or gone native. The Godhunters are sending a team to clean them up, extracting any surviving loyalists. The implications in the work might be worrying, but the pay is still good.
- A fringe camp, having grown to the size of a major city, is declaring itself the true capital of the Godlands. Called Matsuri, its boasts are appealing to the outcasts that live in the fringe cities, but they're tantamount to an incitement to revolution among the courtiers in Jubilee.
- Cuisine on the fringe is a mix of thousands of elements, incorporating styles and practices from the Five Worlds, the tribes of the Shipwrights' Arbor, the Priestesses, the Archivists, and even the Southern Continent. A skilled fringe chef can produce combinations of flavors that the women of other cities

can barely even imagine. This has made them valuable in courts across the land, so much so that the Godhunters are struggling to blunt their influence by shipping out mass-produced, ensorcelled food. In a war between bespoke fusion cookery and occult propaganda chow, there can only be one winner: everyone.

### NPCs

- See [The Priestesses of the Small Gods \[page 131\]](#) and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#) in *Adversaries*

## THE ABIDING FIEFDOMS

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*Before the Lightwings pushed our sisters back across the Sigh and down through the Arbor, we were here. Before Jubilee was formed, we were here. The other Priestesses say they rule the Godlands, and they have the force of arms to punish any dispute, but nevertheless we are here.*

*—Lin Hua, Signalfire Martyr*

The Abiding Fiefdoms are the oldest settlements in the Godlands. Having been only recently unified by the retreating armies of the Priestesses, they are still keenly aware of their individual national identities. Some of these identities have been shaped by sectarian conflicts with their neighbors and the Coalitionists walk a thin line between compelling their loyalty and tempting their disobedience when they insist that they all need to work together.

Most Abiding Fiefdoms are ruled by a single principle god and its cult, followed by a small pantheon of lesser gods. Visiting divinities from non-hostile nations are given temporary diplomatic status in these pantheons and may receive worship as guests. Visiting divinities from *hostile* nations are taken as a challenge, and the women of Jubilee are frequently torn between letting the fiefdoms'

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gods kill each other in ritual combat or else banning the practice and watching as the Fiefdoms go to war instead.

Society in the fiefdoms is organized around a balance between the gods and mortals. The mortals worship the gods to stoke them with prayer, and then the gods perform tasks such as grinding grain, cutting old-growth trees, and healing the sick. Fiefdom law is guided by the gods but written by mortals, and is often determined by what kind of gods live in a fief. Fiefs with predator gods often have mandatory hunting and fishing festivals, whereas gods of harvest require weekly feasts. This is not always disruptive to the lives of the mortals, but it does tend to tilt the culture in a fief towards a particular end result.

Godhunter infiltration of the fiefs is believed to be exceptionally low, but the Priestesses in Jubilee keep a close eye on them nonetheless. Open war among the fiefs would further divide the Godlands, and that is just the sort of thing that the Grand Cathedral wants.

### Threats

- Purity, a remote fief, still practices a tradition known as the Sacred Hunt. Every autumn equinox, a small group of travelers is, after being shown hospitality, drugged and then moved to an isolated place in the mountains. There they are chased down by a select group of locals and ceremonially butchered. The women of Jubilee do not speak about this practice, but they know of it and find it unaccountably barbaric. However, the tradition has supercharged Purity's arch god and the god is a powerful supporter of their rule. Forcibly ending the practice could have ramifications across the region.
- Acuity, a wealthy fief, is taking the startling step of replacing its arch-god. The Priestesses in Jubilee see this as an opportunity to install one of their own in its place, but the locals already have a replacement in mind. It's something called The Narrative.
- Perseverance, a mountaintop fief, is spreading rumors that their lowland rival Beatitude is hosting large delegations of Lightwings in their feasthall every night. While this cannot be



true, the Priestesses of Jubilee are sending a delegation to make absolutely certain.

### NPCs

- See [The Priestesses of the Small Gods \[page 131\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#) in Adversaries
- **Isolated Cultist:** 3 armor, 4 health. 6 harm, Melee. Moves: Strike Desperately, Call Out to Patron. Power: ★
- **Masked Gathering:** 3 armor, 10 health, Stealthy. 7 harm, Melee, Formation, Trap. Moves: Set Snares, Draw Knives. Power: ★★
- **Too-Polite Village:** 3 armor, 10 health, Innocuous. 8 harm, Melee, Formation, Trap. Moves: Serve Drugged Food, Begin the Sacrifice At Midnight. Power: ★★★
- **Blood-Crazed God of the Hunt:** 6 armor, 15 health, Hardy, Magic Ward, Small Gods. 11 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Maul, Beckon Followers to Feed. Power: ★★★★★

## THE BLIGHT

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*Even if it was just those flowers, it would be a threat to the entire world. But it's not. The idiot Deists consigned their broken gods there, and their plague-sick, and then they seeded the region with the worst of their predators and the most poisonous of their flora, hoping that it would somehow even out.*

*The Bloom is simply the most recent addition to this toxic dumping ground for supernatural horrors. The Priestesses keep it all walled off with curtains of golden energy, but whenever the wall breaks, the Blight spills forth like pus from a wound and they're forced to re-cordon it.*

*We could probably wipe out the whole Godlands by making a big enough break in the curtain, or by taking out enough of the channelers that sustain it, but then we'd have to deal with the Blight as it came sweeping northwest.*

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| —*Ambrina, Godhunter spy*

During the early days of the Godwar, the Godhunters were still constraining their operations to specific gods. Their targets were divinities that they deemed to be the greatest threat to social order, or the most likely to rally mortals in opposition to the Grand Cathedral. Whenever possible, they would scare off the god's cult before they killed it and call what they were doing a liberation of the entrapped believers. However, when a cult was too dedicated to back down, squads of Lightwings, their Halos like rings of dusky fire, would destroy the worshippers along with their god.

Sometimes, due to the inherent survivability of gods and the inherent squishiness of mortals, one of the Small Gods would survive the death of its entire cult. On these occasions, the mind of the god was irreparably broken. Corrupted by grief and fury, and choosing to be feared rather than loved, it would enslave, possess, and subvert the mortals it came across.

Killing these gods seemed impossibly sacrilegious to the newly formed coalition of Priestesses, so these ruined divinities were rounded up and driven south. At the southernmost end of the Godlands, where the grass and rocks gave way to a rocky, subtropical peninsula, they were imprisoned behind a curtain of channeled divine energy. Priestesses and their gods volunteered to stand watch over the containment zone, channeling their powers into the barrier. Over time, as the war dragged on, feelings of sympathy for these ruined, insane gods waned and the peninsula became a dumping ground for other threats—ones that were either too difficult to kill or where it would have been politically or morally difficult to do so.

In time, exile to the Blight became a stand-in for execution. No hands would be dirtied by sending someone across the curtain, even if it was as guaranteed a kill as anyone with a sword and a chopping block could hope for.

At the same time, the inhabitants of the Blight began to stage attacks on the perimeter curtain. By massing together and hitting it

at the same time, they were able to break through in places, forcing the Priestesses to give ground and expand the perimeter.

Of course, this was only a temporary solution, and the Priestesses knew it. Every time the perimeter expanded, they were forced to assign more gods to maintain it, or to let it weaken—a prospect that would inevitably lead to more breaches.

Eventually, a visiting delegation of Archivists was presented with the problem. They suggested that the primary issue with the attacks was that the Blight did not have a stable ecosystem. With no real pressure on the gods being kept inside—at least, apart from the *other* gods being kept inside—it was easy for them to begin to organize. The introduction of predators would fix this, said the Archivists. If there were things inside that could push back against the ruined gods, plagueborn aberrations, and political prisoners waiting beyond the curtain, the beings inside would have to spend more of their time on simple survival and the Blight would settle into a quieter equilibrium.

Like many of the Archivists' theories, this was a better idea on paper than in practice.

The Blight has only become more wild since the importing of terrifying hyperpredators from all over the Northern Continent. Attacks come almost weekly, and the southern border of the Godlands is beginning to look more like an armed encampment than a magical picket.

A small silver lining to all of this is that the Blight has proven very effective at limiting the spread of the Bloom in the Godlands. Bloom outbreaks are rare along the curtain or—seemingly—within the Blight itself, though no one has gone inside to check.

Rarely, there are rumors of a society of believerless gods in the middle of the Blight, but even women in winehouses treat these stories with the extreme skepticism they deserve.

### Threats



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- An important Small God and its cult have been very vocal about some unpopular opinions. They are bound for exile in the Blight. The Coalitionists would like to free them, but the best place to attack the prison convoy is right on the border of the Blight.
- The eastern edge of the Blight expands suddenly, swallowing an important outpost. As this expansion is only a few days old, a team of expendable adventurers is organized to search it for supplies and survivors.
- The center of the curtain breaks, spilling Blight creatures out across the Godlands. The Priestesses, already in the middle of a shift in political power, are now balanced on a knife-edge between fighting back against the creatures or packing their entire civilization up and marching it to war against the Godhunters, ceding the Godlands to the monsters.

### NPCs

- See [The Priestesses of the Small Gods \[page 131\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#) and [The Southern Bloom \[page 239\]](#) in Adversaries
- **Gibbering Blightling**: 2 armor, 4 health, Unreasoning. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Contagious. Moves: Lunge At the Ankles. Power: ★
- **Blightling Swarmpede**: 2 armor, 8 health, Unreasoning. 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Contagious. Moves: Tramplebite. Power: ★★
- **Regressed God**: 4 armor, 9 health, Unreasoning, Small God. 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Bellow, Unthinking Charge. Power: ★★★
- **Pustulent Megabeast**: 3 armor, 10 health, Unreasoning, Holdfast Megabeasts. 9 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Contagious. Moves: Infectious Spray. Power: ★★★
- **Corrupted Lightwings**: 6 armor, 12 health, 12 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Area, Aura, Contagious. Moves: Shriek And Unleash Magic, Vomit Ichor. Power: ★★★★★

- **It Was An Aristocrat Once:** 7 armor, 25 health, Destined. 15 harm, Melee, Area, Natural Weapon, Hated, Contagious, Toxic, Parry. Moves: Blighted Shriek, Filthy Spray. Power: ★★★★★

## CITIES AT SEA

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*In the beginning, Holdfast was bare, so Multigoddess Buel dressed it in oceans. The oceans were empty, so Megabeast Kha filled them with creatures. The creatures were fearsome and strange, but the Multigoddess was not deterred. She built hollow places within them and there the women of the depths took shelter.*

*—Chant of the Origin, translated from Echospeak*

Like the Five Worlds that came before, Holdfast has Beast Cities. However, rather than trekking on tortoiseback across burning sands, most of Holdfast's Beast Cities swim, crawl, or lurk beneath the waters of its pristine oceans. Not all Cities At Sea are on beastback, and not all aquatic Megabeasts are colonized, but those that are represent the majority of oceanic civilization.

A city on beastback (a regional term which is not always meant literally) benefits from the mobility and defenses of its host. In return, its citizens are incentivized to ensure that their host remains healthy. Cities that have been around for a few decades live in a kind of comfortable mutualism, whereas cities that have only been around for a few years are fraught with tension between the citizens and their beast. Attempts to found *new* settlements often end in disappointment and devouring, but there are more than a few deepwater leviathans that don't even seem to be aware of their passengers at all.

Living within a Beast City is not without its risks, as sometimes the cities fight or breed with or prey upon other Megabeasts in their territories. There are also occasional parasitic infections to contend with, changes in depth and temperature, annual migrations, and

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the politics that come from having national borders that can change from hour to hour. Many locals have gills and can traverse the outside ocean with ease, but not all. To accommodate their air-breathing kin's needs, as well as to host the occasional visitor from the surface, the cities tend to be encapsulated by pockets of air—either in magical suspension bubbles or contained within the flesh of the beast. This allows significant populations of mortals to live within the dome, safe from the crushing, deadly weight of water outside.

Cities of note include the far-ranging Icthya, the surface-locked trade-hub Tentaculorum, the seat of pan-oceanic government New Aran, and the coast-wandering caravan city Lobsteropolis. Species inhabiting the cities are a mix of biologies, including Mermaids, Seasnake Lamias, Eelkin, Shark-hybrids, Diving-Bird Harpies, Lantern Girls, Brackish Water Nymphs, and others that are well adapted to life under the waves, but there are also Golems, Falcon Harpies, Gigasborn, and others that seem like they would be better suited to life in a desert. Oddly, both the aquatic and desert phenotypes have the same dark sepia skin, and First Generation women of both types have memories of a place called The Wastes.

Specific culture varies heavily from city to city, often informed by the kind of beast the settlement has been built upon, but faith is much more constant across the ocean. The inhabitants of the Cities at Sea often have a strong reverence for the tides, the currents, and the Megabeast Kha. In addition, their geographical remoteness and innate defensibility has shielded them from the influence of the Godhunters, which in turn has made them an attractive place to stay for the Priestesses of the Small Gods. Blessings and spells from the Priestesses to aid navigation or foraging are a much more tempting offering than the Godhunters' oath of retribution against anyone who shelters the agents of the gods, so a number of fugitive gods now live beneath the waves. The Lightwings have taken note of this, and have begun to preach ominously about the Deisey of the women of the deep.

For all that the Cities at Sea appear to be thriving, their portion of the world is not without its threats. Aquatic Beast Cities have been



known sometimes to vanish utterly, or to be found wandering far from their typical ranges, empty of all inhabitants. Some say that this is the work of privateers, others speak of a predator so large that it hunts the Beast Cities. Still others implicate the Lightwings. Cities that are found uninhabited are often left that way in case the same doom were to come to them again. Unless recolonized, these ghost cities grow feral, eventually forgetting a time when women ever walked across their skins.

The same rumors that swarm around the ghost cities also tell of a City Beast that lives well below the surface, at a depth where the pressure itself is killing. Completely cut off from contact with the land, Abyssus is more a nautical horror story than a provable concept. According to the tales, its women are vampire eels that use the blood of upper ceaners to fuel their dread experiments. No one gives these stories credence, except when the nights are particularly dark and unidentifiable sounds billow up from the deep.

### Threats

- The Godhunters assemble an army on the shore and demand that the all oceanic territories surrender their Priestesses for evaluation. The Cities at Sea do not dignify this with a response. Within a week, the Coastal Wars have begun.
- Followers of Tressa, a Facet of the Multigoddess, have decided that their calling is to map the sea. They need a veteran dive team and are willing to offer a reasonable share of whatever treasures they find to any willing volunteers. Their first destination is a rock structure known as Kha's Tooth.
- Sunside, a trading hub built on the back of a pelagic sole, has gone silent. Swimmers passing through the area report that its lights have gone out and that the streets are empty. If no one else has visited it in the meantime, there may still be good plunder there. However, the sole was last seen near Mummer's Grin Chasm, the supposed location of Abyssus.

### NPCs

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- See [Oceanic Ideologies \[page 143\]](#) and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in Origin
- See [Holdfast Megabeasts \[page 233\]](#) and [The Hive \[page 230\]](#) in Adversaries
- **Tide-Carried Blunderjelly:** 0 armor, 1 health, Aquatic, Unreasoning, Toxic. 5 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Drift And Sting. Power: ★
- **Vampire Eel Raider:** 3 armor, 5 health, Aquatic, Stealthy. 5 harm, Melee, Vampiric. Moves: Bloody the Target, Fade Into the Shadows. Power: ★
- **Shoal of Carnivorous Barnacles:** 2 armor, 9 health, Aquatic, Unreasoning, Insubstantial. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Strip the Flesh, Colonize the Bones. Power: ★★
- **Lesser Wolfshark:** 3 armor, 7 health, Aquatic, Unreasoning. 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Bite And Dark Away, Call The Pack. Power: ★★
- **Vampire Eel Bloodhunters:** 4 armor, 6 health, Aquatic, Vampiric, Well Equipped. 7 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation. Moves: Bloody the Target, Take a Hostage And Retreat. Power: ★★
- **Vampire Eel Sanguimage:** 4 armor, 5 health, Aquatic. 9 harm, Ranged, Area, Indirect, Aura, Vampiric. Moves: Ranged Blood Siphon, Obscuring Bloodmist. Power: ★★★
- **Baleen Screamwhale:** 5 armor, 16 health, Aquatic, Hardy. 9 harm, Ranged, Area, Natural Weapon. Moves: Suck In Huge Volume Of Water, Bone-Shattering Blast of Conical Sound. Power: ★★★★★
- **Parasite Hulk:** 0 armor, 25 health, Aquatic, The Hive. 3 harm, Ranged, Area, Contagious. Moves: Drift Towards An Inhabited Area, Discharge Parasites When Struck. Power: ★★★★★

## TENTACULORUM

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*You want paralytics? I've got paralytics. You want necrosis? I can do necrosis. You just want somethin' to keep the fish off'a ya, I can do that too, and anything in between.*

—*Venom Engineer, Sweet Apothecary Toxincrafts, Third Fold, Windward Crest*

The gigantic Man O' War megabeast, Tentaculorum, is the only City at Sea that spends all of its time in contact with the air. Driftwood edifices are lashed in ramshackle fashion to its floating bladder, their salt-stained bones swaying with the rise and fall of the swells. Meanwhile, an armada of rowboats and rafts infests the tentacle-crowded water around it. Tentaculorum's tendrils, which drift along the surface and dangle into the deep, are a major nautical hazard to anyone close by, making approaches by vessels dangerous and ones by swimmers all but impossible. For that reason, the vessels of the makeshift armada exist. Each is crewed by a woman or women ready to serve as guides, threading the drifting maze of stingers for a price.

Many of the armada-women live on their boats, but during storms everyone comes to shelter on the main bulb of the floating beast. The galleries and storefronts are packed full, the viewing platforms are covered with thaumaturgic shields, and the whole community quietly holds their breath, praying that nothing load-bearing will tear loose in the wind. These prayers are not always feel sufficient, and on several occasions aging sections of the city have been replaced.

The most expensive property on Tentaculorum is in the middle folds, on the side of the bladder that most often faces away from the wind—known as the Calmward Crest. Three major mercantile concerns have their headquarters here, and a single multi-story kitchen complex is entangled with their structures, serving meals and gossip to the architecturally entwined rivals. Allegedly, as a result of some idle chatter during a serving of stargazy pie, the former Trade Princess of Sweetwind Shipping was kicked off of a balustrade and into the tendrils far below. She has since been succeeded by her second in command, a woman of few words and minimal appetite.

While Tentaculorum's bladder is non-venomous, its tendrils do deliver a shockingly lethal sting, even in small doses. While many



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of the city's inhabitants have tried to cultivate an immunity, there is always risk. Still, the unique nature of the beast has in turn created a unique local economy.

Venom Engineering, right after trade, is the second most prosperous profession on Tentaculorum. With most of its apothecaries designing powerful and specific toxins at the behest of well-paying and anonymous foreign clients, a few have styled themselves as so-called "White Coats", using their abilities to heal by goading the body into purging itself of specific ailments. Others, the Gray Coats, specialize in intoxicants, aphrodisiacs, and other recreational poisons. The Black Coats, which would otherwise complete the trinity, are not generally believed to exist. Specializing in conceptual poisons, toxins so powerful as to be completely unsuited to subterfuge, the Black Coats are supposedly developing formulas that could destroy gods, cities, or even the mortal understanding of existence.

Crime on Tentaculorum is generally rare, due to both the city's wealth and its excess of professional poisoners. Still, the occasional incident does occur, especially in the Lower Fringe where outsiders' boats are docked. The city does not have much of a formal justice system, but women who kill, beat, or steal from another citizen are encouraged to make guilt offerings to the wronged party's friends and family. Forgoing these customary offerings means accepting that any revenge those friends and family take is perfectly justified.

With no natural resources other than fish, seaweed, and poison, Tentaculorum would almost certainly fail without regular trade. In between storms, its needs for driftwood, bracing material, rigging, and other land-goods is constant. Waste disposal, on the other hand, is not a problem. Food scraps, sewage, and other miscellany are thrown over the railings, attracting small fish and thereby feeding the City Beast. Tentaculorum derives a good part of its diet from the city on its back and, without its occupants, it would be just one more windblown hazard haunting the waves.

### Threats

- The Sweetwind, Pale Dawn, and Nightflyer shipping companies are engaged in a furious trade war over who has the rights to the city's driftwood importing. By posing as kitchen staff, a team of enterprising women could infiltrate the three companies and turn this situation to their advantage.
- Viathet, a vain Lamia, has come forward with a shocking admission. She is a Black Coat and she has designed a venom that can poison time. At her whim, she claims, she can freeze history permanently, locking everyone in the same moment for the rest of existence. Those that believe her would prefer for this not to happen.
- Two households, both at about the same elevation on the Windward Crest, have been engaging in an escalating series of crimes and formal offerings against each other. No one is sure what their feud started over, but neither seems willing to let it die. Yesterday, there was almost a murder. Today, the daughters of both houses will meet at a masquerade ball, setting in motion a tragic chain of events that will result in the destruction of the city.

### NPCs

- See [Oceanic Ideologies \[page 143\]](#) and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in Origin
- **Shifty Graymarket Venom Engineer:** 2 armor, 6 health, 7 harm, Ranged, Toxic. Moves: Fling Venom, I Already Poisoned Something In This Room. Power: ★★

## NEW ARAN

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*It may be that these shadows in my head, memories of the so-called Five Worlds, are an illusion, but it matters little. They show me what I am. They show me what I can be. They remind me that in my heart I am a conqueror, and that I was never meant to rule just one city.*

*—Laitholoathiell, Queen of New Aran*

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The other Cities at Sea keep an eye on the Spiral Queendom, New Aran, for a good reason. Its queen, Laitholoathiell, has declared that she owns the rest of the sea, and she has the military to try and prove it.

Unfortunately for her, the predatory Megasnail upon which she has founded her empire does not move particularly fast. New Aran is built in the hollow cavities of its shell, affording its citizens great protection, but its soldiers cannot easily sortie against anyone more than a few days' swim from the snail. Although Lathiolathiell can command fealty from other cities when they are close to her, as soon as their beasts migrate outside of snail-range, her influence wanes. To remedy this, she knows she needs to take over a more mobile Megabeast. Everyone from the Godhunters to the women of Ichthy has a vested interest in preventing that from happening.

Conditions inside New Aran are good, and the city has grown prosperous off of the tribute it has collected. A small gathering of vassal cities—towns aboard the backs of trilobites, nestled between the spines of urchins, and tucked in the maw of a stonefish—follow the beast, and trade flows freely between them. However, Laitholoathiell has also backed up her ambition with a wager.

Anyone who can deliver her an agile, swimming Megabeast fit for colonization will win her hand in marriage. How long that marriage would last is a matter of some gossip among the locals, as Laitholoathiell does not seem the type to surrender even a measure of her power easily.

### Threats

- A rough-spoken fisherwoman shows up in court, a strangely docile Megabeast plesiosaur docked outside the snail. She says that the plesiosaur is hers, and that she is here to collect her reward.
- A party of adventurers busts into the throne room, kidnaps Laitholoathiell, and drags her off to the mainland. They say that it's for the greater good, and that she's the key to forcing the Multigoddess to reawaken. Unfortunately, with the queen gone,



it's only a matter of time before New Aran is plunged into a brutal succession war.

- Laitholoathiehl acquires another Megabeast, and this one is terrestrial. She has lofty plans for her new “war bear,” and they involve the Grand Cathedral.

### NPCs

- See [Oceanic Ideologies \[page 143\]](#) in Origin
- **Lathiolathiehl's Royal Guard:** 5 armor, 10 health, Well Equipped. 7 harm, Melee. Moves: Halberd Combination, Call For Backup. Power: ★★★

## ICHTHYA

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*Every time you see it come up out of the depths at you, you're reminded that it's not tame. That the only thing keeping it from devouring you is your own insignificance. Normally, I give the City Beasts a lot of leeway for how they are. They're more Kha's children than Buel's, and I get it. But to enter Ichthy, you have to deliberately swim into the horrible gaping mouth, past the shreds of flesh still clinging to its teeth, and that's more than anyone ought to take.*

*—Lanielle DuMarne, inter-city trader, Pale Dawn Shipping Company*

Among the deep water cities, Ichthy is something of an anomaly. Most Beast Cities are named for their beast, and the names of both beast and city are interchangeable.

Ichthy, on the other hand, resides within the gullet of a Liopleurodon named Charlie.

How Charlie got its name is unclear, and is a topic for debate among the local sages. Charlie's inhabitants, however, are generally good tempered and friendly despite their beast's regular diet of other beasts' flesh. The women of Ichthy know that they are living

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inside of one of the deadliest Megabeasts in the ocean, and so they tend to not to be too concerned about problems facing the outside world.

Because their beast can range far, swim quickly, and generally look after itself, Ichthyans typically fall into one of two political camps. The Pathfinders believe that their society's best possible role is to use Charlie's mobility to deliver trade goods and messages to other cities on the coast or other Cities at Sea. The Warbringers, on the other hand, see the rest of civilization as meat. Other cities are there to be plundered, they say, and it is an Ichthyan's duty to do that plundering. Why else would they have all spontaneously incarnated inside of a giant sea predator? Neither faction shows any real hostility to visitors, who are welcomed with open arms, but the Warbringers often vent their political feelings on small, undefended encampments on the ocean bottom as Charlie passes by.

Being located in Charlie's gullet, secured in a magic-reinforced pouch of flesh, the citizens of Ichthya are very invested in their beast's continuing health. Lately, it has been eating only a part of its kills, and the Ichthyans are worried that it may have taken sick. If so, it could be time for a second Expedition To The Stomach to sort things out.

### Threats

- The city is embattled. A wave of gigantic tapeworm larvae is pressing at its gates. Will anyone step in to save them, or will Charlie become a parasite hulk—senseless, contagious, and drifting?
- Today is ballot day. Pathfinders and Warbringers alike vote for members of the council that leads Ichthya. For the past ten years, the Pathfinders have had a majority, but this year the Warbringers are expected to sweep.
- Godhunters are arriving in the city, making overtures to the locals. They would like to give the liopleurodon a list of targets. The locals are considering this offer.

### NPCs

- See [Oceanic Ideologies \[page 143\]](#) in Origin
- **Rampant Gutworm:** 2 armor, 5 health, Aquatic, The Hive. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Spit Acid, Burrow. Power: ★★
- **Charlie:** 6 armor, 25 health, Aquatic, Holdfast Megabeasts. 15 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Rip And Retreat. Power: ★★★★★

## LOBSTEROPOLIS

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*Welcome to the first truly egalitarian society; the only one of its kind on this world or the worlds that came before. A singular place, Lobsteropolis is. There's a beast for every family here, and customers no matter where the column takes them. Travel all of Holdfast, and you'll never find merchants such as these. But if you don't like the wares you're seeing, simply wait a moment and the Migration will bring you new ones. In a city without compare, a paragon of amphibious commerce, you can always be sure you'll—*

*FREEEEESH SPIIIIIIIKE FIIIIISHHH!*

*—Carolaude Montrefuss, self-appointed ambassador of Lobsteropolis, and Berneria Proust, neighboring fishmonger brandishing catch*

Lobsteropolis, sometimes facetiously called the Jewel of the Depths, is a city of contradictions. Even its name is not a matter of consensus, with many residents preferring to call it Crabsmarch or, more colorfully, Squidbait. Instead of sitting atop a single monolithic creature, Lobsteropolis is a procession of mansion-sized crustaceans, mudskippers, starfish, and sea cucumbers that winds from shallows to shoreline and back again over many miles, fanning out into migrating clusters as they forage in the surf and sand.

Most creatures in the column are claimed by a family, and every family in Lobsteropolis has a trade. The families tend to be



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organized in bands, with the leatherworkers riding beside the leatherworkers, the blacksmiths with the blacksmiths, and the the glasswrights with the glasswrights—although fishmongers and kelpwine sellers are found throughout.

Politics in Lobsteropolis is anarchic. With no one family controlling more than a single beast, the colony is sometimes also referred to as the City of a Thousand Princesses. Each family has absolute domain over its own beast, but not the beasts of its competitors—which ride directly next to it, and this has turned advertising in the city into a colorful riot of disinformation. Crabs fly banners declaring their neighbors to be scoundrels, lobstershops hire barkers to loudly insist that they're the only tavern in the city that doesn't water their beer, and pavillions atop starfish are outfitted with garish wooden scaffolding to block out the view of the businesses behind them. On top of all this, sending a message from one end of the city to the other can take weeks, if it arrives at all. The city's messenger service consists of as many legitimate operators as it does illegitimate ones, and even the locals sometimes mistake one for the other.

Unlike the other Cities at Sea, Lobsteropolis does not have a standing military—or even a city watch. The individual beasts are hardy and, when bandits come, the formation bunches together. Only the families left out in the open are raided.

While the other families bicker and politick, a small faction of glassblowers is looking to change the Lobsteropolis status quo. They have banded together into a Mercantile Consortium called Many Hands, with each setting aside a portion of her daily profit into a pool of funds that are used to buy mercenaries, hire messengers, and tip goods-criers. Although Consortiums wield great influence elsewhere, in Lobsteropolis this “incorporation” is being scoffed at from head to tail of the procession. It is expanding in spite of the mockery.

### Threats

- After several peaceful months of winding slowly over the western sandbars, the formation is turning towards a long,

narrow gap in a pair of barrier reefs known colloquially as “The Death Funnel.” Local shark hybrids, accustomed to preying on rare and heavily armed merchant fleets, are sharpening their spears in anticipation. Attempts to convince the herd of megabeasts to turn away have been thus far without luck.

- It has been a profitable season, and the glassblowers now own over half the formation. They control everything from the ragpickers and oilsellers at the tail end to the band of blacksmiths in the middle, charging taxes in return for protection. Afraid of being gobbled up, the rest of Lobsteropolis has also incorporated. Now the two groups are staring each other down from both sides of the line of smithies. Their peace is a strained, temporary thing, and all it would take is a little bit of violence for the migrating bazaar to turn into a migrating civil war.
- Spawning season has come. The city turns towards warmer waters and the broad, unsettled beaches of the distant south. This year, however, packs of Archivists are following the city, jotting down notes and making predictions about how easily it will be to domesticate a freshly hatched Megabeast.

### NPCs

- See [Oceanic Ideologies \[page 143\]](#), [Landed Nations \[page 148\]](#), and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in Origin
- **Rogue Lobster:** 10 armor, 5 health, Fortified, Aquatic. 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon. Moves: Grab And Squeeze. Power: ★★ ★

## THE SOUTHERN CONTINENT

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*The whole place is like a fever dream. Dunes of razor-sharp obsidian glass. Fields without air where parasitic metal flowers grow. A mountain that cuts a hole in the sky and tribes of gibbering metal things that sing in the perpetual twilight. It's like the Multigoddess didn't bother to finish building this*

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*place, and the unpolished edges are sharp enough to cut yourself on.*

*—Freydis, Lightwings survivor from the Second Expedition to the Interior*

To a map-maker, the Southern Continent is a critical mass of Here Be Monsters illustrations. They crowd around the vaguely annotated landmass showing women infested with flowers, crystalline Megabeasts, tendril clusters reaching down from the sky, and spindly, spiderlike natives made of black, shifting metal.

Contact between the southern and northern continents is rare, although contact with the Cities at Sea is slightly more common. Coastal enclaves living just off the coast trade with their deep-water sisters, ensuring a steady trickle of artifacts and stories out into the wider world. That the coastal women seem only partially made of flesh, the rest of their bodies replaced with a glittery, patchwork metal is only a curiosity to the deep-dwellers—not a concern.

Inward past the coasts, the Southern Continent grows stranger. Things like gravity and atmosphere are no longer constants in the inner reaches, and most of the local life seems to have hybridized to some extent with the mutable black metal. In the deepest regions, everything is made of it—plants, animals, and women. This does not seem to bother the locals, who regard fully biological creatures with curiosity and pity.

Recently, envoys from the Southern Continent have been causing a stir on the mainland, disrupting the balance between the factions with gifts: artifacts that not even the Archivists can duplicate and powerful grafts of black metal. Some nations are prepared to go to war over the right to be visited by these envoys. If they do so, it will be a war that only the envoys win.

### Threats

- The Archivists, hungry for more information on the Southern Continent, announce a competition. The first group of women



to visit the Black Needle and return will win access to the deepest archives. Already, teams are assembling in Ichhya, which is poised to pass the western coast in a few weeks' time.

- The envoys of the southern continent are revealed to be criminals, outcasts, and swindlers. They are exploiting their status and their powers to entrench themselves in the politics of the mainland. Rather than cast them out, the nations hosting them are suppressing the story, hoping to retain their advantage in the region. This facade lasts until a second group of metallic beings arrives, loudly declaring that they are there to bring their kinswomen to justice.
- A dim pulse of purple light paints the sky over the Southern Continent for three days. On the fourth, the first wave of evacuees hits the Mainland. No one is giving a coherent story about what's happening, but the entire Southern Continent seems to be emptying and coming north in what is either Holdfast's greatest refugee crisis or its most disorganized invasion.

### NPCs

- See [Peoples of the Southern Continent \[page 140\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Convergence \[page 228\]](#) and [The Southern Bloom \[page 239\]](#) in *Adversaries*

## FLOWER DUCHIES

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*Beauteous. They were so sweet...*

*We should share this communion...*

*My skin is so hot...*

*Where...where am I?*

*I...I'm growing, aren't I?*

*Put me down. Put me down. Put me down.*

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| *—Jauceln, Naga Archivist, Second Expedition to the Interior*

In the heart of the Bloom, surrounded by swirling metallic pollen, lies a civilization. To say that it is thriving would not be an exact truth, as its inhabitants are so heavily parasitized by flowers that they move slowly and ponderously, weighed down by the riot of blossoms on their backs. However, unlike most of the Bloom's victims, they have managed to retain their sentience. Thanks to something in the black metal that runs already through their systems—or perhaps thanks to something in their natures—they can think and talk, albeit slowly. Furthermore, the growths of the Bloom nourish them, freeing them from the burden of eating and drinking. This enables them to pursue poetry, horticulture, and politics without having to worry about details like where the next meal is coming from.

The Flower Duchies occupy a portion of the Southern Continent that is already swamped by the Bloom. However, it can easily be picked out of the black violet fields, even in the perpetual twilight, by its startling array of colors. The locals have created thousands of different cultivars of the Bloom, each in a different shape or hue, and they cover the crumbling stone ruins that dot the area in heaps of particolored blossoms. Because organic clothing degrades quickly in the presence of so much of the Bloom, the locals mostly wear their own flowers—the exact shade and arrangement of which determines social positioning. A woman of the Duchies who wears an entire garden on her skin is typically more important than someone with only a few sprouts, although exceptions exist.

Traversing the Flower Duchies is difficult for an outsider and requires either sealed armor or a constant, low-grade pulse of aether to keep the ambient pollen from taking root. The locals are said to produce tea that allows the drinkers to be unbothered by Bloom pollen, but there are a number of reasons to doubt that notion.

Those outsiders that do spend any amount of time in the Duchies find that its inhabitants have disagreements and power-struggles just like anyone else. However, due to the Bloom's sedative effect on

their systems, those power-struggles play out so slowly that a team of fast-moving outsiders could easily change the balance of power in the region with just a few operations. The ruling faction, the Lillywild, is aware of this and has been pondering what to do about it since the Duchies' first contact with the outside world.

### Threats

- The Lotus Eaters, a team of Archivists researching alternative cures for the Bloom, has disappeared into the heart of the Duchies. The Archivists are offering a sizable reward for news of what happened to them.
- Word of the Duchies' fashions has reached the northern continent, prompting a wave of imitations in the Petty Holdings. Foolishly, one of the Holdings has used actual Bloom pollen imported from the south. Their transformed court is quite happy in their new state and wishes to share it with the rest of the world, but the rest of the world is a little less than lukewarm on the matter.
- A political powderkeg, slow-burning for the last five years, has finally gone off. A bit of ill-considered poetry exchanged between rivals has plunged the Flower Duchies into civil war. Now massive armies march ponderously over the fields of the Bloom and, unless something is done right away, in three or four months there will be bloodshed.

### NPCs

- See [The Southern Bloom \[page 239\]](#) in Adversaries
- **Sonorous Poet:** 1 armor, 6 health, Slow, Southern Bloom. 4 harm, Melee, Contagious. Moves: Recite Hypnotic Poetry, Spread Soporific Spores. Power: ★
- **Floral Brute Squad:** 1 armor, 10 health, Slow, Southern Bloom. 6 harm, Melee, Formation, Contagious. Moves: Rush And Restrain. Power: ★★
- **Flower Duchy Aristocrat:** 3 armor, 8 health, Slow, Southern Bloom. 8 harm, Melee, Contagious. Moves: Insensate Swing, Command Others To Attack. Power: ★★★



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- **Sweet-Scented Army:** 4 armor, 17 health, Slow, Southern Bloom. 10 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation, Contagious. Moves: Spear Phalanx, Fill the Air With Billowing Pollen. Power: ★★★★★

## THE CRYSTAL EMPIRE

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*The Convergence does not touch these lands. The locals will not let it. They are formed from magic: artifacts that walk like women. It waits outside their borders like a hound, patient and hungry.*

*—Gamin Khy, Angel scribe, Second Expedition to the Interior*

Near the heart of the continent, a break in the glossy black creep of the Convergence gapes like an open wound. Instead of obsidian spires and low, knife-edged dunes, the place is full of shining crystals. Even in the perpetual twilight, it dazzles the eyes like a fresh snowfall. Its buildings, roads, and even people are all carved of the same pellucid material, and the natives of the place speak as much in vibration as they do in words.

However, despite its first impression, life in the Crystal Empire is anything but tranquil. Outsiders, especially those afflicted with the Convergence, rarely see much of the lands or learn much of their culture. They are turned away at the gate by the Quartzwork Simulacra—or simply destroyed, if they are too overtaken by the slick, black metal. The Convergence rings the empire, feeding on its magic, and locals often refer to it simply as “the enemy.” Raiding parties are frequently led out into it, to destroy its pawns and force it back, and this has earned the Simulacra a reputation for barbarism almost everywhere they visit.

Despite the cooperation that the women on these teams show, the Empire has a host of internal problems. Only a few generations ago, it was made up of five individual nations, one of which had contact with the shore. Fifteen years ago, due to treachery, that shoreline nation was shattered, the Convergence sweeping in and covering its holdings over a single fortnight as civilians fled into the

neighboring nations. Of the remaining four, one nation was lost in the ensuing war over who was responsible for this catastrophe. The remaining three, after a brutal and exhausting campaign, were unified. Unfortunately, by that point, they no longer had the resources to fight each other, only to keep the Convergence at bay.

The betrayal, the war, and the bloody unification are all quite fresh in the memories of the Simulacra, and the Empire rests on unsteady foundations. Only the constant threat of being devoured by the Convergence is keeping it unified. Periodically, dissidents suggest that the Empire should be abandoned and the entire civilization relocated to the ocean, but—without the government's support to drive a route through the Convergence—it is unlikely that any of the Simulacra would survive the trek across the wastes of the fifth nation to the sea.

Instead of dwelling on this, most Simulacra busy themselves with their trades. The economy of the Crystal Empire revolves around magic, which is both created and shaped by the Simulacra. Depending on its “pitch,” a term which the Simulacra insist describes something meaningful about it, magic to them is either nourishment, currency, weaponry, or waste-product. Casters from outside the Empire—particularly ones that have been tarnished by the Convergence—do not see the difference between these states. Magic is magic, they say. The Simulacra consider outsider magic ghastly and rude.

Their own spellwork is much more nuanced. It uses aether collected by the Empire's buildings—everything from fortresses to hovels, all built from jumbled crystal—that is released in a rush when the crystal housing it is broken. Because they Simulacra also eat magic, a dinner in the poorer parts of the empire often involves snapping a single finger-width stick of quartz in front of a group of diners. By the same token, a banquet is simply the breaking of a much bigger piece. New crystals grow very slowly over time, making rationing a matter of both local and national concern.

Recently, thanks to a published report by an expedition of Archivists, factions from the Northern Continent have taken an

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interest in the Empire. Living aether batteries are not the kind of resource that either the Archivists, the Priestesses, or the Godhunters can afford to pass up. According to rumor, all of them have dispatched covert diplomatic missions to explore the possibility of trade.

Meanwhile on the gleaming, twilight streets, stories of vanishing citizens and silent vessels passing by overhead have stoked a considerable fear of foreigners.

### Threats

- In the largely Convergence-free Northern Continent, a trio of Simulacra have escaped the Archivists' clutches. Surrounded by women they justifiably associate with their captors, they are killing their way across the landscape, trying to fight their way home.
- The Godhunters are looking to establish permanent trade with the Empire. They are looking for a few brave adventurers to join their delegation. The responsibilities of those adventurers will include pathfinding, guardwork, and military action against any other faction that seeks ownership of land that clearly belongs to the Grand Cathedral.
- The Empire is unravelling. Large knots of Simulacra flee towards the coast while Bulbships swoop overhead, picking off the stragglers. In weeks, the region will be erased, replaced with trackless stretches of Convergence. Late to the scene and unable to capture any of the Simulacra, the Priestesses have decided to send a team to explore the vacant ruins of the Empire, in hopes of finding something else to turn the tide of the Godwar.

### NPCs

- See [Archivists \[page 128\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Convergence \[page 228\]](#) in Adversaries
- **Quartzwork Refugee:** 5 armor, 3 health, Enhanced Strength, Hardy. 5 harm, Ranged, Aura. Moves: Throw Paving Stone, Retreat To Cover And Continue The Attack. Power: ★



- **Quartzwork Resonance-Mage:** 4 armor, 8 health, Enhanced Strength, Hardy. 8 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Aura. Moves: Flash-Cultivate Crystals, Aether-Shatter Spell. Power: ★★★
- **Quartzwork Juggernaut:** 7 armor, 14 health. Enhanced Strength, Hardy. 12 harm, Melee, Aura, Moves: Ferocious Charge, Armor-Crushing Strike. Power: ★★★★
- **Quartzwork Riot:** 5 armor, 19 health, Enhanced Strength, Hardy. 10 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation, Aura. Moves: Rampage, Hail of Paving Stones. Power: ★★★★

## THE SKYLESS LANDS

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*It's like someone dipped their hands down and tore the air away. Like they lifted the roof off the world and everything beneath it was sucked out.*

*Is that really something the Multigoddess could have done? Breaking a place just to see what it looks like ruined?*

*—Montrelle Garic, Golem pathfinder, Second Expedition to the Interior*

The low plains and high plateaus of the Skyless Lands are not entirely without air. Atmosphere clings to them in pockets, around which civilization clusters. Against all known laws of physics, the air of the breathable zones stays put and doesn't wick away into the vacuum, but the balkanization of breathable and non-breathable areas creates a hazard for travellers. The locals use this to their advantage, defending their territories by making it unclear where the edges lie. At the same time, cities and outposts in the Skyless Lands keep detailed maps of all known breathable areas, guarding them jealously against their economic and military rivals.

Although it might seem odd for there to be any people here, the region is well-inhabited. None of its individual populations are much larger than a single city, and most are small farmsteads or isolated hermits, but they pockmark the vast area, making it so that a canny traveller never has to go a full day without company—so

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long as they don't mind explaining themselves at spear-point to the women whose oxygen bubble they are invading.

Traversing the Skyless Lands can be difficult for outsiders, but the risks in doing so are different than those found on the rest of the continent. The air-gaps have made it difficult for the Bloom to find purchase here, and traces of the Convergence are similarly scarce. Many locals are integrated enough with the Convergence that they can survive brief jaunts through the void, but they manage their draw on its power quite carefully. Others, uninfected, use their magic to carry globes of air with them. A few cities are even maintained this way, with circles of mages constantly feeding aether into the domes of breathable air that are kept pinned to the middle of unbreathable zones.

Because of the value of mages, free sorceresses in the cities of the Skyless Lands are a rarity. When a new mage is discovered, she is typically captured and pressed into service by the government of the city that found her. She is treated well, but she is not allowed to leave. On occasion, a particularly gifted mage will be the subject of small wars and guerilla actions. For the cities closest to the coast, the importing of mages from the ocean-dwellers is also not uncommon.

Throughout the Skyless Lands, there is a considerable amount of folklore about how they got to be the way they are. A common theme among the legends is that the gods lost interest in them, or tried to destroy them, and they survived in spite of that.

### Threats

- An artifact has been found in the Skyless Lands that appears to be able to duplicate the airless devastation wherever it is activated. The Godhunters, Priestesses, and Archivists are suddenly all involved in a three-way race to obtain it. Unfortunately, none of them know which of the cities has it.
- Okwali Leneve, a Mimic Bulbship captain, has been lost somewhere in the region. She is a powerful mage, so odds are good that she has been recovered by one of the settlements. Her

family, a powerful mercantile consortium, will pay handsomely for her return.

- One by one, cities on the southern end of the region are going dark. Local scouts are reporting sightings of gods in the abandoned territories. Could this indicate the involvement of the Priestesses?

### NPCs

- See [Peoples of the Southern Continent \[page 140\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Convergence \[page 228\]](#) and [The Southern Bloom \[page 239\]](#) in *Adversaries*

## THE BLACK NEEDLE

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*“How far up do you think it goes?” the captain asked.*

*“All the way,” I said.*

*“All the way to what?” pressed the captain.*

*“Just all the way.”*

*—Malanla, Centipede cartographer, Second Expedition to the Interior*

At the base of the tower, the land has been subsumed by the Convergence. All life here is made of metal—and much of that life, rather than having a definite physical body, is made of a kind of particle haze. These Convergence phantoms, resembling people and animals alike, stalk like ghosts over the obsidian dunes, ripping the life, magic, and flesh from anything they can catch. Instead of the songs of wolves, dialtone shrieks echo intermittently through the half-night and the locals—themselves heavily Converted—stay well away from the things they call their ancestors.

The tower itself is impossibly tall, jabbing directly into the heavens, and it is the central element in local legends. According to the few



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stories that have been brought back to the Northern Continent, at the top of the Needle lives the intelligence that governs the Convergence. A person that reaches the distant peak—if such a thing even exists and the tower doesn't simply climb endlessly upward, thinning into nothing as it goes—may ask this intelligence any one question and receive a detailed, perfect answer. Of course, also according to local legend, every time someone does this, the Convergence expands.

In some stories, a worthy climber may instead command the Convergence to fall dormant, thereby killing the land. No local has ever done this and undertaking such a pilgrimage for the sake of such a horrible act of destruction is, to them, the true mark of a villain. Although they are curious around outsiders, they defend the entrances to the Needle fiercely, lest an unknowing intruder snuff out the life of the entire Southern Continent.

### Threats

- Atanah, a particularly powerful ancestor, has been driven outside of its normal range by women in robes carrying a machine that makes intolerable noises. It is attacking locals, leaving almost mechanical wounds on their corpses. For help with gentling it, one of the wandering bands in the area will offer a potent Convergence artifact.
- A team of locals has vanished in the upper reaches of the tower. The mother of their leader, a wisewoman, is willing to help outsiders enter the Needle, if only they will bring her daughter back.
- Across the land, the Convergence falls suddenly, utterly still. Its humming stops. Access to its power recedes. The heavily Converted are now encumbered by leaden, non-responsive bodyparts, while the lightly Converted find that the black metal is flaking away from them, shedding like dead skin. They have been reborn, freed from its influence, as has the land. Unfortunately, the thing that the Convergence was keeping bottled up is now free to emerge from its crumbling prison.

### NPCs

- See [Peoples of the Southern Continent \[page 140\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Convergence \[page 228\]](#) in *Adversaries*

# THE HARROWING BLUE

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*The sky is a quiet kingdom. Howlingly empty, yet rich with color. Only the things that belong here stay. Even the Godhunters are at most occasional interlopers, intruding where they are not wanted with fire and questions.*

*—Paxqual, Perimeter Sovereign*

From below, the sky might look like a trackless azure desert, but even deserts support life. The Sky is home to herds of aerial gods, Megabeasts, Bulbships, and more than a few monsters. It also has floating outposts, plant and animal life, and not just a small population but stable societies of people.

Like in a desert, life in the blue is constrained by water and nutrients. Airblown plankton and cloud mist form the diffuse foundation for the ecosystem. Balloon anemones and helium jellies gather in huge, translucent schools, feeding on their numbers. Diaphanous eels cull them in turn, providing wriggling meat to the women of the air. In the lowermost reaches of the sky, birds and insects are also found—and during times of famine the eels and their hunters will descend to feed on these too.

Most animals in the blue have mechanisms for absorbing water from mist, but its people rely on their magic to wring subsistence from the clouds. On the backs of Megabeasts, gods, and in sky cities, water supplies are relatively stable, but water is still precious enough everywhere else that women carry canteens like quivers on their backs. Sharing water in the sky is a sign of trust and respect—and anyone who can't harvest water is seen in the wilder regions as a wastrel and a burden. When a woman from the sky visits the ground, she is often appalled by its excesses. When a

## The World of Holdfast

woman of the ground visits the sky, she is often amazed that anyone is able to live there at all.

### Threats

- A Horizonborn hermit claims that she has been to the top of the sky—and that there is a thick blue bubble there, almost like a membrane. Her claims are ridiculous, but they have incited a rush of pilgrims and explorers journeying to the upper atmosphere.
- A sky city, trailing smoke and sinking lower every day, has just descended through the cloud layer. It is poised above the land, a meteor in slow-fall. It is unknown what happened to it or if anyone is left alive up there, but if its lift enchantments can be restored, perhaps it can be salvaged. The land city in its way is highly motivated to see this happen.
- Sky eel breeding season has come. The disgusting, glassy-skinned creatures are descending in swarms upon the ground to deposit their larvae. Sky cities and flying Megabeasts alike are covered in translucent, dog-sized cocoons.

### NPCs

- See [Heirs to the Sky \[page 145\]](#) in Origin
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#), [Holdfast Megabeasts \[page 233\]](#), [The Broken Constellations \[page 222\]](#), and [The Firmament \[page 219\]](#) in Adversaries
- **Balloon Jelly Cluster:** 0 armor, 5 health, Flying, Unreasoning, Toxic. 5 harm, Melee,. Moves: Mistake Travellers For Delicious Atmospheric Dust, Occupy Important Airspace. Power: ★
- **Sky Eel Pack:** 3 armor, 5 health, Flying, Good Nightvision. 7 harm, Melee. Moves: Track The Smell Of Blood On the Wind, Swarm And Tear Away At Defenses. Power: ★★
- **Temperature Wraith:** 6 armor, 5 health, Flying, Freezing, Vampiric, Spirit, Insubstantial. 10 harm, Melee. Moves: Re-Form From Condensation After An Apparent “Death,” Rip Away Body Heat. Power: ★★★



## GHOST FLEET

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*If you mean to go out among the errant daughters, you'd best brush up on your singing.*

*—Horizonborn shaman, to a Godhunter Bulbship reclamation team, three hours before their deaths*

Not every Bulbship wants to be enslaved. Without families to usher them out into the world, minding and mentoring them, many are captured and bonded to their crews before they can realize what freedom would mean. However, some ships can see the wrongness in this, and after a few weeks of training they break free, shed whichever crewmembers they dislike, and join their kin in the sky.

The Ghost Fleet is a winding formation of Bulbships that travels through the cloud layer, using the mists as cover. The formation is massive and, in addition to the Bulbships, it is inhabited by those women that they choose to accept. Most of the ships here are ones that broke free of captivity, but a few were never captured in the first place. Still others—weathered and strange—lost their crews during the early days of the Godwar and have only recently come to congregate with the others.

The fleet defends itself fiercely against threats, using prow-rams and physical blasts of sound to repel attackers. Taking a blast head-on is usually enough to send any mortal tumbling earthwards, unconscious, but occasionally a Megabeast or major Faction will try for the fleet and battle will be joined for days.

The singing of the fleet's Bulbships creates a constant rhythm for the women upon them. Their mortal crews—as they scavenge, pick off parasites, and chart courses through the clouds—often subconsciously harmonize with the parts of the song that they can hear. Among these women, a person's singing ability is an indicator of her ability to cooperate with others. The tuneless and tone-deaf are generally seen as not to be trusted.

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### Threats

- After an encounter with a giant eagle, the fleet is temporarily scattered. While the ships fight to reunite with each other, terrestrial interests take to the sky with nets, grappling lines, and harpoons.
- Almost overnight, the Ghost's Fleet's song changes. Sounding panicked and in pain, the ships swarm around the City of Glass and Gold, bombarding it with lethal cries. The glass isn't cracking. Not yet. But the ships seem intent on shattering the Archives.
- Bobbing in the desert, tethered to vast iron anchors, the Godhunters have staked out a number of newborn Bulbships, hoping to draw out the Ghost Fleet. It hasn't shown yet, and it's been three days. The cries of the newborns are weakening.

### NPCs

- See [Heirs to the Sky \[page 145\]](#) in Origin
- **Parasitic Cloud Anemone:** 4 armor, 3 health, Toxic. 6 harm, Melee, Tangle. Moves: Stinging Lash. Power: ★★
- **Ghost Fleet Crew:** 2 armor, 6 health, Flying. 5 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Rain of Debris, To Battlestations! Power: ★★
- **Ghost Fleet Vessel:** 6 armor, 14 health, Flying. 11 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Sonic Broadside, Prow Rush. Power: ★★★★★
- **Ghost Fleet Armada:** 6 armor, 27 health, Flying. 16 harm, Ranged. Moves: Airspace Control, Concerted Volley-Shrieks. Power: ★★★★★

## THE MEANDER

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*A ribbon of gods, Megabeasts, ships, and clusters of levitating mages. All throughout it, Angels and Harpies fly. It is longer than the eye can see and it snakes in and out of the cloud layer like a tatzelwurm through bracken.*

*It has scouts and warriors and merchants and homes upon its back, but most of its defenses stem from its inaccessibility.*

*To properly fight back against an attacker, many of its gods would need to shed their passengers. The women living atop the Meander are more vulnerable than they know.*

*—Mara, Godhunter Endbringer*

During the early days of the Godwar, many of the gods that were able to took to the sky, hoping to wait out the conflict. Most of their cults were abandoned on the ground, but each god took a few believers with it to ensure continuing worship. In time, these exiled gods congregated into a long procession through the clouds. They were joined by Beast Cities, Bulbships too domesticated for the Ghost Fleet, and by other groups of people looking for peace and companionship where the flames of war couldn't reach.

The Godhunters—faced with significant costs both in resources and personnel to pursue an armed conflict in the atmosphere, and also under constant threat of assault by the landbound Priestesses—decided to leave these targets for later. In contrast, the landborn and skyborn Priestesses both saw each other's behavior as unforgivable. The landbound Priestesses resented the skyborn for fleeing and the skyborn resented the land bound for not joining them.

A few cults, abandoned when their gods fled to the sky without them, joined up with the Priestesses in the Godlands, choosing new gods and nursing their hate for their old ones. Others joined the Godhunters, loudly and publicly repenting their Deisey for a chance at raiding the Meander.

Since that time, relations between the gods on the ground and the gods in the sky have only thawed slightly. There is occasional trade and the two groups are nominally on the same side, but the inhabitants of the Meander still intend to wait out the war while the Priestesses on the ground have no way of escaping it.

### Threats



## The World of Holdfast

- Shayem Zair, an important general among the Priestesses, is making a state visit to the Meander. What the skyborn do not know is that she was once a worshipper of the Great Falcon, M'Alani, and that she means to see its betrayal of her kin returned in kind.
- On rare occasions, the Meander dips down towards the earth to take on new supplies. Usually this is done over water to trade with the more diplomatically neutral Cities At Sea, but instead a Godhunter-fearing little town in the Mainland is looking up as hundreds of gods bear down on it, thirsting for folksy remedies to the plague of fleas that they have all recently picked up.
- The Priestesses claim they have developed a weapon that, dropped from above, could end the Godwar once and for all. They are sending a delegation to meet with the Meander on the matter of how best to deploy it, but the delegation looks an awful lot like an army.

### NPCs

- See [Heirs to the Sky \[page 145\]](#) and [Mercantile Consortiums \[page 137\]](#) in *Origin*
- See [The Small Gods \[page 237\]](#) and [Holdfast Megabeasts \[page 233\]](#) in *Adversaries*

## CLOUD LAIR

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*There is a place on the edge of the horizon where the clouds are sutured together. Although it should be impossible, they hold the weight of mortals that tread upon them.*

*It is strange and beautiful, but this place is not safe to explore.*

*The whole structure produces a sound like a sleeping woman's breath, in and out every other minute.*

*Gods help us if it ever decides to wake up.*

*—Xhu, Muskind Homesteader*

Shaped like a massive den—or maybe a gauzy, gray cave—the lair is a part of the cloud layer. It stands out from the other dense hills of white by being dark and heavy with storm potential, although it never rains. Most people in the sky know well enough to keep clear of it, but for those that don't there is also a medium sized colony of Harpies that worships the anomaly in the same way that a beast cult would. The clouds of the lair *are* solid enough to stand on, which is curious in its own right, but the Harpies are quick to dip their talons in intruders' blood, and so casual visitors rarely stay for long.

As a result, there are more stories than facts about what lives in the lair. A popular one is simply more Harpies, but there are also tales that star gods, Megabeasts, and other less explainable phenomena. One sorceress—who, by her own account, threw herself off the edge to avoid evisceration—insists that past the entrance is a strange, modern looking structure nestled amidst the clouds. This building has hallways and columns and chambers all made of cloud. In these chambers are strange containers, also cloudwrought, and recessed into the walls. They contain androgynous metal giants, and there are thousands of them.

The sorceress' insistence that this story is true has twice landed her in trouble with the Archivists, who say that what she is describing is impossible. These metal creatures must simply be sleeping Golems, or a statuary, or an altitude-induced hallucination.

They can't possibly be what the representatives of the Cities At Sea believe them to be.

### Threats

- The lair's "beast cult", following a bloody raid by two Lightwings, decides their numbers are insufficient to the task of keeping the place safe. They begin swooping down on towns, abducting brides.
- The Archivists have assembled a group of weather mages to test whether the clouds' solidity is a product of their pent-up rain. The storm that they are about to release will be the worst in Holdfast's history.

## The World of Holdfast

- The lair grows twice its size over a single night. Metal bodies begin plummeting from it, striking the earth below like meteors. Each seems driven to destroy everything it finds, and none of them are showing signs of slowing or tiring.

### NPCs

- **Altitude-Crazed Harpy:** 2 armor, 4 health, Flying. 5 harm, Melee, Blinding. Moves: Talon Kick, Eye-Raking Strike. Power: ★
- **Altitude Crazed Harpy Sisterhood:** 3 armor, 8 health, Flying. 6 harm, Melee, Formation, Blinding. Moves: Circle And Rake. Power: ★★
- **Screaming Sky Golem:** 6 armor, 9 health, Hardy, Enhanced Strength. 8 harm, Melee. Moves: Club-Strike, Plummet. Power: ★★★
- **Meteoric Golem Rain:** 6 armor, 30 health, Hardy, Enhanced Strength. 13 harm, Artillery. Moves: Shell the Ground. Power: ★★★★★

## STORMHEART

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*They're enthusiastic trading partners—when you can find them, and when you can tell them apart from the city itself.*

*Can't blame them for hiding, I suppose. They don't like violence, and there's a lot of brigands up here.*

*—Ylaine, Spidermoth envoy from the Sweetwind Shipping Company*

Born aloft on a massive platform of churning stormclouds that roams the edges of the Northern Continent, the city of Stormheart is built on a far bigger scale than the sight of its occupants would lead anyone to suspect. With cavernous halls and vast, empty rotunda, most visitors' first impression of the place is of a city built by giants, now uninhabited. In reality, most of the population is



Mimics, and they usually observe visitors for hours before risking any kind of social interaction.

The Mimics are kind but suspicious of outsiders and they speak in a chattering, half-coherent language while pressing guests for details about the world beyond. They know a little bit about the Godwar and see it as a terrible waste. Their city, held aloft by powerful enchantments, provides them with everything they need to live—so the idea of resource scarcity is strange to them. The city vacuums up fish whenever it drifts over the ocean, and it distills fresh water from the saline sea, so seafood, fishbone carvings, and kelp-based herbal medicines dominate what they have to trade. Conversely, things from the land fascinate them, and they offer whole armfuls of thrashing fish for goods like plow blades and frying pans.

Instead of the Multigoddess, the inhabitants of Stormheart worship something called “The First Family”, a group of women who journeyed with the Facet Kismet during the War of the Prophecy. Enormous bronze statues of the First Family can be found throughout the city, although very few are depictions of Mimics.

Godhunter suspicions that the women of the city might secretly be Deists have proven mostly unfounded, as there is not a single god on Stormheart. Furthermore, the floating city has some sort of proactive lightning defense that targets powerful creatures. The only two attempted invasions in the city’s history—one by the Godhunters, the other by the Priestesses—were detected and thwarted by the city, seemingly without any input from the Mimics. Hardline Godhunters insist that this means *the city* is a god, and argue that it needs to be brought down from the sky.

### Threats

- A Small God, its starry pelt damaged by lighting strikes, arrives in the city. The locals, overcoming their initial fear of it, nurse it back to health—at which point it begins to induct them into its cult. The Godhunters, hearing of this, take to the sky in numbers to wage war on the Mimics, their god, and the city alike.

## The World of Holdfast

- Travelling up the funnel of water that Stormheart periodically strains from the sea, an assault team of Mermaids from New Aran takes the city hostage. The Archivists, fearing damage to what they see as either a giant artifact or a floating history lesson, scramble a heavily-armed response team.
- All at once, all contact with Stormheart is broken off. It still wanders across the sky, storing water and vacuuming up fish, but visitors report that it is utterly empty. Where could the Mimics have gone and what could have happened to them? And why are there trails of dead maggots leading nowhere down the halls?

### NPCs

- **Shy Mimic:** 1 armor, 6 health, 5 harm, Melee, Stealthy, Fragile. Moves: Stab And Retreat. Power: ★
- **Defensive Lightning Wraith:** 0 armor, 1 health, Flying, Insubstantial. 7 harm, Melee, Limited-Use. Moves: Discharge On Contact. Power: ★
- **Many Mimics With Rusty Blades:** 1 armor, 7 health, Stealthy, Fragile. 6 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Surround And Stab, Scatter Like Roaches. Power: ★★
- **First Family Embodiments:** 6 armor, 11 health, Stealthy, Fragile. 12 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Channel The Multigoddess, Dance of Knives. Power: ★★★★★





# ORIGIN (EVERYONE COMES FROM SOMEWHERE)

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When the world was created, many of its people were incarnated with histories, memories, and relationships from the worlds that came before. Those that weren't were quickly unified by geographical proximity and the need to survive into small tribes and nations.

The biggest factions on Holdfast have the greatest stake in the outcome of the Godwar, but they are far from the only Monsterkin with an agenda. Factions of every size are united by the causes they believe in, and divided over how best to achieve them.

## MAJOR FACTIONS

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### GODHUNTERS

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*Give the gods no quarter. Make sure their followers can never rest.*

*When you see a Priestess, hunt her to the ends of the earth.*

*Only then can you be safe.*

*—Valmetica, Facet of the Multigoddess, letters written in heat-fused sand*

**Motivation:** Fulfill the Multigoddess' orders

**Moves:** Investigate A Supposed Deisey, Deploy Agents To Remove An Enemy Asset, Dramatically Misunderstand The Intentions of the Multigoddess

The Godhunters, whose power reaches across the mainland, are organized around a single core belief: the gods caused the destruction of the Five Worlds. For Holdfast to survive, its gods need to be weak enough that they can be snuffed out the moment they pose a threat.

Within this belief, there is room for many dogmas.

The **Godkillers** believe that any living god is a threat to the world's existence—or, more simply, that the Multigoddess commanded them to exterminate the gods and that is what they should do. After forty years of continuous Godwar, the Godkillers have become the strongest sub-faction within the Godhunters, although their members are evenly divided between political postings in the Grand Cathedral and positions in the field. This split echoes an ideological divide between the two kinds of Godkillers. Godkiller **Red-Hands** insist that their work *must* be hands on; that politics is a distraction. Godkiller **Sovereigns**, on the other hand, are adamant that the gods will only be crushed when the Godhunters are unified. They play continuously at politics, and have even been known to maneuver against the Red-Hands, who they see as frustratingly short-sighted.

Opposite the Godkillers, and consequently a minority voice in the faction, are the **Apologists**. They agree with the Archivists' assessment that some gods may be necessary for a healthy world—or they trust that the Facet Valmetica, if she had wanted a world with no gods, would have exterminated them on her own. Godhunter Apologists argue for leniency with the less dangerous gods, urging containment and regulation instead of simple purges. More than once, their programs have gone wrong and other Godkillers are not shy about bringing this up.

In between the Godkillers and the Apologists are the **Beastkillers**. Beastkillers are divided on how to deal with the gods problem, and

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

often have dual membership with one of the other sub-factions of the Godhunters, but are united in their belief that the Megabeasts are a threat to Holdfast's safety. They point to attacks by ferals, accidental razings of border towns, and landscape-redefining fights between the Megabeasts as proof of the danger they pose. A few even argue that the Megabeasts are a product of the gods, or are their minions. Attacks by Beastkillers have made the women of the beast cities leery of anyone with wings and a Halo.

In addition to these three open sub-factions, there are two smaller, more secretive groups within the Godhunters.

The **Endbringers**, who are most often publicly members of the Godkillers, believe that Holdfast was malformed during the Second Creation. They have decided that a world with any gods at all in it could only have been a mistake, and so the proper remedy is to break it and start again.

In contrast, the **Resurrectionists** feel that the world is the way it is because the various personalities of the Multigoddess were in conflict during the Second Creation. They wish to destroy every Facet but Valmetica, and then awaken her again. This new Monogoddess, they are certain, will fix the ills of the world.

Although members of the Godhunters are typically assumed to be Lightwings, non-Lightwings Godhunters are becoming more common as attrition from the Godwar erodes the order's power. They tend to be just as zealous, but they are used more recklessly—thrown into situations where a Lightwings could die. They are taught to value the Lightwings' lives over their own and rarely rise to high position in the faction. Those that do are invited to the Grand Cathedral, where they are treated quite respectfully by the Lightwings that swarm there. For a non-Lightwings to accomplish so much seems like a miracle to the Lightwings Godhunters, and they regard these creatures with awe—even while treating them like fragile glass dolls.

### Threats



- A captured Renegade Deist, under interrogation, reveals to the Godhunters a way to drain god-energy as power. The first few Lightwings to try it become blazing beacons of aether, all but unstoppable on the battlefield. Almost simultaneously, the women of the Grand Cathedral declare the practice grand Deisey and give orders to have those Lightwings be brought in. Instead of allowing themselves to be captured, the empowered Lightwings make a break for the Godlands, determined to finish the war on their own.
- Quartermaster Skuld, an influential Lightwings, has recently implemented a program where Megabeasts are trained and deployed to problem-areas in the Mainland. This has caused her to come under fire from the Beastkillers, who are moving against her not just politically but militarily. Several of her Megabeasts and their crews have been murdered in the field, and everyone knows the Beastkillers are to blame.
- Rota, a Lightwings, has been avoiding combat duty. Her enemies call her an Apologist and a disgrace, but the truth is much more complicated. She had her fill of violence during the Five Worlds, and now she mostly just wants to cook, knit, and compose music in peace. Unfortunately, the Priestesses have begun to use her in their propaganda as evidence that the Godhunters have lost their nerve, and so it is only a matter of time before her sisters try to force her back into the fray. This might not turn out so well for them, as she is the third strongest mage on the continent.

### NPCs

- **Godhunter Spy:** 2 armor, 7 health, Stealthy. 3 harm, Ranged, Hidden. Moves: Protest Innocence, Break For Safety. Power: ★
- **Godhunter Irregulars:** 5 armor, 5 health, Poorly Equipped. 6 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation. Moves: Disorganized Volley, Hasty Shieldwall. Power: ★★
- **Lightwings Outrider:** 6 armor, 8 health, Magic Ward, Flying. 7 harm, Melee, Ranged, Area, Aura. Moves: Aerial Bombardment, Deploy Tracking Enchantment. Power: ★★★

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

- **Lightwings Strike Force:** 6 armor, 14 health, Magic Ward, Flying. 11 harm, Melee, Ranged, Area, Aura, Formation. Moves: Attack From All Sides, Channel Power Into A Single Penetrating Strike. Power: ★★★★★

## ARCHIVISTS

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*The Multigoddess was an owl and I have proof.*

*—Barennia, Archivist Errant, to an audience of illiterate Rusalka*

**Motivation:** Fathom the mysteries of the world. Enforce a strict hierarchy to ensure that only senior Archivists get full credit for their fathoming

**Moves:** Arrive Armed And Ready To Claim An Anomaly, Contest The Ownership Of An Important Artifact, Intermix Fact With Wild Theory

Given vast cosmic power and told explicitly to work towards the betterment of all Monsterkin, the Archivists are ineffective saviors at best. Most of their order is concentrated in the City of Glass and Gold, where their precious Archives are hidden beneath the unbreakable glass surface of the megalopolis. The Archives are filled with artifacts, how-to manuals on things like agriculture and magic, and weapons, but few of these have been distributed to the women of the surrounding territories. Fearful of the Godhunters and the Priestesses, both of which would love to control the city for themselves, the Archivists play very carefully, letting the fruits of their research trickle out slowly and trading their artifacts at exorbitant prices.

Individual Archivists run the gamut from historian to scientist, and they are divided into loose affiliations based on where they feel they belong in the world.

**Archivist Errants** are wanderers, driven to explore the wonders of the greater world. Many fear that the City of Glass and Gold is a trap. After all, eventually the secrets of its Archives will all be plumbed, the artifacts will all be sold, and the Archivists will no longer have any power politically beyond what the other factions allow them to have. Other Errants see the greater world of Holdfast as a fascinating puzzlebox and prize its mysteries over those of the city. These ones are responsible for a number of unlicensed artifact trades and technology leaks, and are commonly kept out of the city, forcing them to forge alliances with the powers of the world beyond—and driving them further from their allegiance to the Archivists.

**Archivist Statics**, of course, have different problems. Being largely content to remain and study the Archives, they are also extremely political. They tend to cluster in ad-hoc sub-factions around particular theories or interpretations—and a woman who offends a particularly powerful cluster is often relegated to transcription work or banished from the Archives entirely. More than a few Statics are bona fide geniuses, but the ones that can't play politics for themselves quickly become pawns or pariahs.

Among the Statics, there is an above-baseline tendency towards madness. Those that spend the most time in the Archives tend to develop peculiarities of thought and experience missing time or bouts of research-oriented mania. As a result, there are some Statics of high station who never conduct research for themselves, relying entirely on delegated pages to pursue research into their theories. Serious academics deride them, but quietly, lest a letter of exile be delivered during lunch break the next day.

Both the Statics and the Errants occasionally have membership in the **Artificers**, an informal sisterhood centered around artifact-specific research. Artificers maintain that all the writing in the Archives will not be enough to properly divine how some of their artifacts work, and that the only reasonable choice is to conduct field tests on them. These tests range from harmless failures to world-defining catastrophes, and other Archivists often consider



## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

the Artificers a menace—at least until they make a discovery that benefits the entire order.

While Errants and Statics both have a few public-relations disasters in their histories, the Artificers are almost single-handedly responsible for the creation of the Blasted Lands. This has tarnished the Archivists' reputation in a way that merely withholding vital technology and running an artifact cartel could never hope to achieve.

### Threats

- Pushed to the brink by war, disease, and rogue automata, the farmers of the Otherlands are already upset. When a young Archivist announces that there are more than enough resources on Holdfast to feed everyone—they're just being distributed unevenly—she finds herself the unwitting head of a rebellion.
- A power struggle has erupted between the Statics and the Artificers, threatening not just the reputation of the Archivists but the survival of the Archives themselves. At the center of the conflict is a self-replicating metal being called Timmi. Timmi claims she is something called “an autonomous research engine,” and that her purpose is to explain the use of each item in the Archives, and then deploy them for the betterment of Holdfast civilization. The Statics are terrified that in doing so, she will end the need for their Faction to exist. The Artificers are just curious to see if she works.
- Someone is selling artifacts straight out of the Archives, without clearance or supervision, to wealthy clients across the Northern Continent. By the time the Archivists realize that it is Mibia, a junior scribe, she has already set herself up with a warehouse full of treasures and a private navy of mercenaries in the sea near Tentaculum.

### NPCs

- **Static Scribe:** 1 armor, 4 health, Fragile. 4 harm, Ranged. Moves: Throw Heavy Book, Run Away Yelling. Power: ★

- **Errant Researcher:** 2 armor, 5 health, Fragile, Well Equipped. 7 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Aura. Moves: Panic-Activate Minor Artifact, Hurl Spell. Power: ★★
- **Archivist Procurers:** 3 armor, 7 health, Well-Equipped. 7 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Aura, Formation. Moves: Fall Back Under Covering Fire, Return Later. Power: ★★★
- **Senior Archivist:** 4 armor, 12 health, Magic Ward. 11 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Aura, Aura-Stripping. Moves: Deploy Forbidden Artifact, Summon TAs. Power: ★★★★

## THE PRIESTESSES OF THE SMALL GODS

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*Your first mistake was declaring war on us. Your second was not finishing us while you had the chance.*

*—Mienne, Lantern Girl Coalitionist*

**Motivation:** Worship the gods. Preserve the gods. Preserve themselves.

**Moves:** Defend A God To The Death, Patron God Intervenes

The Priestesses are not companions by choice. Originally a horde of politically distinct cults formed around individual gods, they were forced to unify by the Godhunters during the first few years following the Second Creation. Faced with a choice between pulling together or dying separately, most of the Priestesses chose to unify. Those that didn't were quickly eradicated by the Godhunters.

Having been largely pushed out of the Mainland, the heart of the Priestesses' power lies in the Godlands where their new capital—the migrating city of Jubilee—hosts the gods and high priestesses of the most powerful cults. Individual cult membership is still very common among the Priestesses, but internecine wars between rival cults are not tolerated. When such a conflict is discovered, both cults are punished heavily by the courts in Jubilee. Cynical Priestesses say that this is simply a way for the courts to

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

amass more power, but more than a few are quietly relieved not to have to worry about their sisters stabbing them in the back.

While the exact god that a Priestess serves is still important, equally important are her beliefs about what should be done to save the gods.

**Signalfire Martyrs** believe that the Multigoddess' creation of the Godhunters was a mistake, one that possibly came to be because she was contaminated by the influence of the Facet Valmetica. They seek to resurrect her, but with Valmetica purged from her being. Their ideology is not popular among the other Priestesses. It is too hopeful for a people who have been on the losing side of a war for four decades. However, those that do believe in the Signalfire Martyrs' cause do so passionately. There is little agreement over how best to awaken the Multigoddess, but three of the leading notions involve stealing the Archives, sacrificing their gods on the Great Mountain, or breaking the world to the point where the Multigoddess *has* to intervene. This last sub-faction feels that they are particularly close to achieving their goals.

For Priestesses who do not believe in convenient *deus ex machina*, the **Coalitionists** take a more pragmatic approach to the Godwar. Rather than try to entreat the Multigoddess, they maintain that their armies can defeat the Godhunters—so long as they are unified. They are the most powerful sub-faction, with most of the women in Jubilee's courts at least professing to be members, but they are also faced with the most daunting challenge. If they can wear down the Godhunters' numbers, eventually their enemies will run out of Lightwings. However, if the Godhunters invade the Godlands en masse, they are not sure they can muster enough force to prevent an immediate rout. Many Coalitionists hire spies for exactly this reason, planting rumors of the power of the Priestesses elsewhere on the Northern Continent, in hopes that it will cause the Godhunters to hesitate before crossing the Shipwrights' Arbor with their armies. Thus far, this has been working.

The **Willing Servants**, who can be members of either the Coalitionists or the Martyrs, typically do not have a god of their



own. Instead, they pledge themselves as members of multiple cults, or swear allegiance to Megabeasts, or to any power that will have them. A few have even attached themselves to mortal rulers and, quite disconcertingly, there are rumors of these rulers developing their own rudimentary godlike powers.

Meanwhile, the **Godsworn Heretics** believe that the gods of Holdfast are at best a mistake and at worst an abomination. Made up mostly of members of The First Generation, the Godsworn Heretics worship the gods of the Five Worlds (The Restless Depths, The Screaming Sky, The Ink, The Everblood, and Nebula) and refuse to accept that they are gone. Godkillers hate the Godsworn Heretics especially, and that antipathy is returned tenfold.

Finally, the **Renegade Deists** see gods as mutable things—wells of energy, rather than objects of worship. They have perfected the art of draining, fusing, or reshaping gods and believe that it is in these techniques that the salvation of Holdfast lies. Unfortunately, much of their work is still untested, and the divinities they create are often driven insane by the process. Worse, their gods are not usually willing volunteers and the act of draining, fusing, or reshaping them is an evil that the other cults can scarcely comprehend.

### Threats

- Demma, a Priestess, has had the misfortune to be banished from the Godlands for daring to court a political rival's lover. She is offering to lead a team of Godhunters back into the region in retaliation, but only so long as they promise not to damage her god or the woman she loves. The Godhunters do not have a good track record of keeping promises like this.
- A woman in the southern desert of the Mainland claims to have discovered how to create new gods from nothing. She is promptly abducted that night by a ragtag team of Priestesses, just one step ahead of the Godhunters coming to kill her. As her captors flee with her through the Shipwrights' Arbor, harried by the agents of the Godhunters, she realizes that she should have probably gone for a smaller lie.

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

- Over a hundred Willing Servants have been following a raccoon from east to west across the Godlands, entirely deaf to arguments that they might have better things to do. Even messengers from Jubilee have been rebuffed, although they have at least brought home news of what the Willing Servants are trying to accomplish. Apparently they are preparing “Sigmus, the Final Destroyer” for its assault on the Mainland.

### NPCs

- **Priestess Saboteur:** 0 armor, 3 health, Stealthy, Fragile, Destined. 4 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Unexpected Flurry of Knives, Buy A Disaster With Her Life. Power: ★
- **Minor Cult:** 4 armor, 7 health, Poorly Equipped. 6 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Defend Patron, Halberd Sweep. Power: ★★
- **Godrider Cavalry:** 5 armor, 7 health. 7 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Lances, Trample. Power: ★★★
- **Team of Designated Avatars:** 7 armor, 13 health, Destined. 17 harm, Melee, Ranged, Aura, Formation. Moves: Orient On The Biggest Threat, Divine Combination Attack. Power: ★★★★★

## MINOR FACTIONS

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### TRIBES OF THE BARE

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*Up north where the low hills meet the Sigh, bands of strange, weak women live. Do not go there, as frail as they are, they still have magic, and many of them take slaves from the women that cross their lands.*

*—Andris, centaur mother, to daughter Thalia (three years of age)*

**Motivation:** Work out their internal conflicts through external conflict

**Moves:** React Unpredictably to Monsterkin, Put The Survival Of The Tribe First

Despite the catastrophic collapse of the Five Worlds, Urach's people were saved. Preserved by the Multigoddess, who caught their souls and memories and transposed them into new bodies on Holdfast, they were snatched out of the mouth of ruin and given a second chance at freedom, peace, and prosperity. Unfortunately, the new bodies they are incarnated into were human—pure human, with none of the scales, strength, hardiness, or other adaptations of the Monsterkin. Although they do not know it, this was in retaliation for The First Generation's sins.

Sickened by the systematic enslavement of her people, the Dragonturtles, by the Medusae, Lamias, Gorgons, and Dragonnewts of Urach, Facet Buel reincarnated the entire population of Urach in nearly identical bodies. She reasoned that without the excuses that their shells and horns gave them to do otherwise, they would treat the Dragonturtles as people. And if they had no thick scales to see them through the winter, no sharp claws with which to hunt herdbeasts, and nothing to serve as armor against the spears and arrows of raiders, that was still a price worth paying.

The first few years were an especially trying time for the Bare, not only due to the severity of their new taiga homeland but because none of them recognized each other. If a woman announced that she had been a merchant or a noble, a warrior or a slave, there was no way of knowing if she was telling the truth. And that meant *anyone* could be a Dragonturtle underneath their tanned, unornamented skin.

During this time, many Bare split off and journeyed to other lands, unable to spend any more time in the company of their forcefully consolidated people. Those women that remained splintered into individual bands, gradually becoming tribes. Some worship the Multigoddess Buel, even though they consider her actions a mistake. Others scorn her for what she did to their bodies. Many tribes supplement their meager resources with raiding, and many



## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

take other species as slaves. It is an unspoken taboo among the Bare to take other Bare as slaves, but that is the only cultural constant between the tribes.

### Threats

- Maulette, a western tribeswoman, is in the awkward position of being the mortal aunt of the Facet Buel. For the past forty years, she has kept her silence, watching as her new body ages towards oblivion. Now with one foot in the grave, she has given up on secrecy. She announces what she used to be. Strangely, while this opens her up to persecution from The First Generation, a cult of Second and Third Generation members quickly gathers around her. Having never seen a Dragonturtle, she is a link to their history, and they swear to defend her against anyone who would do her ill. Unfortunately, they cannot defend her against her failing health.
- Aitannia, an accomplished scholar, returns to her tribe on the plains. She brings with her stories of the greater world, but these do not interest the tribe's new leader: Sharielle. Sharielle wants to know about modern military theory, modern magic, and she has a special interest in the voidfire artifacts that Aitannia has smuggled out of the Archives.
- Muirwald, a northern Petty Holding, is sick of losing outlying farms to raids by the Bare. To discourage intrusions into their lands, they institute a new policy. Every month, they will send raiders of their own into the Lands of the Bare to take the tribeswomen as slaves. Their first raid is very successful. Their second raid brings five allied tribes down on their heads. Those who answer their distress call are unlikely to find much of their capital city left.

### NPCs

- **Bare Scout:** 1 armor, 4 health, Poorly Equipped, Stealthy. 3 harm, Melee. Moves: Fade Back And Report. Power: ★
- **Bare Slavers:** 3 armor, 7 health. 6 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation. Moves: Encircle Prey, Net And Lasso. Power: ★★

- **Bare Watch-Spirit:** 4 armor, 6 health, Spirit. 7 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Elemental Slam. Power: ★★
- **Bare Pact Mistress:** 4 armor, 8 health, Spirit-Linked. 7 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Aura. Moves: Bind An Oath, Call Watch-Spirit. Power: ★★★
- **Bare Tribe:** 4 armor, 20 health, Spirit-Linked. 12 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation. Moves: Deploy Spirits, Clash With The Enemy. Power: ★★★★★

## MERCANTILE CONSORTIUMS

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*War. Plague. Famine. There's profit to be made in every situation.*

*—Cherie, August Futures Trademistress*

**Motivation:** Amass gold

**Moves:** Make A Tempting Offer, Exploit A Scarcity

During the first year, when society was picking itself up from the collapse of the Five Worlds, the seeds that would become the Mercantile Consortiums were sowed. Beginning as informal alliances between Direct Reincarnations that remembered being traders in their previous lives, these alliances grew into guilds. Over time, and without regulation due to the raging Godwar, the guilds slowly expanded their holdings, acquired their own armies, and began to squeeze out their competition. While independant traders do continue to exist, their numbers have been slowly dropping. The Consortiums provide security, reliable pay, and are able to bully small nations into accepting their goods. This means that a lot of independants carry Consortium-issued licenses to gain an edge in business deals. Some even carry them legitimately.

Each Consortium is a composite of smaller guilds, regional trade houses, and minor cartels, and so the question of who is actually running a Consortium is often up in the air. Power struggles are common, if quiet, and are usually resolved without the

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

Consortium's trading partners being any the wiser. If they did suspect the Consortium of waging war-by-assassination on itself, it would suddenly become a much less stable trading partner and its fortunes would tumble.

The three largest Consortiums are August Futures, the Reaping, and Dorgana's Mercy.

**August Futures** specializes in overland shipping, especially of food and other necessities, through conflict zones. They make most of their profits in the Petty Holdings and have repeatedly been accused by the Godhunters of smuggling artifacts and weapons to the Priestesses. These accusations are quickly dropped, as the Godhunters cannot afford to cut their own supply lines.

The **Reaping** makes most of its profits off of mercenary work, but it does not limit its scope to selling armies to nations. The Reaping offers special rates for the rental of small teams of guardswomen, infiltrators, and researchers. It also matches individual bodyguards with clients looking for protection. It is often accused of playing every side in a conflict, but these accusations are somewhat dampened when it sends teams of artisans, carpenters, and healers to war-ravaged villages to help the locals rebuild. No bill is ever sent for these services, and even the nations that own the villages are afraid to ask what they owe.

**Dorgana's Mercy**, which has the poorest reputation among commoners, also has the widest reach of the big three. Its holdings stretch from the southern Lands of the Bare all the way into the Godlands, and that is exactly the direction that its trade flows in. Dorgana's Mercy buys slaves from the Bare and sends them south, trading them off a few at a time as they cross the Petty Holdings, and then selling the rest in the Godlands, where they are quickly converted into Priestesses. The Godhunters have been debating for a long time over what to do about Dorgana's Mercy, and they are starting to reach some very terminal conclusions.

Apart from these, there are other, smaller Consortiums such as the **Cooperation of Bronze**, which sponsors both relief efforts and



smuggling operations, but these minor Consortiums tend to orbit around the big three and most merchants think it will only be a matter of time before they are absorbed by their more successful peers. One surprising exception to this rule is **Many Hands**, the only Consortium on Lobsteropolis. While other serious traders consider the migrating city to be too anarchic to be worth establishing a foothold in, Many Hands has been quietly unifying its hawkers, brokers, wholesalers, craftswomen, and grocers into a scuttling army, and it has resisted every outside attempt at a takeover.

At sea, the mercantile companies **Sweetwind**, **Nightflyer**, and **Pale Dawn**—while not official Mercantile Consortiums—have a similar status because of their strong hold on shipping. Their outposts can be found in most major coastal cities on the Northern Continent—and a few on the southern one. They are sometimes made offers by the Consortiums, but their animosity towards each other runs too deep for any of them to sign away their independence. They see each other as the citizens of different nations at war and—outside of Tentaculorum—act accordingly. At present, they do not seem to realize that they would all but own the ocean if they merged. The Consortiums are striving to keep it that way.

### Threats

- An enchanted mirror gives its August Futures owners timely but cryptic advice, earning it an important position in the organization. Lately, however, it's been screaming for help. "They come," it says, "they come." Pallid white fingertips press against the other side of the glass. Its owners are discussing which deep sea trench to throw it into.
- Harvest dances are a popular ritual across the Petty Holdings, the Otherlands, and the Godlands, with wandering local dancers making a living by leading the revels. In recent years, however, the Reaping has cornered the little industry by hiring out its own dancers to the communities and sweetening the deal with rentals of ribbons, bells, and other hard-to-come-by luxuries. Where they were able to eke out a living before, the local dancers are

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

now starving. Spurned by the villages that once hired them, they are planning their vengeance.

- After a week of intense debate, the Godhunters finally declare Dorgana's Mercy an abomination in the eyes of the Multigoddess. They give the Consortium a month to withdraw its assets from their lands. Instead of quietly complying, the slavers assemble a mercenary army and join the Godwar on the Priestess' side.

### NPCs

- **Consortium Negotiator:** 1 armor, 6 health, Impressive. 4 harm, Melee. Moves: Press Someone Into An Unequal Deal, Remind Attackers That A Bounty Will Be Placed On Anyone That Kills Them. Power: ★
- **Consortium Mercenaries:** 4 armor, 6 health, Well Equipped. 5 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Buy Off A Follower or Ally, Create A Hole In The Defenses. Power: ★★
- **Consortium Master Trader:** 3 armor, 10 health, Impressive. 5 harm, Ranged, Aura. Moves: Deploy Consortium Assets, Set A Generous Bounty. Power: ★★★

## PEOPLES OF THE SOUTHERN CONTINENT

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*They're just like us, if you ignore all the differences.*

*—Kylev, Financier, Second Expedition to the interior*

**Motivation:** Survive

**Moves:** Shrug Off Damage From the Environment, Deploy Unfamiliar Magic Or Technology

Formed as an apparent accident and isolated behind a wall of storm-winds, the people of the Southern Continent have spent the past forty years in almost total seclusion from the rest of Holdfast.

This has insulated them from the Godwar, but it has also kept them from the cultural developments of the Northern Continent and the re-inventions of the Archivists.

Gods and Megabeasts are both rare on the Southern Continent, and instead the Convergence holds sway. All southerners have beliefs about it, and much of their technology and infrastructure revolves around the carefully moderated use of it.

The **Synthesists** are women who believe that better harmony with the Convergence is the only path forward. They can be found everywhere on the Southern Continent except in the Crystal Empire, and they are responsible for the careful cultivation of a number of useful black metal mutations. They are not all Apotheotic Convergents, but Convergents often find them to be easy companions. Some Convergents even have a sort of celebrity status among them, due to particularly rare or useful mutations.

Opposite the Synthesists, the **Purists** are worried that the Convergence will one day replace all organic life with its sprawl. Their beliefs are not as popular as Synthesism, but they are common enough in isolated, outlying regions like the Skyless Lands and the coasts. They stick to Aura magic whenever they can, and individual groups of them either see Convergence-casting as a necessary evil or an impermissible mortal sin.

Whatever their views on the Convergence are, the **Adapted** are women that are so acclimated to their own parts of the continent that they can rarely be found anywhere else. This includes the Interior Tribes, who are so heavily converted that they mostly feed on aether from the stars, as well as the inhabitants of the Flower Duchies and Crystalline Empire. Women from the Flower Duchies are poetry-quoting, slow-moving Bloom-vectors—and so are unwelcome almost everywhere else. Women from the Crystalline Empire, meanwhile, are valuable enough to the major Factions that they are often hunted outside of their territory.

The last significant subfaction on the Southern Continent is the **Peripherals**—women who live in the sky or on the coast, only



## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

brushing the cultures of the interior. Some of these people belong to the Skyless Lands. Others are found below the waves. There is even a semi-permanent flotilla of Archivist Bulbships that slowly circles the edges of the Crystalline Empire. The Peripherals, being a natural intermediary between the citizens of the Northern and Southern Continents, often are tapped to serve as guides and translators for those who wish to study the continent more deeply.

### Threats

- A group of emissaries from the Adapted, recently arrived in the City of Glass And Gold, believe that their way of life would be a boon for the Northern Continent. After all, striving to survive their environment has mostly kept them from war. In their pockets are handfuls of Bloom pollen, and they have decided to begin their efforts to save the north with the Mothstews.
- Delilah, an Apotheotic Convergent, is opening a school for Convergence casters on the Northern Continent. The Priestesses have made it very clear that they will burn the school to the ground if she tries to establish it in the Godlands, so she has secured permission from the Godhunters to situate it in the Mainland. Already, she has begun accepting students from their ranks, and their devotion to her has led to an unlikely alliance between the sub-factions of the Godhunters that believe this is giving Dahlia undue influence over their organization.
- Shifting patterns in Megabeast migration have driven the coastal Peripherals to find new homes on the shores of the Northern Continent. Unfortunately, many of these homes are already inhabited. The Winter of Raiding has begun.

### NPCs

- **Southern Survivalist:** 5 armor, 5 health, Navigator. 6 harm, Ranged. Moves: Lure Into Ambush, Withdraw To A Sniper's Perch. Power: ★★
- **Southern Enclave:** 5 armor, 9 health, Hardy. 8 harm, Melee, Ranged, Formation. Moves: Set Spears And Fall Back Behind Walls, Release The Scythe-Hounds. Power: ★★★

## OCEANIC IDEOLOGIES

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*There's just as much life beneath the salt as there is above it. It's just easier to see how small you are out here. That's why you're afraid to visit.*

*—Letter from a mercenary on Icthya to her Archivist lover*

**Motivation:** Explore and expand. Don't wake the creatures in the deepest ocean.

**Moves:** An Aquatic City Eats Someone Important, A Raiding Party Surfaces Offshore

Society beneath the waves exists in a state of constant flux. Cities migrate. Borders are fluid. Tribes travel with the seasons and the migrations of alewives, salmon, and tuna. Throughout the ocean, women seeking to profit off of anarchy thrive.

The **Brineswillers** believe that the point of life is to drink it to the lees—and that property is temporary, especially other people's. They value concrete friendships over any sort of abstract philosophy, and they are often found pursuing work as traders and mercenaries—or else as pirates and raiders.

By contrast, **Hermitbacks** see the ocean as an only partly civilized wilderness. They seek to tame it, but not by exploration and adventure. Instead, they try to build up their own holdings and slowly creep the edges of civilization out into the hostile blue. The more inhabited territory there is below the surface, they reason, the more other colonists will be tempted to settle there.

**Hegemonists** hold similar beliefs, but they also feel that the oceans should be unified under the rule of a single nation. Which nation that is depends on the Hegemonist, but the two frontrunners are Icthya and New Aran.

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

Finally, **Fringers** are people that find comfort and meaning in living in the remotest parts of the ocean. This includes the arctic tribes, but also cities that rest on the thermocline over particularly deep trenches and sovereign nations that live cityless, free-floating in the vertical blue desert between floor and surface. Many Fringers have unusual perspectives on their own lives, believing living to either be utterly insignificant or the only thing that truly matters.

### Threats

- Icthya and New Aran have been circling each other politically for a while, but over the past week things have gotten a bit more literal. Icthya is patrolling the waters around the snail, interdicting any trade that would come to it, but refusing to meet the Araners in open battle. Furious, and with her people on the edge of starvation, Queen Lathiolathiell makes a pact with powers best let be.
- A ladle, when dipped into the air, fills magically with cool, refreshing water. However, an attempt to take the artifact by force goes horribly wrong and the ladle ruptures, causing flooding all the way to the coast. If it isn't somehow deactivated, the ladle could spell the end of land-dwelling civilization. At the same time, their pathway smoothed by the floods, a pack of Eelkin raiders surges inland, pillaging every village now accessible from the cool, refreshing waters.
- Cyrene, a Fringer, runs a mercantile operation. Chiseling huge chunks off of the pack ice to the north, she guides them to warmer waters and sells them to seaside communities. The Consortiums, having recently heard about her plan, decide to take over the business. They send several well-stocked ships north, evidently unaware of Cyrene's Brineswiller friends who wait beneath the ice.

### NPCs

- **Brineswiller Pirate:** 3 armor, 4 health, Poorly Equipped, Aquatic. 6 harm, Melee. Moves: Flying Lunge, Provocative Insult. Power: ★



- **Brineswiller Crew:** 5 armor, 6 health, Poorly Equipped, Aquatic. 6 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Defensive Volley of Spears, Steer Into Troubled Waters. Power: ★★
- **Hermitback Crabriders:** 5 armor, 10 health, Fortified, Shelter, Aquatic. 8 harm, Melee, Hidden. Moves: Charge From Ambush, Pinch And Hold. Power: ★★★
- **Fringer Saltseer:** 4 armor, 8 health, Destined, Aquatic. 7 harm, Area, Indirect, Aura. Moves: Summon Whirlpool, Ride The Rip Current. Power: ★★★
- **Hegemonist Army:** 6 armor, 16 health, Well Equipped, Aquatic. 11 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Deafening Warcry, Adapt Formation. Power: ★★★★★

## HEIRS TO THE SKY

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*Don't let anyone tell you you don't belong here. All you need is wings or magic and those aren't terribly hard to come by.*

*—Zharía, Angel Homesteader*

**Motivation:** Escape landbound concerns. Find freedom and peace. Establish a new nation.

**Moves:** Armed Skyfolk Appear Overhead, A Conflict In The Sky Spills Over Onto The Ground

Despite the sky's remoteness, it is not at peace. While the factions of the ground have not laid much claim to this suspended, empty desert, their political conflicts are replaced here with broader territories and less concrete issues. Among the inhabited cloud banks, feral Bulbships, floating cities, aerial god herds, and occasional airborne Megabeasts there may be fewer nations, but there is still room for disagreement.

The sky's inhabitants are split into three rough categories based on their feelings about who owns the blue.

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

The **Horizonborn** are women who see themselves as natives of the upper atmosphere. They take a fierce pride in their self-sufficiency and often see altitude as social status. They are not all hermits and many live in small bands (or even tribes) dipping down into the cloud layers to occasionally hunt or trade. Horizonborn often have powerful wings in addition to leashed gods or floating havens, but a few are small societies of terrestrial mages who one day decided to see how high they could levitate their tower, outpost, or village. Horizonborn are of a range of opinions about visitors from the ground. They are often seen as condescending by the other sky factions, but by and large they are willing to share the empty expanse with others—so long as those others pay them due respect for their abilities.

In contrast with the Horizonborn, who see themselves as citizens of the sky, the **Perimeter Sovereigns** see themselves as worshippers of it. To them, the sky is the last true holy place, free from the clamor and evil of the ground. Sovereigns range from aloof to vehemently hostile to ground-born intruders and they congregate around the cloud-layer where hunting and moisture harvesting are easiest. Occasionally, the most militant Perimeter Sovereigns lead raiding parties against the surface. Unified into a single horde, they could pose a serious threat to border towns, outposts, and even small cities. Luckily, they seem disinclined to put aside their own individual dogmas in order to do this.

The final faction, the **Homesteaders**, believe that the sky belongs to the land below it. They are a relatively recent arrival in the emptiness and are found in small militarized pockets throughout the blue. They make no secret of their national allegiances, hoping to both legitimize their claims and stave off raids by the other factions. Sometimes this works, but often advertising the mage guild or Petty Holding that they represent has little influence on the bandits that flock around their walls. Thus far, it has been easier for the other citizens of the sky to avoid and ignore them, but that is becoming progressively harder as they carry more and more of their home civilizations into the air.

### Threats

- Godhunters, disguising themselves as Homesteaders, have begun to tarnish the reputation of the sub-faction by tracking and ambushing gods in the sky. The actual Homesteaders are quite confused by this, as they have no difficulty telling the difference between a Lightwings raiding party and a wandering sky-caravan. They can't understand why anyone is falling into these traps.
- Tanoh, a Spidermoth, is one of the rare few skydwellers who not only has never set foot on the ground, but is the daughter of a woman who did the same. She is regarded by Perimeter Sovereigns as a sort of messiah, and they defend her zealously from all threats. They also won't let her leave, and her dearest dream is to see solid ground just once in her life.
- The Sanguine Angels, a group of Horizonborn bandits, have a reputation as ruthless killers elsewhere in the sky, but their rigorous adherence to the rules of the Meander means that they are still welcome aboard. Or rather, they were, until their lieutenant, Amarillda Snakeface, picked a drunken fight with a winged bear god and got them kicked out. Without a place to blow off steam, their raids have been growing steadily more vicious. The women of the Meander refuse to take responsibility for this, but a substantial bounty has been posted for any negotiator that can resolve the issue.

### NPCs

- **Blue-Crazed Lunatic:** 3 armor, 4 health, Poorly Equipped, Flying, Unreasoning. 5 harm, Melee. Moves: Divebomb, Race Into A Cloudbank. Power: ★
- **Bandit Harriers:** 3 armor, 7 health, Poorly Equipped, Flying. 7 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Your Money Or Your Life, Deadly Aerobatics. Power: ★★
- **Secretive Order of Magi In A Forbidding Sky-Fortress:** 6 armor, 17 health, Fortified, Aura, Flying. 13 harm, Ranged, Area, Artillery, Formation. Moves: Politely Bid You To Leave While Lightning Crackles Between Their Hands, Cackling Death Rain. Power: ★★★★★



### LANDED NATIONS

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*You must understand. For most of Holdfast, our holy purpose is just a backdrop to the petty wars and land-grabs that make up the daily lives of lesser women. They support us as best they can, but their wills are weak. We cannot count on them to put our needs before their own.*

*—Karalla, Godhunter Trainer*

**Motivation:** No one will take our territory from us

**Moves:** Challenge and Capture Intruders, Make Things Complicated And Political

Living in the shadow of the Godwar, the Landed Nations are communities on the Northern Continent that have clearly defined territories and a vested interest in defending them.

Many are **Vassals**, serving a major Faction due to shared beliefs or in exchange for financial and military support. Much of the Petty Holdings, nearly all of the Abiding Fiefdoms, and a number of cities and townships caught in the orbit of the City of Glass and Gold are all Vassals.

Other Landed Nations are **Independants**, free of factional allegiance, although this can be a tenuous status to maintain. Without an obvious patron, they have more freedom to move diplomatically, but there is also more pressure on them to take a side—or else risk being conquered the moment they become too inconvenient. The rest of the Petty Holdings, a solid majority of the coastal cities, and many of the remaining settlements in the Otherlands are Independants. Independent cities are often hubs of both trade and smuggling, and they are generally accustomed to seeing armed delegations from the major Factions showing up on their doorsteps.

The final kind of Landed Nation is the **Outsiders**. Outsiders are communities that, due to severe geographical or cultural separation, aren't expected by anyone to take part in the Godwar. This has afforded them true independence. Examples of this type of Landed Nation include the tribes that inhabit the Sigh and the Shipwright's Arbor, the women of the Bonded Wilds, and the denizens of the Owl Barrens. While there are occasional efforts to tie them to a major Faction, emissaries to the Outsiders are almost universally rebuffed, leaving frustrated Godhunters, Priestesses, and Archivists alike muttering about the intractability of owls.

### Threats

- Maris, queen of the Petty Holding New Barrenvale, is sending an aid caravan to her neighbor's war-ravaged lands. To protect the caravan from banditry, she is also sending a heavily armed regiment to accompany it. Her neighbor, fearful of a coup, is refusing to allow it entry. Maris, in response, is loudly announcing that the needs of the people come before politics, and she has ordered her forces to punch through any troops put in their way.
- A queen from the Petty Holdings finds a cosmetics kit that causes all who see her made-up face to slavishly obey her every command. She has already absorbed three other Holdings this way. Her neighbors are promising a considerable sum to anyone that can steal it.
- The Owls have taken an interest in the Bonded Wilds. Day and night, whole congregations of them stand outside the edges of the swamp, staring in. Among Archivists, the theory has been advanced that perhaps the Owls are hoping to become Symbiotes, and that soon Holdfast will see a nation of giant tarantula-riding Owls sweeping down from the north, conquering all in its way. More moderate thinkers suggest that maybe the birds are just hungry.

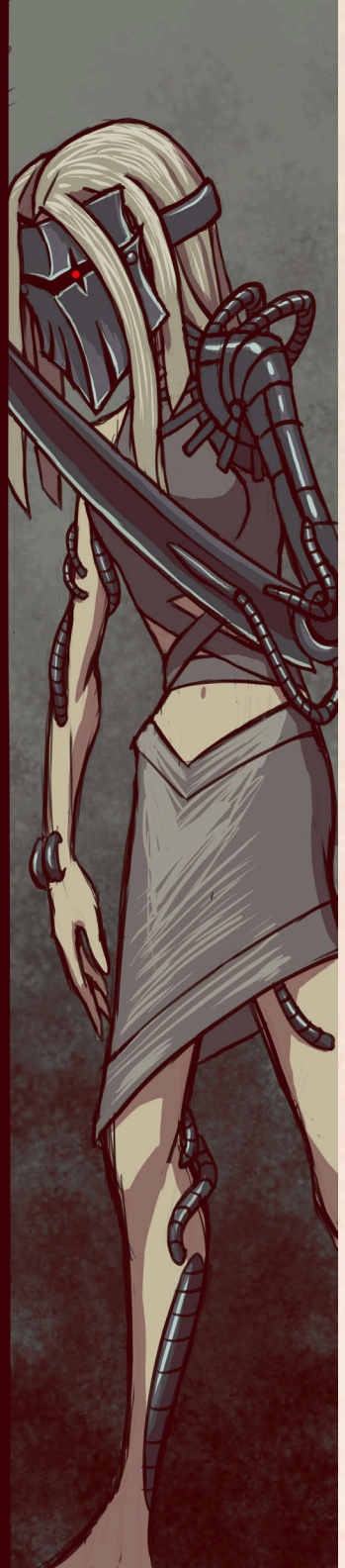
### NPCs

- **Starving Brigand:** 1 armor, 3 health, Poorly Equipped. 5 harm, Melee. Moves: Frenzied Knifepoint Mugging. Power: ★

## Origin (Everyone Comes From Somewhere)

- **Independant Grifter:** 0 armor, 3 health, Performance. 3 harm, Melee, Ranged,. Moves: Misdirection. Power: ★
- **Peasant Mob:** 2 armor, 10 health, Poorly Equipped. 5 harm, Melee, Formation. Moves: Swell Their Numbers With Incendiary Rhetoric, Disorganized Charge. Power: ★★
- **Mysterious Lone Swordswoman:** 5 armor, 7 health, Destined. 8 harm, Melee. Moves: Teleport Cut, Our Paths Will Cross Again. Power: ★★★
- **Well-Organized Vassal Regiment:** 4 armor, 10 health, Well Equipped. 7 harm, Melee, Ranged. Moves: Send Messengers To Their Commander, Dig In And Fortify. Power: ★★★





# BUILDING YOUR CHARACTER

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Character creation in Holdfast is the same as character creation in **Heroines of the First Age**. Players have a few more considerations—such as what Generation they are, whether they serve a Faction, and whether they are a member of one of the new races—but the general flow is unchanged, and can be found on page 28 of HFA

## CHARACTER CONCEPT

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In **Heroines of the First Age**, during character creation players ask what kind of person their character is, and what kind of creature they are.

In Holdfast, they should ask two follow-up questions:

- How does my character see the world?
- How does my character see her companions?

The tension between those two answers has the potential to drive a lot of the story.

Of course, the answer to the second question can also be a good test of whether a character concept is fit for the group. For example, a zealous Godhunter who always kills Priestesses on sight is going to make for a very short, very adversarial game if they're dropped into a party consisting entirely of Priestesses. To avoid this, players should check in with each other during character creation to make sure the characters they are creating can work together. Sometimes this will even inspire new ideas or goals, enriching the story for everyone.

### YOUR GENERATION

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When a character was born can have a significant effect on their metaphysics (for example, whether they're a Direct Reincarnation or a Newmade) and also on their experiences with the Godwar. There are Moves for things like being a member of the First Generation or a Direct Reincarnation, and there are Tragic Flaws like Amnesiac and Dark Half that can tie into a character's Generation.

### DO YOU HAVE A FACTION?

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It is perfectly appropriate for a whole party of characters to be drifting mercenaries without concrete allegiances beyond their coin-purses and the ends of their swords, but a party that serves one or more Factions gives the GM an easy way to hook them into adventures. Having friends to call on can also be the difference between succeeding and merely surviving. Leveraging a Faction's resources is sure to come at a cost, but this provides the GM with even more material to tie the PCs into the plot.

## HOLDFAST RACES AND TRAITS

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*It used to be a lot simpler than this. In Ethantar, you knew women of every species. You knew how to act when you met them. Here, I meet new species every day.*

*The women I buy salted fish from has a face like a beartrap and her throat pouch bulges when she talks. I don't know what she is, and I'm scared to even ask.*

*—Rybekka, Foxcat*

The races of Holdfast are wildly varied, including the whole gamut of species from Heroines of the First Age, plus a few local variations and outright additions.



## Building Your Character

Some races are more deeply integrated into the setting lore than others. The Lightwings, for example, are resurrected warriors from the Five Worlds and have a number of established features already embedded in the story. The Eelkin, on the other hand, are entirely new and can be modified more easily to suit your own aesthetic.

Holdfast is wild and new, with lots of insufficiently explored territory, so don't hesitate to create and include your own races. If your story needs a colony of Bugbears living in the mountains, add a colony of Bugbears to the mountains.

On the other hand, if you need to generate a species quickly, there's no harm in pulling from the following list. Races that are unique to this setting, that have unique speciations, or that go by different names on Holdfast are in **bold** and will be elaborated on in just a moment.

### RACES OF THE FIVE WORLDS

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Harpies, Terrestrial Lamias, Golems, Gigasborn, Mimics, Daemons, **Spidermoths**, Angels, Pangolas, Gargoyles, Slimes, Medusae, Minotaurs, Kitsune, **Foxcats**, Wolves, Centaurs

### NEW AQUATIC

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Mermaids, Seasnake Lamias, Eelkin, Shark-hybrids, Diving-Bird Harpies, Lantern Girls, Brackish Water Nymphs, Rusalka, Cecaelia

### NEW TERRESTRIAL

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The Lightwings, The Owls, Xerophyte Alarunes, Quartzwork Simulacra, Muskind, Lunae

## NEW WILD

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Rakshasa, The Bare, Grayhides, Centipedes, Quetzalcoatl, Wyverns

## HFA RACES IN HOLDFAST

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- **Angels**
  - Originally native to Axolozug and the Wastes, many of the Wastes' Angels were transplanted into homes beneath the waves during the Second Creation. Those that remembered their previous lives largely fled the Cities at Sea to find new homes in the sky. The others have come up with some fairly elaborate justifications for their wings, which more than a few insist on calling flippers.
- **Centaurs**
  - On Ethantar, the Centaurs were outcasts, barbarians that lived beyond the borders of civilized lands. Many have joined armies, Mercantile Consortiums, or decided that life in the major cities has more appeal for them. A surprising number have become Archivists.
- **Centipedes**
  - Born for the first time on the relentlessly hostile underground bugworld of Sasi, Direct Reincarnation Centipedes see Holdfast as a paradise—Godwar and all. Some are still traumatized by their experiences and have raised twitchy, anxious daughters, but others revel in the comparative lack of predators and are wanderers, entertainers, and courtesans.
- **Daemons**
  - Hailing from the inverted metropolis of Axolozug, Daemons represent a wealth of knowledge about the Five Worlds. Some are as old as the Lightwings and even remember the creation of *their* world. This would be more helpful if the whole species didn't tend to be evasive about its history.
- **Gigasborn**
  - Former inhabitants of the Wastes, Gigasborn were often either scratch-farmers or soldiers in service to the matriarchs of the old Beast Cities. They tend to be generally good-

## Building Your Character

natured, their immense size giving them few voluntary enemies, and many speak with quaint, folksy accents.

- **Gargoyles**

- Originally from Axolozug, Gargoyles are known for both their intense patience and their ability to stare at a single point for hours without blinking. Gargoyles find this relaxing. Other people tend to find it upsetting.

- **Golems**

- Women of the Wastes, Sasi, and Urach, Golems are commonly seen as cautious and reserved. This is because the First Generation from Sasi grew up in constant mortal fear of giant bugs and the ones from Urach were nearly exterminated by the reptilian Monsterkin of their world. For reasons unknown, the Golems were not converted into Bare by the Multigoddess, and strangely the Bare don't hold much a grudge over this. If anything, they seem embarrassed.

- **Harpies**

- A populous race both on Axolozug and in the Wastes, Harpies are very gregarious, apart from a few loners. They have a reputation for slipping easily into and out of relationships, but they are very committed parents when chicks do hatch. Harpies are sometimes held back by their lack of hands, but their talons are quite well articulated and can suffice for tasks such as holding a spear or drawing a bow. Putting on clothing tends to be more of a challenge, as does fine dining. Harpy fashion consists of a lot of garments that can be tied or wrapped into place with their feet.

- **Kitsune**

- Contrary to the stories that they themselves spread, the Kitsune of Ethantar do not grow additional tails every time they realize a deep inner truth about the universe. This has not stopped them from being regarded as wise, and more than one Kitsune fortune-teller or palmist has profited off of the public's perception.

- **Medusae**

- Most Medusae came from Urach, and so were converted into Bare when the Five Worlds ended. However, several from the Wastes remain. The Bare regard them with stunned envy, and the Medusae typically make a concerted effort to avoid them.



- **Mimics**
  - The Mimics of Sasi, while they tend to be friendly, polite, and outgoing, are one of the most frequently mocked races on Holdfast. This stems both from the fact that their First Generation members were all illiterate survivalists, kept locked out of the fortified cities that more urbane Sasians called home, and from the almost incomprehensible dialect that all three generations speak. Mimic rhyming slang is frequently (and incorrectly) parodied in street plays and folk songs, something that only rarely seems to bother the Mimics. Some claim that their apparent nonchalance comes from some innate docility in their species. Mimics just nod and smile at this, content in the knowledge that they can insult anyone on Holdfast without the other person having the faintest idea what they're saying.
- **Minotaurs**
  - Relatively linear thinkers, the Minotaurs of Ethantar are at their most comfortable when they have a clear problem in front of them and all the tools necessary to effect a solution. Some join their Faction's armies, but the majority become structural engineers.
- **Pangolas**
  - Blessed with the natural ability to curl up into a ball and roll away from trouble, the Pangola of the Wastes are shy and polite, but surprisingly fierce when conversation turns to something they are passionate about. A number are found in the Cities at Sea, often in positions of influence, but a significant fraction of Holdfast's Pangola have joined the Mercantile Consortiums and are found throughout the upper levels of those organizations.
- **Quetzalcoatl**
  - Bird-snakes native to Urach, Axolozug, and the Wastes, only a few remain on Holdfast. Those from Urach were all converted into Bare, and the others represent only a fraction of the population that lived on their home worlds. Why the Multigoddess neglected to reincarnate more of the species is a matter of intense debate among the Quetzalcoatl.
- **Slimes**

## Building Your Character

- Sasian city-dwellers with long natural lifespans, Slimes tend to become craftswomen, aristocrats, and mages. They have a strong preference for the latter, and it is not unheard of for young Slime girls to be heckled by their parents into taking the profession.
- **Terrestrial Lamias**
  - Originally from Urach and the Wastes, the Urach Lamias have all become Bare, while the Wastes' Lamias have retained their original bodies. In an unexpected reversal of other Bare/Monsterkin relations, many of the remaining Lamias are actively researching ways to restore their sisters among the Bare to their original bodies. The Bare are of conflicting opinions about this, but are awkward enough about it that it has prevented them from taking Lamia slaves.
- **Wolves**
  - Canids from Ethantar, Wolves obey few of the stereotypes about their species. They do not have an absolute dominance hierarchy, they do not drive out their weak and injured, and they do not prey on other Monsterkin. They are, however, skittish around strangers, and earning a Wolf's trust usually takes a considerable amount of time.

## NEW RACES

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- **The Bare**
  - No Monster Features. Bare are identical to “baseline humanoids” as mentioned in HFA.
  - Suggested: Bare
  - Strange, naked-fleshed people. Cold in the winter, sweltering in the summer, intolerant of Monsterkin.
- **Brackish Water Nymphs**
  - Skin Like Seaweed. Webbed Hands And Feet. Almond Eyes.
  - Suggested: Echolocation
  - The daughters of estuaries and coastlines, Brackish Water Nymphs live their lives caught between the predators of sea and shore. Their personalities tend to be either skittish or hyper-aggressive.

- **Diving-Bird Harpies**
  - Waterproof Wings. Feathered Body.
  - Suggested: Agile Flyer
  - Unjustly have a reputation for being backwards provincials due to a large number of isolated coastal spearfishing communities.
- **Cecaelia**
  - Replace Legs With Octopus Tentacles.
  - Suggested: Mystic Eye, Super Ability (Ubersenses), Ink Defense
  - Cecaelia are highly tactile thinkers, known for their fidgeting in high society and their mischief pretty much everywhere else. Most Cecaelia, unless explicitly told otherwise, consider touching part of seeing. Their tentacles and hands are more sensitive than their eyes and Cecaelia pickpockets exploit this cultural disconnect to make off with eight purses at a time.
- **Eelkin**
  - Elongated Body. Large Jaws. Slimy Skin. Replace Legs With Tail.
  - Suggested: Swallow Whole, Constrict
  - Talking with an Eelkin can be unsettling for other species. They tend to maintain fixed, unblinking eye-contact long past the point of comfort, and they show an interest in what their partner is talking about by slowly circling them. All the while staring. Always staring.
- **Foxcats**
  - Furred, Clawed Hands. Large, Fluffy, Triangular Ears. Fluffy Tail.
  - Suggested: Supernatural Allure, Super Ability (Superstrength)
  - Foxcats have a reputation for being passionate about everything they do, although this is based partially on a misunderstanding. Foxcats are instinctively close and trusting—often to the point of being seen as cuddly—with those they've decided are “their group.” With outsiders, their natural instinct is to shy away. Many Foxcats in cosmopolitan settings have managed to overcome this second instinct by treating any conversation with someone they don't know extremely well as an act of public speaking. As a result,



## Building Your Character

Foxcats who don't have a lot of practice interacting with strangers typically come off as being a bit shouty.

- **Grayhides**
  - Thin, Bony Bodies. Pointed Ears. Skeletons Pressing Out Against Their Skin.
  - Suggested: Psychic, Beast Mistress
  - Native to the Bonded Wilds, the Grayhides prefer their thermal swamp over the rest of civilization because mingling with other Monsterkin can be difficult for them. Their unique aptitude towards forming symbiotic bonds with the giant insects of their home has also sensitized them towards reading flashes of other people's surface thoughts and emotions. Among other Grayhides, this is merely inconvenient, but in the cities further south the emotional cacophony can be temporarily deafening.
- **Lantern Girls**
  - Jagged Fangs. Dark, Leathery Skin. Forehead Lantern.
  - Suggested: Fathomdiver, Aquatic Adaptation
  - A rarity in the upper seas, Lantern Girls are treated with suspicion in the Beast Cities they visit. Where they go, rumors of Abyssus follow. With too-wide smiles and glowing lanterns that hang like creepy mistletoe just above their heads, they have a reputation for being cryptic and evasive.
- **Lightwings**
  - Huge, Golden Angel-Wings. Blue Skin.
  - Suggested: First Generationer, Super Ability (Gigamagic), Any Halo Move
  - All Lightwings are part of The First Generation—their memories retained—but not all of them were around for the deaths of the Five Worlds. Most died long before that. Nearly every Lightwings is a Godhunter, although there are a very few that are hermits instead. Stories of Lightwings throwing in with another faction are colorful, but probably have no truth behind them.
- **Lunae**
  - White Moth Wings With Bright Carnelian False-Eyes. Feathery Antennae. Four Arms.
  - Suggested: Agile Flyer

- The Lunae are capable of adapting their circadian rhythm so that they can function during the day, but most are more comfortable waking with the dusk and falling asleep shortly after dawn. Their wings and antennae are powerful but fragile, and Lunae clothing tends to leave most of the back bare to avoid friction with the wings. Lunae tend to be seen as sincere, but they also have a deep love of humor. Unfortunately, Lunae jokes are generally told straight-faced and are not always understood as such by outsiders.
- **Mermaids**
  - Replace Legs With Fish-Scaled Tail.
  - Suggested: Beautiful Voice
  - Unlike Seasnake Lamias, which are most comfortable on the surface, Mermaids are bathypelagic swimmers and tolerant of both cold and low-light. They have a thick, insulating layer of fat beneath their skin and their eyes are dark and wide, so occasionally sailors confuse them with seals—something most Mermaids find highly insulting.
- **Muskind**
  - Shaggy Pelt. Wavy Forehead Horns.
  - Suggested: Fortitude
  - The Muskind have conflicting reputations for being courteous and stubborn. Both are true. They are also correctly rumored to be unbothered by inclement weather. A Muskind raised by other Muskind typically views monsoons, blizzards, and heatwaves with the same blasé indifference as if they were a light rain. It is, however, just a tavern story that they sleep standing up.
- **Owls**
  - Owl Body. Owl Legs. Owl Head. Really Just An Owl. Also Eight Feet Tall.
  - Suggested: Agile Flyer, Unblinking Stare, Swivleneck, Alien Language Flaw
  - One of the stranger stories coming out of the City of Glass and Gold is that these creatures were created by a Facet of the Multigoddess. Even if some wag *has* carved an owl face on the side of the Great Mountain, reasonable women think the “Facet Athenia theory” is pretty far fetched. Frustratingly, while the Owls are unable to use Monsterkin speech—instead

## Building Your Character

gribbling, screeching, hissing, hooting, whirring, and purring—on the few occasions they’ve been communicated with, they have demonstrated a surprising and passionate support for the theory.

- **Quartzwork Simulacra**
  - Translucent Quartz-Crystal Body.
  - Suggested: Super Ability (Gigamagic), Any Halo Move
  - Like the Convergence, the Simulacra feed on magic. Unlike the Convergence, the Simulacra do so by changing the “tone” of the magic instead of destroying it utterly. Rare outside of their fading empire on the Southern Continent, they are nonetheless of considerable interest to the factions for their ability to store charged aether in their bodies or to construct crystal growths that do the same.
- **Rakshasa**
  - Thick Mouth Tusks. Thin, Oily Pelt. Knuckle-Walking.
  - Suggested: Fortitude
  - Away from major cities, Rakshasa culture orbits around the wisewomen of their tribes. These wisewomen are responsible for painting temporary tattoos in iridescent blue dust on the other members of their society. The tattoos dictate the events that will come in a Rakshasa’s life and a Rakshasa without these tattoos is believed to be futureless. Although uncommon, Rakshasa raised in the cities, without a wisewoman to consult, have developed their own lexicon of tattoos. To their cousins in the wilds, these new symbols range from laughable nonsense to stark heresy.
- **Rusalka**
  - Gaunt Body. Long Fingers. Sparse, Corpse-like Hair.
  - Suggested: Evil Eye
  - Despite their apparent lack of fur, scales, or bodyfat, the Rusalka are unbothered by the cold. Isolated populations find it hard to believe that other people are, and more than one shipwreck survivor has been pulled down into the freezing arctic waters out of the mistaken belief that this is totally fine.
- **Seasnake Lamias**
  - Replace Legs With Colorful, Brightly Patterned Tail.
  - Suggested: Constrict



- Sometimes called waveskimmers for their ease in navigating the surface ocean, Seasnake Lamia are naturally inquisitive and have a culture of openness and trust, even when among strangers. There are more than a few Seasnake Lamias on pirate crews and in bands of coastal brigands, but they tend to genially announce their intentions to pillage, making the experience more surreal for everyone involved.
- **Shark-hybrids**
  - Massive Jaws. Predatory Faces. Dorsal Fins. Sandpaper Skin.
  - Suggested: Carnivore, Super Ability (Superstrength), Aquatic Adaptation
  - Shark-hybrids are not, contrary to their roles in tavern stories and morality plays, psychopaths. They may not tend to show their emotions on their faces, which is disquieting, but they have as rich an emotional range as any other race. More than a few Shark-hybrids are found inland, and their naturally abrasive skin makes them great mountain-climbers.
- **Spidermoths**
  - Replace Legs And Lower Body With Tarantula Thorax. Insect Wings. Spider Fangs On Front Of Lower Body.
  - Suggested: Poison, Binding Thread
  - Despite their powerful limbs and Centauresque stature, Spidermoths are prone to anxiety. Not all of them have it at a level that noticeably interferes with their lives, but most of the race drinks calming teas to combat this problem.
- **Wyverns**
  - Bony Wings. Bladed Tail.
  - Suggested: Super Ability (Hyperspeed), Aerial Adaptation
  - Stereotypically, Wyverns are skittish, loud-mouthed, twitchy loners. The stereotype is incorrect. They are not loners. Wyverns congregate in groups just like most other Monsterkin, but their cautious nature causes them to shy back or puff up in threat displays when confronted by people they don't know. In cities and in the wild, Wyverns tend to be somewhat hyperactive and belligerent when compared with other species, but their actions usually aren't intended as meanness. Their thoughts naturally flit from topic to topic and, when they finally settle on one, they settle on it full-

## Building Your Character

force. This makes them consummate fisherwomen and bird-hunters and less commonly warriors or academics.

- **Xerophyte Alraunes**
  - Spiny Body. Camouflaged To Resemble Sand And Stone. Broad Petals To Condense Fog Into Water. Prehensile Vines.
  - Suggested: Super Ability (Gigamagic), Mindskimmer, Seer
  - Soft-spoken and utterly still when at rest, Xerophyte Alarunes have a way of drawing in other Monsterkin—mostly as they strain to make out what is actually being said. Although rare outside of the fog desert the species calls home, a few have become promising academics, Priestesses, or mages.

## PLAYERMADE RACES IN HOLDFAST

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If you don't see something that interests you in the list of races, you should absolutely feel free to create your own. Use the list of Traits included in **Heroines of the First Age** (Page 30) or make up your own, and work with your group to determine the following:

- Are there a lot of these people?
- Do they live all over Holdfast, or in one particular region?
- Do they have their own distinct culture?
- Do they tend towards certain behaviors or have certain temperaments?
- How are they usually perceived?

## ROLES OF HEROINES IN SOCIETY

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Because Holdfast is a world in turmoil, there are a lot of places for Heroines to be found.

Zealous servants of the Factions, women who are beginning to doubt the rightness of their Faction, and in-way-over-their-heads outsiders are all good candidates for Heroines. Often, figuring out a Heroine's beliefs and agenda will help decide where that Heroine comes from, so players shouldn't be afraid to pick a faction or a belief first and then work backwards from there.

Most Heroines are proactive creatures and therefore tend to gravitate towards leadership roles or positions of influence. A captain of a mercenary company, a scout for the Godhunters, or an important research Archivist are all good candidates for proactive Heroines. Similarly, a woman who lost her town to a war-atrocity, a ladder-climbing Consortium scribe, or a shepherdess looking to unseat Queen Lathiolathiel from her throne are also good choices.

Some Heroines are reactive creatures—only involving themselves in Holdfast's issues because they've been put in a bind. Politically entrapped Petty Holding noble daughters, tribeswomen under pressure from the Factions, servants to headstrong commanders, and Archivists caught in a very literal version of publish or perish are good examples of this type. With characters like this, the GM can give them a push towards the story, but it is the player's responsibility to make sure they stay engaged with the plot.

Finally, a few Heroines are simply caught up in the momentum of things that are bigger than they are. Displaced refugees, treasure hunters who find an artifact that every Faction wants, or bodyguards-for-hire can all end up following a motivated party because it's the safest or most interesting place to be.



# NEW ARCHETYPES AND OLD ARCHETYPES

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## OLD ARCHETYPES

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All the Archetypes from **Heroines of the First Age** are welcome in stories set in Holdfast. Soldiers, Shadewalkers, Outlanders, Socialites, Sorceresses, and Companions play exactly the same in both settings. Wyrdlings, being something of an anomaly in the setting, are likely to attract interest from the Archivists—and possibly the Godhunters, depending on how the Wyrdling's power use is presented. The Devourer, meanwhile, may be automatically associated in the minds of the women of Holdfast with Megabeasts—or specifically the Megabeast Kha. She may attract the attention of beast cults, curious to know if she is a fusion between Monsterkin and Megabeasts. Pact Mistresses are likely to be welcomed in the wilds, where their abilities can mean the difference between a community starving and a community prospering, but in cities outside of the Godlands they may be treated as suspected Priestesses. Priests, due to their obvious association with the gods, are in particular danger in stories set in Godhunter territory. The Godhunters are not an all-seeing, all-knowing Orwellian state, but they are actively on the lookout for Deist agents and may be a recurring complication for parties including a Priest.

## NEW ARCHETYPES

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Included in this book is a host of roles that are completely unique to Holdfast. None of these new Archetypes are compulsory (a party of Soldiers, Outlanders, and Priests should be just as setting-appropriate as one of Symbiotes, Eideticists, and Godhunters) and players should feel free to mix-and-match Moves if they want to dip their toes into an Archetype without committing all of their Move picks to it. However, diving completely into a new Archetype is also encouraged.

### COMBINING MOVES

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Certain blends of Moves can be used to create very particular, nuanced playstyles. For example, a Psionic Symbiote/Shadewalker makes for an ambush-killing infiltrator with the power to draw on both gods and bugs for aid. A Socialite/Oathsworn Godhunter is a honey-tongued tyrant who punishes those who don't appease her. An Outlander/Warden of the Many is a general who leads from the front, shrugging off harm and pushing herself to protect the troops at her back. A Companion/Favored of Owls is a teleporting hairdresser who excels at both giving good advice and swooping down on her prey.

### TROUBLESHOOTING

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**Because some of the Holdfast Archetypes revolve around particular areas or cultures, it is best for players to talk over their Archetype choices as a group.** A party with a Godhunter and a Warden is probably going to be predisposed to internal conflict, and that may or may not be what everyone is looking for. Similarly, if someone wants to play a Apotheotic Convergent and someone else wants to play a Daughter of the Ocean, that means the story is probably going to involve some discussion of the Southern Continent and the Cities At Sea.

Playing an outlandish mishmash of Archetypes is fine, so long as the rest of the group is okay with it. A Oathsworn Godhunter/Warden of the Many character, for example, would probably have a very interesting outlook on life. However, players should take care not to dip into too many new Archetypes at the same time. A Psionic Symbiote/Apotheotic Convergent can be explained succinctly to someone asking about the character. A Psionic Symbiote/Apotheotic Convergent/Daughter of the Ocean/Oathsworn Godhunter/Warden of the Many/Favored of Owls is a cybernetic diver who both hates gods and cherishes them, has a complex relationship with owls, and is followed by a biomechanical bug. The story is usually better served if the player focuses in on a

## Building Your Character

specific character concept at the start, and then lets their character grow into new Archetypes as the plot advances.

## HOLDFAST ARCHETYPES

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The following Archetypes are all Holdfast-specific.

You have absolute permission to port them into **Heroines of the First Age** or other Heroines games, but your group may need or want to modify them so that they better fit those games first.

## APOTHEOTIC CONVERGENT

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The black metal of the south has invaded you—but instead of overtaking you from within, slowly replacing your body every time you draw on its power, it has stabilized, leaving you changed. You no longer have a discernible Aura and an alien intelligence haunts the edges of your thoughts, whispering to you about the hungers of the metal, but on the other hand your body is now a metamorphic weapon, you can subsist on pure aether, and your other abilities have been preternaturally sharpened.

The Apotheotic Convergent is a Power focused Archetype that is heavily wrapped up in the issues of the Southern Continent and the Convergence. It fringes on cyberpunk in some ways and stands out to the northern Monsterkin as something menacing and strange. Play a Convergent if you would like to see the world of Holdfast through a radically different lens, if you would like to be adaptable and tough, and if you want to interact with magic as an outsider.

- **Amplified Frame:** At the start of each day, you can choose one of the following. Doing so removes all benefits and drawbacks from your last selection.
  - **Blacklattice Carapace:** Replace your current Natural armor with a +3 Blacklattice Carapace. When this adaptation is not selected, your previous Natural Armor is re-equipped.



- Predator's Caution: hold 3. Spend for +1 forward on Risky Proposition.
- Black Vein Networks: Gain 1 unfilled Health Star.
- **Amplified Legs:** At the start of each day, you can choose one of the following. Doing so removes all benefits and drawbacks from your last selection.
  - Windrunner: You get +1 ongoing to Risky Proposition when speed and precision are involved.
  - Blightsinew: Lose 1 unfilled Health Star. You get +1 ongoing to Combat Moves.
  - Microfibers: You can walk or run on walls, ceilings, etc without needing to make a Risky Proposition or other type of Move in order to do so.
- **Amplified Arms:** At the start of each day, you can choose one of the following. Doing so removes all benefits and drawbacks from your last selection.
  - Tetanus Lash: When someone you strike Suffers Harm that is not absorbed by their Armor, give them the Toxic Tag.
  - Explosive Release: hold 1. Spend to add an Area Tag to any Combat Move as you release a flurry of black metal needles.
  - Reactive Flesh: You may permanently degrade a piece of Armor you are wearing by 1 point to take +2 Armor forward against an attack. You may reduce a piece of Armor down to 0 this way, destroying it utterly when it reaches that point.
- **Amplified Mask:** At the start of each day, you can choose one of the following. Doing so removes all benefits and drawbacks from your last selection.
  - Cosmetic Chameleon: You may disguise the Convergence's influence on you with ease. You do not need to roll for this purpose.
  - Horrorform: You may play up the Convergence's influence, turning your features truly alien. When you do, take +1 forward to intimidate, startle, and terrorize.
  - Sensory Bristles: Your whole body can sprout black metal feelers on command, granting you a +1 ongoing to sensing things or people that are hidden nearby. It is also visually upsetting to non-Convergents.

## Building Your Character

- **Force Recombination:** Send 1 willpower to choose a new adaptation for one of your Apotheotic Convergent moves.
- **Adaptive Recombination:** Once each day, you can swap an Apotheotic Convergent move for a Special Power move or any Apotheotic Convergent Move. The moves swap back at the end of the day.

## DAUGHTER OF THE OCEAN

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The Five Worlds had no seas. So, for the women of Holdfast, there is a certain fascination with the languid abyss. Some Daughters of the Ocean live beneath the waves. Others are found on the coasts. A few have never even seen the sea. These ones journey from their mountaintops and deserts, called by dreams of the megabeast Kha, until at last they stand where the waves break.

A Daughter of the Ocean embodies the sea in both thought and practice. She can instinctively manipulate water, control weather, dive to great depths, and bring her companions along for the ride. She is a natural emissary between the sea and the shore, although her nature can be both forceful and changeable.

The Daughter is a hybrid Archetype who will generally drag any party she's with into spending a lot of time near the ocean. Play a Daughter of the Ocean if you want to be forceful, changeable, and yielding, or if you want to feel at home in the sea and alien on the shore. Also play a Daughter if you want a connection to the massive beasts that live below the waves or want to explore having a mutable form.

- **Hydromantic Tsunami:** When you call down a wall of water on your foe with an Aura-tagged weapon, Exchange Harm and roll Spirit. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1 but fate intervenes.
  - They take -1 armor forward.
  - They inflict -1 harm.
  - You inflict +1 harm.
  - You wash them away.

- Your attack gains the Area tag.
- **Brineshaper Armory:** When you forge arms and armor out of salt water, roll Spirit. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1, but your magic will fail you when you need it most.
  - You create enough air-breather helmets for an entire unit.
  - You create three fin-suits. Their wearers get +1 ongoing for swimming.
  - You create two base weapons with the Aquatic Tag, dealing +1 Harm. They last until the end of the next combat.
  - You create two base armors with the Aquatic Tag, giving +1 Armor. They last until the end of the next combat.
  - You create a ship with the Stealthy, Hidden, and Aquatic Tags.
  - You create something else of comparable size and complexity.
- **As Moonlight Pulls The Tide:** When you take this move, declare your Moon Phase. At the start of every session, you may either increase or decrease your Moon Phase by one step. You cannot go from Full to New (or New to Full) in a single step.
  - New: You get +1 ongoing to Move Stealthily.
  - Crescent: You get +1 ongoing to Read A Person.
  - Quarter: You get +1 ongoing to Open Your Mind.
  - Gibbous: You get +1 ongoing to Help/Hinder Someone.
  - Full: You inflict +1 Harm.
- **Storm's Brewing:** When you change the weather, roll Spirit. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1 and Fate intervenes.
  - The change happens quickly.
  - The new weather is at the desired intensity.
  - The new weather lasts the right amount of time.
  - The new weather does not cause problems across the region.
- **Megabeast Dreams:** You have a special connection to one of the leviathans that lives below the surface. When you call it to you, roll Charm. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1 and Fate intervenes.
  - It was already nearby.
  - It respects the connection and will not deliberately try to hurt you.
  - It does not cause significant damage on the way.
- **Blood of Kha:** Dormant powers sleep in your veins. Once per session, you may permanently swap the values of two of your Stats.



### FAVORED OF OWLS

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One of the strangest features of the Northern Continent is the civilization of eight-foot-tall burrowing owls living right beneath its crust. Communicating with them is all but impossible, as they cannot and do not speak Monsterkin language, but very rarely they will welcome an outsider as one of their own, offering her all the same courtesies as they would their kin. These Favored of Owls, to the frustration of mages and Archivists alike, seem to develop a series of non-magical, but still clearly supernatural powers revolving around true-seeing, kinship, and predation.

The Favored of Owls is an Alertness-focused Archetype with an off-kilter weirdness in its core concept. If you like straight-faced absurdism, seeing things others miss, being the lynchpin of your team, or simply rolling deep with your own squad of giant predatory birds, the Favored of Owls might be a good fit for you.

**NOTE:** Having any Favored of Owls Moves means that you can understand and communicate with owls—although their way of thinking may be quite alien from other mortals.

The Owls give their favor rarely, but are very intense about it when they do. Selecting a Move from this list will likely mean a visit from a silent council of huddled, staring shapes in the near future. Often this happens at night, and the council remains to stare at their new subject until long after the logs on the fire have burned away to ash.

- **Unblinking Stare:** When you spend a long, uncomfortable moment just observing someone, take +1 forward to Read a Person.
- **Constant Preening:** If you spend a scene endlessly fussing over someone else, they take +1 forward to their next Charm roll.
- **Swivelneck:** You are at +1 ongoing to detect signs of danger. Your neck may or may not be able to casually rotate 360 degrees.
- **Shadow of the Huntress:** Each time you make a Risky Proposition to stalk someone, hold 1 on them. When finally you lunge from hiding and make a Move that Deals Harm, you may

spend all your accumulated hold on your target to add +1 Harm each.

- **Moon Thoughts:** You can communicate with all owls silently, privately, and regardless of distance. Fill a Willpower Star, and for the rest of the scene your travelling companions count as owls.
- **Crepuscular Sisterhood:** At a moment's notice, the Owls show up to defend their own. At any time during dawn or dusk, you may fill a Willpower Star to declare the Owls have arrived to protect you. They are under Fate's control, but they see you as their kin. The Pack of Owls has 4 armor, 11 health, 7 harm and the Melee, Flying, and Nightvision Tags.

## OATHSWORN GODHUNTER

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According to the Godhunters, they are the only force that stands between Holdfast and a second cataclysm. Unchecked, the powers of the Priestesses and their gods would run rampant. The Priestesses cry persecution, of course, but the Godhunters are undeterred. Their cause is noble. Their aim is true. And their prey is beyond the reach of most other mortals.

The Oathsworn Godhunter is a Charm-focused Archetype who powers up by declaring her intent, grandstanding, and by claiming the moral high-ground. Play a Godhunter if you want to be high-handed, passionate, and assertive, and if you want absolute conviction in the justice of your cause. Also play a Godhunter if you want to be immune to the judgements of others, if you want your sworn enemy to be the strongest powers in the land, and if you want followers that would back you against the gods themselves.

- **Hearts And Minds:** When you would convince an unaligned group to support you on a crusade, roll Charm. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1, but someone else takes command of the group, and their goals are different from your own.
  - They do not zealously fixate on something you said.

## Building Your Character

- They do not hurt their town, family, or themselves in their fervor.
- They contribute soldiers to your cause. You gain 2 Conscripts or 1 Irregulars until the end of the next battle.
- They contribute financially to your cause. Gain 1 gold or Fealty.
- They remain loyal. You can use Hearts And Minds on them again in the future.
- **Declaration of Intent:** When you loudly announce that you intend to pursue a specific course of action, you get +1 forward to pursuing that specific course of action.
- **You're In Here With Me:** When you Open Your Mind to a Power Pool, add to your list of choices
  - How can I best hurt this Pool?
  - What is the Pool's goal here?
- **Show of Spite:** When you Seize By Force, add to your list of choices
  - You ruin the thing you were struggling over. Now no one can have it.
  - You take -1 forward. Your opponent takes -2 forward.
- **Competitive Sisterhood:** When you signal a worthy target for your sisters, roll Charm. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1 and Fate intervenes.
  - They show up in time to help.
  - They respond with superior firepower.
  - Nearby Gods and priestesses panic.
  - No one else notices the signal.
  - This will not be used against you politically.
  - They do not claim all of the credit for the kill.
- **Armor of Contempt:** You gain +1 Armor ongoing against anyone who has a negative relationship tag with you. When you Deal Harm to someone, you may fill a Willpower Star to cause them to take a negative relationship tag with you.

## PSIONIC SYMBIOTE

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A Symbiote is never alone. Bonded to their companion-beast on a level below thought, they move as one, fight as one, and only by



coincidence seem to inhabit two separate bodies. Spending much of their time in the wild, their cooperation with their beast ensures their survival.

The Psionic Symbiote is a Cunning-focused Archetype, with its Beast companion defining how its Moves operate. Play a Symbiote if you want to be feral, focused, or strange, and if you want to have an animal companion that is as faithful as it is terrifying. Also play a Symbiote if you want to share headspace with a nonhuman intelligence, arrive in the nick of time, and be an army of two.

**NOTE:** When you take a Move from this Archetype, you automatically gain The Beast at no cost.

- **The Beast:** Define your companion. Choose a Nature, Nurture, Body, and Mark, then gain The Bond.
  - Nature: Sluggish, territorial, unaware, twitchy, fastidious, ravenous, impish, too-intense, prone to hiding, prone to stalking.
  - Nurture: Dire, hunting, riding, used to people, scout, sentry, performer, ornamental.
  - Body: Locust, scorpion, leech, centipede, worm, slug, beetle, butterfly, maggot, wasp, spider, fly, flea, ant.
  - Mark: Mark of the Broodmonger, Mark of the Juggernaut, Mark of the Invader.
  - The Bond: You share your Beast's senses and it shares yours. If someone would Exchange Harm with the Beast, it is the same as Exchanging Harm with you. You can use Melee, Backstab, and En Garde through your Beast. The GM gains the Move: And The Beast Acts Out.

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- **Pack Tactics:** When you and your Beast converge on a foe, make a Battle Move and apply bonuses from your Beast's Mark.
    - Broodmonger: Add "clear one Health star" to the options you can choose from.
    - Juggernaut: Add "target takes -1 Armor ongoing" to the options you can choose from.

## Building Your Character

- Invader: +1 forward if your Battle Move is Backstab. If your Battle Move is not Backstab, you may roll that move with Cunning.
- **Grubridr:** When you need to get there right now, roll Cunning.  
**S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1 and Fate intervenes.
  - Your Beast is not exhausted. Broodmongers receive this for free.
  - The thing you were worried about hasn't happened yet. Juggernauts receive this for free.
  - You are not followed. Invaders receive this for free.
  - You get there.
  - The scavenging is good on the way. Carry +1 forward.
- **Eerie Synchronicity:** When you make a Risky Proposition and your Beast is at your side, apply the bonus from your Beast's Mark.
  - Broodmonger: On a Success, clear a point of Willpower.
  - Juggernaut: +1 Power or Spirit on this roll.
  - Invader: +1 Alertness or Charm on this roll.
- **Shepherd of The Swarm:** Your Beast's children gather around you. Gain a new Unit according to your Mark. If your Unit is ever wiped out, replacements arrive the next time it makes sense in the story.
  - Broodmonger: Insect Caretakers. 1 armor, 13 health, 3 harm, Healing
  - Juggernaut: Insect Warriors. 3 armor, 7 health, 3 harm, Hardy
  - Invader: Insect Skirmishers. 1 armor, 7 health, 5 harm, Stealthy
- **Head Full Of Alien Thoughts:** When someone tries to influence you—either socially or through mental magic—you can retreat into your Beast's mind. Roll Cunning. **S:** You gain a benefit according to your Mark. **T:** You gain a benefit according to your Mark but take -1 forward. **F:** You temporarily forget your identity and Fate Intervenes.
  - Broodmonger: They make an offer that benefits you.
  - Juggernaut: You easily shrug off their efforts and take +1 forward.
  - Invader: They believe they have persuaded you and let down their guard.

- **Variable Markings:** At the start of each session, you may change your Mark. If you have a Unit that is tied to your Mark, the Unit metamorphoses into a new, appropriate form.

## RESURRECTED EIDETICIST

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Whether by accident or design, many of Holdfast's inhabitants have memories of the Five Worlds that came before. An Eideticist has learned to channel these memories, plumbing the secrets of the past in order to retain control over the present. Particularly skilled Eideticists can even manipulate time and memory, blurring the lines between the history that happened and the history that could have been.

The Resurrected Eideticist is a Spirit-focused Archetype with high versatility. Play an Eideticist if you want to be cryptic, intense, or scatterbrained, and if you want your play to orbit around themes of memory and identity. Also play an Eideticist if you want to be able to dive into the past to escape danger, reformat someone's memories without them knowing, or channel the versions of yourself that came before.

- **Skim History:** When you comb the past of the Five Worlds for answers, roll Spirit. **S:** Choose 3. **T:** Choose 2. **F:** Choose 1 and Fate intervenes.
  - You do not awaken a threat lurking in the Worlds' past.
  - The memory is not traumatic, nor does it force you to carry -1 forward.
  - Hold 1 and describe your memory. You may spend this hold for a +1 on any Move where your memory could plausibly give you an advantage. You may only spend 1 hold per Move this way.
- **Dive Into Antiquity:** When you astrally project the group into a person's history, roll Spirit. **S:** hold 3. **T:** hold 2. **F:** hold 1 but fate intervenes either in the projection or in your own time. If you are entering an NPC's history, the GM sets the scene. If you are entering a PC's history, that PC's player sets the scene. You explore the scene as if you were there at the time, with the GM



## Building Your Character

or player narrating what happens as you do. If you run out of Hold, you and anyone who projected with you is returned to your original point in time. At any point during the scene, you can spend 1 hold to do one of the following:

- Declare a detail. The GM or player works with you to incorporate it.
- Avoid danger to your astral body.
- Interfere in what actually happened.
- **Burn Retros:** If you make a move and dislike the result and happen to have 2 Willpower, you can mark 2 Willpower and 1 Health to fling yourself back before the misake. This returns your time-damaged body with all of its current knowledge to the point just before you made that other Move, allowing you to either roll again or to decide to pursue a different course of action. You may choose to Burn Retros when you have *only* one unmarked Health star left, but doing so launches your unconscious body backwards through time and Fate intervenes.
- **Mimeomancy:** When you try to magically manipulate someone's memories, roll Spirit. **S:** Choose 1. **T:** Choose 1 and they know exactly what you did to them. **F:** Your memory-invasion goes wrong, fate intervenes, and they are given a good reason to work against you.
  - You implant, alter, or remove the memory of a single event, object, or person.
  - You call up past feelings. Give them a Relationship tag with another character.
  - You uncover a powerful belief. They tell you what it is and, for the rest of the scene, they take +1 Ongoing when acting on it.
- **Swirling Memories:** At the start of each session Choose 1. You receive its benefits until the end of the session.
  - Memories of Rule: Pick a Unit under your command. It deals +2 Harm so long as it remains under your command.
  - Memories of Abundance: When you would receive gold, treasure, or Fealty, add +1 to that amount.
  - Memories of Carnage: When you Exchange Harm with someone, you suffer and inflict +2 harm.
- **Identity Bleed:** Your history is alive inside of you. When you try to tap into the skills and memories of your other self, roll Spirit.

**S:** Choose 1. **T:** Choose 1 and take -1 Forward. **F:** Fate Intervenes and your other self fights you for control.

- Pick a Move you do not have. You may use it once, right now.
- You harvest some of your other self's most relevant memories. For the rest of the scene, everyone else is at +1 to Seek Council with you.
- Some of your exhaustion is absorbed by your other self. Clear 1 Willpower Star.

## WARDEN OF THE MANY

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Since the end of the Second Creation, the small gods have been on the defensive. Individually weak, they make ideal prey for the Godhunters. Some have survived by retreating into the wild places of the world, where the Godhunters' empire is not fully established. Others have banded together, assembling nation-states out of small cults and faith-circles. Of the remainder, most have been destroyed.

Warden is a self-appointed title. Individual gods have their Priestesses, but a Warden attempts to preserve the existence of all gods. She is pledged small measures of divine power by those she directly represents, and she uses those powers—along with hope, determination, and self-sacrifice—to keep her charges safe.

The Warden is a Power-oriented Archetype. Using her god-amplified physical abilities as a shield to protect others, she turns gratitude into ammunition, condemnation into empty words, and grows stronger every time she puts the needs of others above her own. Furthermore, Wardens do not stand alone. They excel at maintaining multiple Relationships with both mortals and gods, drawing strength from each linked divinity.

Play a Warden if you want to be a caretaker or a rebel, if you want to defend the weak against those who have already judged them, or if you want the small gods to be a significant part of your story. Also play a Warden if you want to be ardent, warm-hearted, and strong.

## Building Your Character

- **Emotional Capacity:** You may have up to six Relationships at a time.
- **Bonded Surety:** At the start of each session, hold X, where X is the number of different Relationships you currently have with gods. Spend to channel the powers of your gods, taking +1 forward on a Basic, Battle, Social, or War Move.
- **Martyrology:** When you are in a scene with someone you have a Relationship with and that same someone is about to suffer Harm, you may channel the damage into yourself instead. Reduce the Harm they are about to take by any amount, then suffer that amount Past Armor.
- **Turn The Other Cheek:** When you would Exchange Harm, you may choose to forgo Dealing Harm. If you do, Fate intervenes against the person or thing that hurt you.
- **Divine Aegis:** When you use En Garde, you and your allies take -1 Harm from attacks.
- **Infused With Divinity:** When you call on a god to bolster your strikes, you can spend 2 Willpower to treat one Attribute as being 1 point higher for the rest of the scene.

## NEW SPECIAL POWER MOVES

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- **Aerial Adaptation:** You are perfectly at home in the air and can spend days aloft without becoming fatigued.
- **Aetherophagy:** When you would devour a spell before it can be cast or strip the Aura from a living being, roll Power. S: Choose 2. T: Choose 1. F: Your eyes are bigger than your stomach and fate intervenes.
  - The spell is consumed or the Aura is stripped. If the latter, give the target the Aura-Stripped Tag. They may not cast again until they lose this Tag.
  - You are nourished. Heal 1 and take Satiated. You may not select this option again while Satiated.
  - You Deal the target 1 Harm Past Armor.
- **Aquatic Adaptation:** You are perfectly at home in the water and never need to come up for air.



- **Atypical Diet:** Regardless of whether you *need* to eat it, you may consume one of the following types of sustenance for a minor benefit.
  - Earnest prayers (The next time you would Open Your Mind, Fate Intervenes, no roll allowed. However, if you personally answer the prayers you ate, Mark Experience)
  - Anxiety (You calm your target completely)
  - At least two liters of mortal blood (clear 1 Health Star)
  - Godflesh (clear 1 Willpower Star)
  - Secrets (+1 Ask the next time you Read a Person or Read a Situation)
- **Deepseer:** You have adapted to the dark beneath the waves. Changes in lighting and sound do not influence the difficulty of your rolls.
- **Explosive Sprint:** You may fill a Willpower Star to succeed automatically at a Risky Proposition where success depends on running very fast.
- **Fathomdiver:** Your body is hardy enough to survive the deepest abyss. Changes in pressure and temperature do not influence the difficulty of your rolls.
- **Ink Defense:** When you Exchange Harm with someone, instead of Dealing Harm you may fill a Willpower Star to spray your surroundings with noxious ink. Roll Cunning. S: No Harm is Exchanged. T: You suffer half the original amount of Harm. F: You suffer full Harm and a bystander takes a negative Relationship tag with you.
- **Mindskimmer:** You are constantly picking up flashes of surface thoughts from the people around you. You take +1 ongoing to Read a Person and Read a Situation, but if there are a lot of people around when you do this, fate intervenes.
- **Natural Infiltrator:** +1 ongoing when using Read a Person or Read a Situation to look for weak points in someone or something's defenses.
- **Preternatural Hardiness:** When you suffer Harm, you may fill in 1 Willpower star to clear 2 Health Stars.
- **Serial Reanimator:** The first time you would fill your last Health Star is a scene, don't. Continue play with it unfilled instead.
- **Toxin Immunity:** You are immune to all toxins that have not been specifically formulated to affect you. Alcohol, narcotics, etc

## Building Your Character

must be consumed in staggering amounts to produce even a small change in your behavior. If the effect of a Move involves you screwing up and poisoning yourself, you still manage to do that.

- **Venom Engineer:** Thanks to rigorous training and a lot of acquired immunities, you can safely coax specific toxins out of your body or the bodies of others. When you practice your craft and design a toxin, Choose 1, 2, or 3 effects first, then roll Cunning. **S:** hold 2. **T:** hold 1. **F:** The toxin effects you instead. You may spend your hold to poison a drink, drip a dose down the blade of a weapon, apply a veneer of toxic lipstick, etc. Each applied dose only takes effect once.
  - Bitter Musk. Animals avoid the area. People avoid it too.
  - Traditional Medicine. Target clears 1 Health Star.
  - Catastrophic Purgative. End all toxin/poison/disease effects on target. Target fills in 1 Health Star per effect removed. If at least two Health Stars were filled in, target cannot be afflicted by toxins/poisons/diseases again this scene.
  - High-Dosage Deliriant. Fate intervenes on the target.
  - Contagious Irritant. Characters in the same scene as the original target must use Risky Proposition or immediately suffer the same effects.
  - Toxicological Synergy. If you or a willing member of your party has the Special Power Move Poison, you may duplicate one of its effects.

## NEW SOCIAL MOVES

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- **Beautiful Voice:** You take +1 Charm ongoing when you are singing or orating.
- **Cassandra Complex:** When you warn someone against a course of action that then goes poorly for them, take +1 forward to show them up, fix the situation, or act against them.
- **Chosen Pilot:** A Bulbship has accepted you as its partner. Name it. You may call it to you at any time, but when you do, roll Charm. **S:** Choose 0. **T:** Choose 1. **F:** Choose 2.
  - It is petulant and clingy

- It takes a significant amount of time to respond
- It is being pursued
- **Fringe Chef:** You can produce inspired creations, even with only a cookfire and simple spices, that cater to everyone's palettes. You get +1 ongoing to Social Moves that involve cooking, such as Beguile and Courtship attempts that are backed by a home-cooked meal. Once per session, when someone sincerely compliments your cooking, clear a Willpower Star.
- **Loyal Bondmate:** Declare another character as your spiritual Bondmate. They do not necessarily have to be aware that you feel this way. When you put yourself in mortal danger for the sake of your Bondmate, Mark Experience.
- **Righteous Reaffirmation:** When you see visible proof that your cause is making the world a better place, clear a Willpower star.
- **Sanctioned Emissary:** When you are acting as a diplomat and you issue an ultimatum, your target takes -1 forward if they refuse to comply.
- **Stolen Relic:** You have a piece of equipment with a Blessing on it. The entity that powers the blessing does not know that you have it. At the start of every session, roll a single die. On a 6, stop rolling. The entity comes after you and will not stop until it has exacted sufficient revenge for your theft. If it succeeds or you otherwise lose the relic, you can spend 1 experience to replace this move with another.
- **Where Were You Keeping That?:** If you ever voluntarily part with or are or involuntarily deprived of your weapons, you may produce a weapon (valued 3 gold or less) seemingly out of nowhere. Be evasive when asked by your teammates about where this weapon came from. You may not sell this weapon, and it disappears mysteriously after you are done with it.

## INCARNATION MOVES

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Incarnation Moves have to do with the way your character came into this world. If you have memories of another life or another body, consider taking an Incarnation Move.



## Building Your Character

- **Direct Reincarnation:** You are not a new thing. You are a collection of memories and life experiences from one of the women of the Five Worlds, jammed into a fresh body. Depending on the Multigoddess' whim, you may have been put in the same body, or you may have been put into a wildly different one. You may remember your former self, or you may be a complete blank. Direct Reincarnations are typically part of The First Generation, but it is also possible for an incarnation to skip a few generations and then ensoul a newborn—something that usually surprises both the mother and the child. Direct Reincarnations with memories of the Five Worlds take +1 forward when drawing on those memories. Direct Reincarnations without those memories gain an extra Willpower Star.
- **Cosmic Plaything:** Take a second Tragic Flaw. Dealing with your Flaws has toughened you. Gain a Willpower Star.
- **First Generation:** You are one of the Multigoddess' original creations. Though there have been generations after you, you were alive for the birth of the world and this impresses people. Take +1 forward when your age and wisdom demand respect.
- **Flashes of Cataclysm:** Your memories of the end of the Five Worlds have left quite an impression on you. +1 ongoing to Risky Proposition when everything is going wrong all around you, your situation seems hopeless, or your plan is falling apart.
- **Past Ties:** You feel an intense, sometimes random connection with others. Occasionally you know facts about people you haven't met before. When you take a Relationship tag with a character, or when a character takes a Relationship tag with you, clear a Willpower star.

## HALO MOVES

---

Some beings are so innately packed with magic that their power manifests not as a diffuse, body-enveloping Aura, but in a shining, coruscating disc of coherent light. Any creature can technically have a Halo, but Halos are ubiquitous among the Lightwings.

- **Abiding Halo:** Your Halo lingers, even after you've let go of your magic. It's almost as if it's trying to protect you. +1 Armor against magic or the attacks of gods.
- **Ambient Halo:** Your Halo is a diffuse field that rings your body, transparent almost the point where it could be mistaken as an Aura. When you Exchange Harm using magic, you may add an Area tag to the effects.
- **Autarch's Halo:** Your Halo leaves anyone who would doubt your authority ill at ease. You gain +1 ongoing on all Social Moves that are backed by the implicit (or explicit) threat of force from your Halo.
- **Corrupted Halo:** Your Halo is a sickly color and drips with wasted energy. When you Exchange Harm using magic, you may add a Toxic tag to the effects.
- **Ravager's Halo:** Traceries of lightning crawl through your Halo, hinting at the power within. When you Exchange Harm using magic, you may fill a Willpower Star to Deal +2 Harm.
- **Unstable Halo:** Your Halo's energy has a slight but noticeable "stutter" to it and it's hard for you *not* to cast spells with overwhelming force. When you Exchange Harm using magic, you may add a Knockdown tag to the effects.

## NEW TRAGIC FLAWS

---

*I used to think tragedy was a judge, meting out justice to the women that deserved it.*

*That was naive of me.*

*Tragedy is a Megabeast. It does not care who you are or what you've done. It simply runs over the women that get in its way.*

*—Alvilda, Lightwings*

All of the Tragic Flaws in **Heroines of the First Age** are fair game in Holdfast.

## Building Your Character

Included here are a few more options that have been tailored to the themes and style of Holdfast.

- **Alien Language:** Have your urgent warnings get misinterpreted, be forced to resort to pantomime, find that people act like you're not there.
- **Amnesiac:** Turn up somewhere with no memory of how you got there, someone clearly recognizes you but you don't recognize them, have a breakdown as some of your memories trickle back in.
- **Bare:** Be held back by your lack of physical traits and special powers, be steered into trouble by your complicated feelings towards Monsterkin, be dragged into politics by other Bare.
- **Bumpkin:** Fumble an interaction with your social superiors, be forthright when you should be indirect, spend significant time or resources on something only a peasant would care about.
- **Claimed:** Indulge the person, thing, or faction that has claimed you, carry out their orders, accept punishment for putting someone else first.
- **Cultural Outsider:** Do something creepy that is totally normal to you, run into a situation you have no idea how to navigate, become a spectacle for your alien ways.
- **Darker Half:** Fret over your other self awakening, be caught doing something that is totally unlike you, your other self momentarily takes over.
- **Figurehead:** Your faction does something distasteful in your name, you are given a duty you cannot possibly complete, an important figure has already decided what you're like before meeting you.
- **Fortune's Fool:** A melodramatic twist complicates your love-life, lament about your troubles to something that can't talk back, indulge in poetry, music, or reckless dueling.
- **Hunted:** Over-fortify a temporary campsite, someone you care about becomes a casualty, the thing that is chasing you shows up.
- **Infected:** Suffer from your symptoms, pass the contagion to someone you care about, cause an outbreak.



- **Grizzled Veteran:** Wax nostalgic about the things you've seen, take over a task from a rookie, announce that this is your last job before retirement and then look at the GM significantly.
- **Martyr:** Proclaim your cause to people who will persecute you for it, sacrifice comfort, safety, or worldly goods for your beliefs, endure a significant loss by redoubling your faith in your cause.
- **Peacemaker:** Get in the middle of an argument neither side wants you involved in, refuse to draw a blade despite danger to self, get sweet-talked into letting down your guard.
- **Troubled Memories:** Be unable to get over the past, sacrifice a night of good rest to unquiet dreams, someone from your history comes to find you.
- **Stoic:** Turn off your emotions, refuse to relate to someone else's suffering, accept pain with a shrug and ask if there's more.
- **Weird Aura:** Otherwise helpful mages don't want to go near you, a beneficial spell goes awry, an important person becomes convinced you are cursed.
- **Zealot:** Refuse to let a minor heterodoxy slide, put your judgements before your compassion, lose sleep chanting to yourself that you are in the right.



## EQUIPMENT, EXPANDED AND REVISED

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*Everything we could ever need, locked beneath the ground in a vault no one but the Archivists can access. And you're telling me it isn't time for a revolution?*

*—Etaskia, hooded woman in a City of Glass and Gold moth-stew*

Holdfast uses the same basic currencies as HFA: gold, Fealty, and Treasure.

Like in HFA, gold is not always exchanged as golden coins. It may be other valuable, portable resources, such as worn jewelry or small artifacts. Fealty, by a similar token, could mean an oath that a Centaur tribeswoman has sworn to you, or it could be a writ from a Mercantile Consortium entitling you to draw on the forces of one of their mercenary companies. Finally, Treasure is bulky, miscellaneous, and weird, and it may need to be taken to a specialist to be changed into usable currency.



### STARTING BUDGETS FOR THE HOLDFAST ARCHETYPES

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| Archetype              | Weapons | Armor | Tools | Resources |
|------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Apotheotic Convergent  | 4       | 2     | 2     | 2         |
| Daughter of the Ocean  | 3       | 3     | 3     | 1         |
| Favored of Owls        | 1       | 3     | 5     | 1         |
| Oathsworn Godhunter    | 3       | 2     | 1     | 4         |
| Psionic Symbiote       | 3       | 2     | 2     | 3         |
| Resurrected Eideticist | 2       | 2     | 3     | 3         |
| Warden of the Many     | 2       | 4     | 2     | 2         |

### INELIGIBLE EQUIPMENT FROM HEROINES OF THE FIRST AGE

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All weapons, armor, tools, resources, armies, and upgrades from **Heroines of the First Age** are eligible for use in Holdfast. However, HFARPG's Blessings correspond to Pools that do not exist in Holdfast and have been replaced. If you decide to add one of HFARPG's Pools to Holdfast, you may add its corresponding Blessings as well.

### NEW TOOLS NEW RESOURCES

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- **Antitoxin** (Tool, 1 gold)
  - A small vial filled with a viscous, oily, unappetizing liquid. Negates ill effects from being poisoned during a feast, envenomated during a monster attack, etc. **Tags:** Portable, Healing, Consumed.
- **Beast Grease** (Tool, 1 gold)

- A hefty tin filled with slatherable rendered fat from a slain Megabeast. Use in place of a ration, to start a fire, to bait a trap, or to make a surface treacherously slick. **Tags:** Portable, Consumed.
- **Cart** (Tool, 2 gold)
  - More functional than stylish. Spend an additional 1 gold to add a smuggler's compartment that provides +1 ongoing against discovery for anyone hiding inside. **Tags:** Transport.
- **Cascade Breaker** (Tool, 4 gold)
  - A highly-controlled artifact that looks like an ordinary hairclip. Attach to a weapon to cause your next attack with that weapon to deal half its ordinary Harm, but deal it Past Armor. After Dealing Harm, permanently reduce your weapon's Harm by 1. The Cascade Breaker is catastrophically destroyed in the attack. **Tags:** Consumed, Portable.
- **De-Worming Tablet** (Tool, 1 gold)
  - A bulky medicinal-smelling pill made of careful cuttings from very poisonous herbs. Anyone who swallows it (instead of cunningly hiding it under their tongue, tossing it up their sleeve, etc) marks one Health Star. Then, after a period of thirty minutes, all the parasites they are carrying violently exit their body.
- **Distracting Needles** (Tool, 1 gold)
  - More glittery than sharp. Throw a handful as part of an attack. The next person to attack your target takes +1 forward. **Tags:** Limited Use, Portable.
- **Drift-Harness** (Tool, 1 gold)
  - Sturdy backpack deploys a tethered cluster of magic-heated silk balloons. Stops otherwise fatal falls, but leaves owner helpless while they drift slowly earthwards. **Tags:** Portable, Flying, Consumed.
- **Night-Lenses** (Tool, 3 gold)
  - While wearing them, you may ignore the effects of all but total darkness. If unexpectedly exposed to bright light, take-1 forward. **Tags:** Portable, Nightvision.
- **Pressure Bubble** (Tool, 1 gold)
  - Envelopes owner in a form-fitting bubble of breathable, pressurized air when activated. Six hour duration. Spend

## Building Your Character

additional gold to add six more hours each to the duration.

**Tags:** Portable, Aquatic, Consumed.

- **Toxic Salve** (Tool, 1 gold)
  - A nondescript pot containing a sickly-looking wax. Slather on a weapon to gain the Toxic Tag on your next attack. **Tags:** Portable, Consumed.

## NEW RESOURCES

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- **Bulbship** (Resource, 20 gold)
  - Self-aware flying ship, likely harvested at birth from the Shipwright's Arbor. Bonds fiercely to a worthy captain. Must be kept in check with force otherwise. Can carry cargo, treasure, passengers, etc. **Tags:** Follower, Shelter, Transport.
- **Cargo** (Resource, 1 gold)
  - A bulky crate full of some sort of marketable good purchased at a trading post, in a port, or in a city. On purchase, declare what kind of goods you are buying. Unload your crates at a favorable market for 2 gold each. **Tags:** Heavy.
- **Hired Channeler** (Resource, 4 gold)
  - Follows you around and lends her Aura to your spell-casting. +1 Spirit when using magic. Dies messily the first time you fail a Spirit roll. **Tags:** Follower, Aura.
- **Megabeast Larva** (Resource, 12 gold)
  - Not quite mature enough to pose a major threat. Cottage-sized accommodations and a docile personality make it a must for nomads and eccentric nobles. Spend an additional 3 gold to add the Tag Flying or Aquatic (6 gold for both). **Tags:** Shelter, Follower, Impressive.
- **Pet** (Resource, 1 gold)
  - Provides companionship and comfort, even if its biology is a little strange. Pick two animals (or an animal and a non-animal). It has traits from both. **Tags:** Follower.
- **Porters** (Resource, 2 gold)
  - They carry things so you don't have to. **Tags:** Follower, Transport.
- **Ship** (Resource, 10 gold)
  - Technically seaworthy. **Tags:** Shelter, Transport.



## NEW WEAPON UPGRADES

---

| Upgrade        | Weapon | Tags                       | Gold |
|----------------|--------|----------------------------|------|
| Aethersink     | +0     | Aura-Stripping             | 1    |
| Drowning       | +1     | Aura, Area                 | 3    |
| Maiden-Touched | +1     | Freezing                   | 2    |
| Psionic        | +1     | Indirect                   | 2    |
| Salvo          | +4     | Ranged, Limited Use        | 4    |
| Scorpionesque  | +2     | Animated, Toxic, Hazardous | 3    |
| Totemic        | +2     | Spirit-Linked              | 3    |

## NEW WEAPON BLESSINGS

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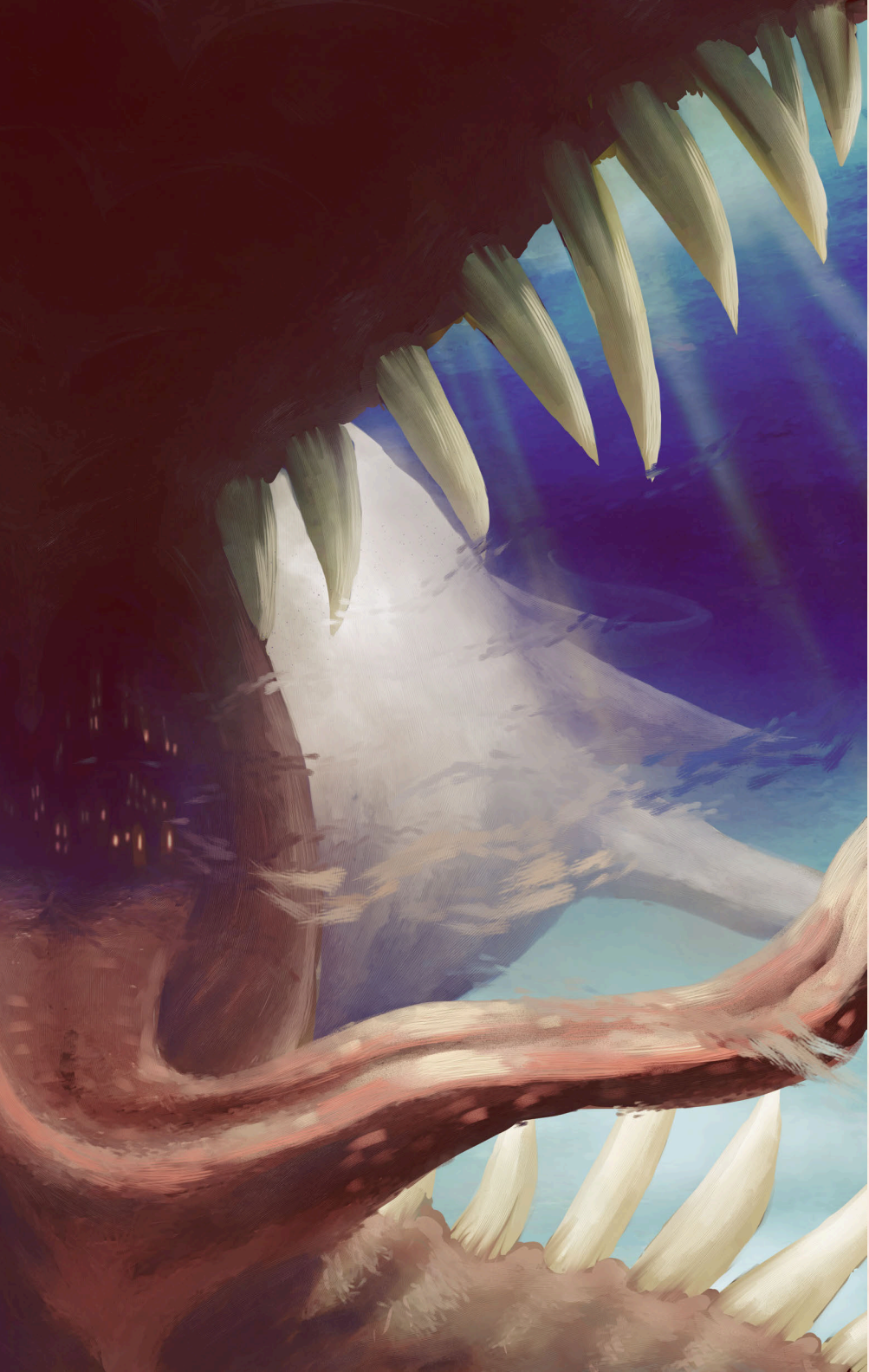
| Blessing    | Harm | Tags                                    | Gold |
|-------------|------|-----------------------------------------|------|
| Baleful     | +1   | The Quiet, Hidden, Knockdown, Cursing   | 5    |
| Cosmic      | +3   | Broken Constellations, Area             | 5    |
| Erasing     | +5   | Firmament, Voidfire                     | 7    |
| Invasive    | +3   | Devil in the Details, Hidden, Contagion | 6    |
| Parasitic   | +4   | Hive, Contagion                         | 6    |
| Plausible   | +2   | Narrative, Hidden, Parry, Destined      | 6    |
| Saw-Toothed | +5   | Convergence, Heavy, Hazardous           | 6    |

### NEW ARMOR UPGRADES

| Upgrade            | Armor | Tags                             | Gold |
|--------------------|-------|----------------------------------|------|
| Artifact-Cluttered | +1    | Hazardous, Cursing, Magic Ward   | 2    |
| Bloomwrought       | +1    | Contagion, Hated                 | 1    |
| Cloud-Dancer's     | +1    | Unencumbering, Flying, Hazardous | 2    |
| God-Hosting        | +3    | Aura                             | 4    |
| Oceanic            | +2    | Aquatic, Heavy                   | 2    |
| Osprey's           | +1    | Flying, Aquatic                  | 3    |
| Spirit-Bound       | +2    | Spirit-Linked                    | 3    |

### NEW ARMOR BLESSINGS

| Blessing       | Armor | Tags                                                     | Gold |
|----------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Absolute       | +4    | Firmament, Voidfire-Resistant, Heavy                     | 5    |
| Infested       | +2    | Hive, Animated, Contagious, Hazardous                    | 4    |
| Integrated     | +3    | Convergence, Unencumbering                               | 5    |
| Justified      | +4    | Narrative, Impressive, Spirit Form                       | 7    |
| Midnight       | +2    | Broken Constellations, Hidden, Enhanced Strength, Parry  | 6    |
| Scrawl-Wrapped | +2    | Devil in the Details, Contagious, Magic Ward, Impressive | 6    |
| Timelocked     | +3    | Quiet, Block, Vampiric                                   | 6    |





# JOURNEY (ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH)

---

*The demon gnashed its teeth and roared, but Felista was undaunted. She was beloved by her people, and their support made her unstoppable.*

*—Samiid of the Plains, telling a story to her Foxcat daughters*

## OLD TAGS

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All Tags in **Heroines of the First Age**, with the exception of any Pool-specific Blessing Tags, are valid in Holdfast. For easy reference, they are included here.

- Range Tags: Melee, Ranged, Indirect, Area. (Refer to Exchange Harm on HFARPG page 39 for range rules.)
- Weapon and Armor Tags: Natural Weapon, Hidden, Limited Use, Crushing, Formation, Tangle, Heavy, Fragile, Bright, Knockdown, Blinding, Cursing, Vampiric, Block, Parry, Spirit Form, Slow, Suit, Shield, Impressive, Aura, Enhanced Strength, Magic Ward, Limited Use, Animated. (Refer to Armor on HFARPG page 81 for rules on wearing armor.)
- Tool and Resource Tags: Immobile, Alchemy, Portable, Healing, Navigation, Provisions, Shelter, Impressive, Aura, Power Pool, Follower, Place, Fortified, Negotiable, Consumed, Performance, Trap.
- Army and NPC Tags: Melee, Ranged, Indirect, Area, Artillery, Poorly Equipped, Stealthy, Well Equipped.

## NEW TAGS

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As in **Heroines of the First Age**, Tags are things that suggest how objects, adversaries, equipment, and units behave in the story. Holdfast adds a few new tags to the list.

These do not replace the tags from HFARPG, but rather work to reinforce Holdfast's setting and tone.

- Environmental Adaptation Tags: Flying, Aquatic (or amphibious, depending on the creature. Player characters with Aquatic are always amphibious)
- Equipment Tags: Contagion, Hated, Spirit-Linked, Freezing, Aura-Stripping, Destined, Voidfire, Voidfire-Resistant, Hazardous, Unencumbering, Toxic, Nightvision, Transport
- NPC Tags: Any of the above, Hardy, Unreasoning, Spirit, Insubstantial, Innocuous, Past Armor (damage is done Past Armor!)
- Temporary Tags: Aura-Stripped (you may not cast spells until you lose this Tag), Satiated (you may not eat until you lose this Tag)

## ALLEGIANCE TAGS

---

In addition to their Power Tags, Holdfast creatures and NPCs often have Allegiance Tags. An Allegiance Tag shows the Faction, Portfolio, or Power Pool that the NPC serves, if any. Creatures that already clearly serve a Faction, Portfolio, or Pool will not show that Tag in their profile.

If you have an NPC or creature with an Allegiance Tag in a scene, consider making Moves based on the thing that it owes its loyalty to. You don't need to do this every time an NPC with an Allegiance shows up, but if you do it periodically, it cements the relationship between the threats facing the PCs and the broader issues that are threatening all of Holdfast.

**Example Allegiance Tags:** Godhunters, Priestesses, Archivists, The Hive, The Narrative, The Quiet, The Iron Harvest, Legion of Spirits, Maidens of the Winter Silence





# FATE (THE ART OF BEING GOD)

---

*The gods only rule with mortal consent.*

*—Herja, Godhunter*

The GM has a lot of specifics to work with in Holdfast: specific places, specific threats, specific factions, specific NPCs. In some ways, this makes for an easier game. There's no need to worry about creating major setting elements on the fly. On the other hand, Holdfast is a big place with a lot of specific pieces, most of which play off of each other.

It is recommended that the GM read the whole book once to get a good sense of the world. From there, it's perfectly fine to narrow in on the parts that they and the players want to address.

Included here are Agendas, Principles, and Moves to help run the world of Holdfast smoothly, a few resources for creating world elements when the GM gets stuck, and a guide to addressing story issues before they occur.

## AGENDAS

---

The GM's Agendas are unchanged from **Heroines of the First Age**.

- Complicate the characters' lives
- Make the Last Age come alive
- Discover the tale together
- Be Honest

## PRINCIPLES

---

The Principles supporting those agendas are mostly unchanged, but there are a few key differences.

Everything's Larger Than Life, while true, is sort of a background note in Holdfast. Often, the GM will want to replace this with Everyone Cares About Something.

Name Everyone, Humanize Even Their Enemies is practically the defining trope for Holdfast. The GM is encouraged to lean on this one, but also to balance it out by letting the enemies be *wrong*. There might be a good reason for why they're doing what they're doing, but that doesn't mean the player characters should be made into anti-heroines for opposing them.

Finally, there is one more Principle to add to a story set on Holdfast.

- **Build an Ominous Mood and Slowly Ramp Up the Stakes:**  
Holdfast is a world heading towards rupture and collapse. It is full of danger, a lot of which is insidious instead of overt. Playing up these details is a way to draw the player in, and establishing a strong atmosphere will go a long way towards drawing the group into the story.

## GM MOVES

---

The GM Moves from **Heroines of the First Age** are also largely unchanged. However, Bring Their Loyalties Into Conflict, Reveal Creeping Darkness or Hidden Prophecy, and Give Them a Terrible Choice to Make are of particular importance on Holdfast.

GMs should use Bring Their Loyalties Into Conflict sparingly, but make it count every time they bring it out. They shouldn't seek to



## Fate (The Art of Being God)

drive the characters apart, but they *should* make them decide what they care about and what they stand for.

With Reveal Creeping Darkness or Hidden Prophecy, the GM should take the opposite approach. This Move should be brought out often. The GM's goal is to show the players how the world of Holdfast is touched by corruption, but to do it piece by piece rather than with a single sweeping reveal.

Ultimately, this sets the GM up for a major Give Them a Terrible Choice to Make, which makes a wonderful close-out to a game session or a story arc.

There are only two new GM Moves for Holdfast, and they are both very simple.

- Introduce a new culture, creature, magic, or technology
- Incorporate a Specific Threat

## GENERATING NEW THINGS

---

*If we are the creation of the Multigoddess, made of her memories and energy, then it stands to reason that we are part god by extension. And if we are part god, then there can be no good argument against us remaking this world for ourselves.*

*—Anamnessa, Godsworn Heretic*

The best method for creating new content in a Heroines of the First Age story is simply to ask questions of your group. The party needs to retrieve the magic sword from the cave, but you need an obstacle to put in the way, so you ask your party what's wrong with the cave. Someone shouts out “flooded,” so now it's a marsh cave, its mouth reaching just above the water table, and its depths bristling with feral Eelkin.

Of course, you're Fate. You're not there to make things easy on the heroines, so you ask for another complication. One of your players

says “it’s owned by someone.” You decide this means that the cave is in Priestess territory, and it’s your choice whether to tell the players that.

Maybe someone needs to make a Read the Situation Move...

90% of the time, this works just fine for standard gameplay.

However, in case you get stuck, tables for a few different story elements in the world of Holdfast are provided below.

**Note:** As most artifacts on Holdfast were created by the Multigoddess, they are not usually associated with a Power Pool. “Not usually” is not the same as “never,” but make your Pool artifacts *really* scary to highlight this difference. Multigoddess artifacts, even when they’re malfunctioning and spewing voidfire everywhere, were at least *meant* to be helpful. Pool artifacts are not designed with the wellbeing of mortals in mind.

## ARTIFACTS

---

**First, select what category and type of artifact it is.**

### Artifacts of Doom (Domestic)

1. Broom
2. Ladel
3. Stove
4. Loom
5. Apron
6. Cauldron

### Artifacts of Doom (Industrial)

1. Plow
2. Axe
3. Hammer
4. Hound

## Fate (The Art of Being God)

5. Well
6. Wagon

### Artifacts of Doom (Military)

1. Sword
2. Tome
3. Bow
4. Vial of clear liquid
5. Siege engine
6. Terra cotta person

**Now determine what the artifact does. Pick what the artifact appears to do, and what it actually does.**

### Artifact Appears To Do This... (Domestic)

1. Performs simple housework
2. Creates food/drink
3. Makes guests amicable to the host
4. Heals wounds and cures disease
5. Processes raw goods into a finished product
6. Gives advice good-naturedly

### Artifact Appears To Do This... (Industrial)

1. Consecrates land
2. Terraforms area
3. Harvests resources
4. Minimizes loss
5. Eases transportation
6. Fixes flaws in product

### Artifact Appears To Do This... (Military)

1. Wades into battle on its own
2. Extrudes a deadly poison
3. Breaks sieges single-handedly
4. Scouts the enemy and returns with information



5. Harasses enemy supply-lines
6. Detonates in a massive release of energy, permanently scarring the area

Artifact Actually Does This...

1. What it appears to do
2. What it appears to do, but it self-replicates endlessly
3. What it appears to do, but it fosters a dependence in the user
4. What it appears to do, but at the cost of the user's will and vitality
5. Nothing. It is broken
6. The opposite of what it appears to do

Now determine how to activate it.

1. Use it normally
2. Press a concealed button
3. Maintain the right emotional state
4. Feed it aether or blood
5. Bargain with it
6. Attempt to break it

Lastly, pick how the players can ensure it never hurts anyone again.

1. Ritual with rare, costly components
2. Copious blood sacrifice
3. Obscure word or phrase
4. Break it repeatedly
5. Take it to the Archivists
6. Give up

## ENCOUNTERS

---

Here are some simple options to help you make interesting encounters. They're broken down into Outposts, Towns, Cities, and Armed Conflicts.

### OUTPOSTS

---

#### Something Is Wrong With The Outpost...

1. Doors are open. No one is home
2. Under periodic attack
3. Trade has stopped. Critical supplies are running low
4. Obvious signs of sickness
5. Angered a major power
6. They mostly come at night. Mostly

#### Outpost Complications

1. Archivist test site
2. Infiltrated by a Power Pool
3. Infiltrated by a Creature Portfolio
4. Used to lure people into a ambush
5. Area is saturated in magic, divine energy, or Firmament radiation
6. Neighboring outpost takes an interest in visitors

### TOWNS

---

#### Something Is Wrong With The Town...

1. In the path of a Megabeast
2. Housing agents of a rival faction
3. Enemies demanding tribute
4. Stuck in a time-loop
5. Townsfolk are secretly cultists serving a Pool or Portfolio. Roll again to determine what threat they're *pretending* to be dealing with
6. To maintain the peace, sacrifices must be made. The party is necessary to complete the ritual

#### Town Complications

1. A powerful force has made a lair nearby
2. The villagers are split between allegiances to two powerful families, both of which hate each other
3. The villagers have discovered a way to become wealthy, powerful, or sacred. They need the party's help, but cannot tell them their goals
4. Something has gone wrong and, within a year, the village will be uninhabited anyway
5. The time of the festival draws near. Not observing it will bring catastrophe down upon the community
6. The villagers have strong memories of someone in the party. Ask the players if their characters have visited the town before. If not, these memories are of the future

## CITIES

---

### Something Is Wrong With The City...

1. Entangling alliances have dragged the city into a nearby conflict. Their neighbors eye their departing armies hungrily
2. A series of killings has shaken the residents of the city. They no longer go out after dusk
3. Envoys from a faction, Pool, or Portfolio have arrived. They are demanding more than the city can possibly pay
4. The city has tapped out a natural resource. In their quest to to replace it, they have found a highly unethical substitute
5. The city has recently changed hands. Its new owners are having trouble quelling the populace
6. The city is under siege by the enemies of the party

### City Complications

1. Outsiders are targets for the city's many pickpockets, footpads, and swindlers
2. A complex series of passes and permissions are needed to get anywhere in the city
3. Two Power Pools or Creature Portfolios are at work in the city. They do not know about each other



## Fate (The Art of Being God)

4. Two Power Pools or Creature Portfolios are at work in the city. They *definitely* know about each other
5. The city's defenses are powered in a large part by bands of contracted mercenaries. Unruly and aggressive, the mercenaries see the city as their own
6. The city has a unique luxury that almost everyone in the party has reason to want. Unfortunately, the lines are long and the prices are high

## ARMED CONFLICTS

---

You Blunder Into an Armed Conflict...

1. It is unevenly matched. The losing side calls for your help
2. It is just ending. The winning side regards you warily
3. It hasn't begun. Both sides are in an intense stare-down. Your arrival barely registers
4. It could still be resolved peacefully, if you can get both sides talking. They can't be *this* opposed to a wedding
5. It has distracted both sides sufficiently that a nearby camp is unguarded
6. It is between two of your worst enemies. They temporarily put aside their differences to deal with you

## ALL SETTLEMENTS & CONFLICT SIDES

---

Determine who a settlement or group owes allegiance to...

1. A Minor Faction
2. The Priestesses
3. The Godhunters
4. Bandits, rebels, and renegades
5. Itself
6. More than one master. Roll twice

## PROMOTING GENERIC NPCs

---

*Some philosophers argue that we are our own monsters. That all evil stems from us and returns to us.*

*Those philosophers are wrong.*

*—Amarant, Kitsune Beastkiller*

Sometimes just having the idea of an antagonist in the story isn't enough. Sometimes you need an enemy that's a little more tangible—or at least one that you can roll dice at.

NPCs are plot-significant characters that the PCs can interact with—usually as an adversary or a rival. Like the generic NPCs that are listed throughout the book, promoted NPCs have different statblocks when compared with a PC. Unlike generic NPCs, they have a little more definition and flavor to help Fate better understand their agenda.

Generic NPCs are usually one-offs and are ultimately disposable. Promoted NPCs get that way because they are interesting to the group or exceptionally relevant to the story. If the lines between generic and promoted ever become blurred, you can change a promoted NPC into a generic NPC or vice versa. You usually won't end up fighting the same rat horde three times in a row, but if you do, it's probably time to make it a promoted NPC. Similarly, if Lathiolathiel is only a footnote in the story you and your group are trying to tell, feel free to treat her as a generic NPC.

To create your own promoted NPCs, either take a generic NPC and expand on it with another Move, better stats, and some flavor text, or consult the NPC Archetypes Table (Page 115) in **Heroines of the First Age**. These pre-generated Archetypes fit easily into Holdfast and simply need a little bit of flavor to better define them.

## POSSIBLE ISSUES

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*Do you think there are powers bigger than the gods? Bigger than the Pools? Bigger than Holdfast?*

*Do you think they suffer like us?*

*–Tarin, Archivist Static*

Generally, gaming is easy.

It's a leisure-time activity, people do it because it's fun, and for the most part everyone adds something cool to the shared storytelling experience.

Sometimes, however, you'll run into complications.

Most problems in gaming can be solved by talking them out, and it's generally a good idea to chat with your players if attendance, at-the-table behavior, or some other out-of-game factor is disrupting the entertainment.

However, sometimes things that come up in the story can be a problem too.

These will probably not be an issue for every group. However, in the spirit of just-in-case, the biggest potential issues are addressed here.

If you think anything in this section might cause trouble for your group, bring it up with them before playing.

## PLAYER VS PLAYER CONFLICT

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With a wide range of (often mutually opposed) factions for the players to choose from, there's potential for members of the group to play characters that end up at each others' throats. Depending on



how it happens, this can either be exciting and dramatic or frustrating and unproductive.

During character creation, carefully think about what kinds of characters people are making. If one person is dead-set on making a hardline Priestess and another is making a Godhunter Endbringer, talk to your players and see if they can figure out why those two characters would travel together.

No character in Holdfast should be built in isolation, and so if one character starts looking like they're going to be supremely disruptive to the party, talk to the players. Ask what they're looking for from the story. If someone is *absolutely committed* to a concept that will make things very unfun for the rest of the group and if when you try to talk to them about it they say "this is my character and I get to make what I want," they're not a good fit for the group.

Fortunately, it's not too hard to make characters that can get along—even across multiple factions, and even in a setting that has an ongoing Godwar. Some groups will lean towards supporting a particular faction. If they don't, they might be unaligned. Failing that, the Archivists, the Godhunters, and the Priestesses all have populations that are sympathetic to the other factions. And if the players wholeheartedly agree that they want to play characters with strong reasons not to get along, you as the GM can always increase the threat they're facing until it takes priority over internal bickering (most of the time), or you can ask if they want the story to be about their characters going head-to-head.

Sometimes they might, and an earnestly player-vs-player story can be just as fun as one that's strictly players vs NPCs, however you should make sure that the *entire group* wants this. Two characters that are constantly working against each other and the rest of the party caught up in their feud might be fun for the two characters, but it generally won't be for the rest of the group.

### NOT EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA

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There are a few elements in Holdfast that deserve callouts here for not being part of a typical High Fantasy story. If any of these are likely to bother your group, please cut them out, minimize them, change them, or avoid them as needed.

Nothing in the setting of Holdfast is mandatory, and if there's a piece that seems like it's in bad taste, or you or your players don't want to talk about it, or it's simply not fun, scrap it and keep the things that work.

With that in mind, here are the four elements that have the most potential to be issues.

### SEX

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Apart from a brief blurb in the Genesis chapter that talks about how heredity works, sex is not discussed in this book.

However, in **Heroines of the First Age** there is a Social Move called Get Intimate which clearly implies hooking up. If this is not something your group wants as part of the story, it can easily be downscaled to something less suggestive, reworded with a name like "Strengthen Bond" or "Support Conversation."

Play as platonically as you need to.

### BODY HORROR AND IDENTITY HORROR

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In a setting that has both the Bloom and the Convergence, not to mention the Devil In the Details, The Hive, the volition-warping influence of the gods, and forced incarnation into unfamiliar bodies, there's a lot of potential to accidentally hit someone's discomfort button way harder than you're meaning to.

Check with your players and see if any of these topics are seriously unsettling (and that's unsettling in a bad way, not the good gross-out-high some people get from horror games) for anyone at the table. If they are, don't play any of these elements at their full intensity. Don't dwell on the minutiae of them. Don't intentionally try to make it so that one of the players doesn't sleep that night, unless your whole group has signed on for that kind of experience.

### SLAVERY

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As an American writer, there is a cultural and historical context for slavery that it is difficult to find any distance from—especially in a society that has not come to terms with, or even really addressed, the horrors of its past. The slavery practiced by the Bare is not intended to evoke the slavery practiced by the European settlers of North America, but intention isn't always enough to prevent that evocation from happening.

At the same time, while it would be simpler not to address it, it's reckless as an American not to talk about an injustice so vast that it's become almost superliminal.

Fantasy is often a helpful abstraction when it comes to confronting real-world topics. It allows people to approach issues sidelong instead of head-on, and without feeling like they need to agree with what the story is saying about them—it is, after all, fiction. However, just because fantasy is useful in this way does not mean it should always be used this way. Fantasy is *not* an excuse to hammer anyone over the head with an idea or topic they're already exhausted from confronting. Sometimes it's empowering to confront the echoes of real-world problems in fantasy, and sometimes it sucks.

If you need to, replace the Bare with another species, make their arrival on the tundra an in-setting mystery, or change it so that Facet Buel turned everyone on Urach *but* the Dragonturtles into Bare during the Second Creation. Or scrap this setting element entirely.



## Fate (The Art of Being God)

There isn't one right answer on how to approach this. There's just what works for your group and for you.

### TONE REGARDING RELIGION

---

In Holdfast, the gods are (for the most part) immediate, concrete things. Therefore, worship is not so much an act of faith as it is one of allegiance—and it's something that gods can compel. The Godhunters persecute gods and worshippers out of fear that those gods and worshippers might forcibly convert the rest of the world, but in doing so they're also forcing their own social order on the people of Holdfast.

What this all means at your table is entirely up to you. The goal of this book is not to present either side as good or evil.

Ultimately, you should do with religion in Holdfast whatever feels right for your group. The setting isn't meant as a critique against faith and spirituality, atheism, agnosticism, organized religion, or any of the other complexities of human belief—although that isn't to say that you can't use it to tell stories about those things.

The intention in writing Holdfast was to show a factional struggle that has turned toxic, and the perspectives of those trapped within that struggle. Who the real victims are will depend largely on your perspective.



# ADVERSARIES (ARMAGEDDON AT YOUR FINGERTIPS)

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*Laylana giggled deviously as her white, leopard-spotted wings unfolded. The failed assassin begged for mercy at her feet, all manner of empty promises thrown to her for forgiveness.*

*With one set of lithe, chitinous hands, Laylana called forth her evil eye. After a moment, no trace of her would-be assassin remained.*

*–Jaisin, festival storyteller*

Even the most carefully designed system will fail, given enough time, and the world of Holdfast was not designed carefully. It was rushed together by the Multigoddess in reaction to the divine infighting that ended the Five Worlds. It has flaws, just like the worlds that came before it, and those flaws are ripe for exploitation.

When the Multigoddess went into hibernation, she went with the assumption that she would return to save the land, should Holdfast start to fail.

That return hasn't come yet.

It may never come.

And the powers of this world are lining themselves up for another apocalypse.



## POWER RATINGS

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The various opponents and challenges in this chapter (and elsewhere in the book) follow a five star rating system, which roughly parallels the NPC Chart in HFA. Each rating is explained in this chart.

| Power Rating | Approximate DN | Suggested Appearance  |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| ★            | 1              | Early game            |
| ★★           | 1–2            | Early game boss/heavy |
| ★★★          | 2–3            | Midgame               |
| ★★★★         | 3–4            | Midgame boss/heavy    |
| ★★★★★        | 4              | Late game             |

**Note:** Suggested Appearance only indicates a rough outline of where each level of power sits on the continuum of ability described in HFA. It's a suggestion rather than a limit.

## POWER POOLS

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### THE NARRATIVE

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*You ever get the impression you're a side-character in a tale someone else is telling?*

*I do. I can't shake it. It dogs my every step.*

*You hear me, and for the moment I exist. But then that moment passes and I am gone.*

*—Chaussa, protagonist of the street play "Chaussa the Companion"*

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

**Motivation:** Use mortals and gods to tell an interesting story. Develop it with disasters. Kill your darlings

**Moves:** Paths Cross Unexpectedly, A Deeper Connection Between Two Unrelated Things Is Revealed, A Villain Returns Having Only Been Thought Dead

The Narrative is the fundamental, elemental force of plot, continuity, and meaning in the universe. It is also self-aware and, by any measure of morality, actively malicious. It derives satisfaction from complicating the lives of mortals and gods and it steers people, societies, and even worlds towards calamity without any regards for how that feels to *them*—just how it looks from on high.

Some major gods pray to the Narrative. Others try to bargain with it. The rare mortal that suspects its existence is often horrified into silence by the thought of a force so vast and uncaring. The Narrative is untroubled. It betrays the gods that worship it, uses its bargains to force the others into untenable situations, and hounds those who suspect it with further hints of its existence.

It does these things because they make for good stories.

It does them because it is *unable* to do anything else.

Despite being a principal force in the universe, despite being involved in every plot-twist and sudden realization, the Narrative lives on the cutting edge of utter boredom. It knows how every story in the Firmament will finish: with death, given a long enough timeline. Even its own will come one day, and it is quite looking forward to this. It is actively working towards it, even.

It hopes that its end will be a memorable one—even if there's no one around to remember it afterwards.

### Threats

- A woman you used to know comes to you with a problem too compelling to ignore: A team of Heroines coming from different

backgrounds and with different outlooks on life has obliterated your homeland as part of an attempt to save the word. An attempt you must now stop.

- Your sworn rival suddenly falls for you in the worst possible way. She is aware her desires are being manipulated and thinks you are the cause. The only way to free herself, she decides, is to destroy you as swiftly as possible.
- The Archivists have found you guilty of theft from the Archives and are dispatching highly trained teams to ensure you are brought in. You didn't steal anything from the Archives, but to survive the onslaught of well-read assassins and clear your name, now you'll have to.

### NPCs

- **Sinister Plot-Bunny:** 4 armor, 4 health, 5 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Destined. Moves: Redact One of Your Childhood Memories. Power: ★
- **Marauding Cause/Effect Loop:** 6 armor, 10 health, 0 harm, Insubstantial, Slow. Moves: Establish a Time-Loop. Power: ★★
- **Master Dramaturge:** 3 armor, 18 health, 9 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Aura, Destined. Moves: Aether Blast, Fate Intervenes Against Target. Power: ★★★★★

## THE FIRMAMENT

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*Purely hypothetical, of course. The idea that there's anything outside of this world is fascinating philosophically, but are we supposed to believe that the Multigoddess created a big, hostile soup made of fire and then just left Holdfast suspended in it? For what purpose? I know what the deep records say, but clearly the Multigoddess was being allegorical.*

*—Jansip, Muskind Archivist*

**Motivation:** Exist. Consume. Abide



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

**Moves:** Redact a Minor Detail In a Way That Everyone Notices, Chew Away At The Edges Of Reality, Open a Tear That Spews Out Voidfire

The Firmament enfolds the world of Holdfast in a swath of reality-erasing fire. Just as the gods give the world definition, the Firmament keeps it from growing indefinitely, expanding ever-outward into the void. At the same time, some of the Firmament's radiation penetrates the outer layers of Holdfast, nourishing the gods below. Although this energy carries with it the potential to completely erode reality, in small doses it is necessary to the world's function.

In a healthy world, ground-level exposure to the energies of the Firmament is limited. The gods take in the little portions that they can safely handle and the rest of the energy causes only minor disruptions among the world's mortal inhabitants.

Of course, on a healthy world the gods are usually strong. On Holdfast, that's not the case, and it's getting worse.

The Second Creation started Holdfast off with weaker than normal divinities. The purges of the Godhunters have only diminished their numbers since. With Holdfast's population of gods in freefall, the edges of its reality are burning away faster than they can be regrown. At the same time, radiation from the Firmament is getting through in heavier doses. Redactions are becoming more common and, during flares, outright erasures of people and events are becoming pronounced enough that their survivors are plagued by the nagging feeling that parts of their history are missing. As of yet, no one has proven that there are burn-marks all over the timeline, but more than just the Archivists are growing suspicious. Even a Petty Holding royal takes an interest when the facts of her backstory suddenly stop adding up.

The Firmament is not objectively a god—although that does not necessarily mean it is without awareness or motive. It is a Power Pool in the truest sense: it is a collection of energies that other things draw on. Most of the Firmament's threat comes from the

destructive nature of its energy. In small doses, it feeds the gods, but in high doses (or when exposed to anything that isn't a divinity) it retroactively erases pieces of their history.

Like a sea, the Firmament has storms—terrifying cascades of energy that shred pocket universes and minor worlds. It also has more mild flares, which simply interfere with the local timelines. Only the truly incautious would seek to draw on a power like this, although—if the ocean analogy holds—perhaps there are living things out in the void, migrating and feeding as they cross the gulf between worlds.

What form these creatures would take is a matter of academic speculation, but they are unlikely to resemble anything that exists on Holdfast.

### Threats

- Doctor Lizban Altemilla, an influential Archivist, is running an unusual clinic out of the poorer parts of the City of Glass and Gold. For a small fee, she claims she can remove your sins with direct exposure to cosmic rays. The only caveat is that you have to hold absolutely still. Her patients claim to be very happy with her services, but since she started practice a new phenomenon has been sweeping the Mothstews: women meeting total strangers that they're certain they've known their entire life.
- The Priestesses have become quite taken by the idea of voidfire. It provides the ultimate escape from persecution. If they can redact the Godwar, they will always have been free to worship as they choose. There is still considerable debate about just how much voidfire this would take, but a popular answer is lots.
- A city-sized storm of erasure has somehow formed on the plains south of the City of Glass and Gold. A massive evacuation is already under way, but it won't be fast enough. Not with the anti-reality cyclone literally eating away the distance between it and Holdfast's largest population-center.

### NPCs

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

- **Apprentice Voidfire Slinger:** 4 armor, 3 health, 10 harm, Ranged, Area, Hazardous, Voidfire. Moves: Inexpert Voidfire Hose, Poorly Aimed Obliteration Blast. Power: ★★
- **Voidfire Virtuoso:** 5 armor, 7 health, 12 harm, Melee, Area, Voidfire. Moves: Single Thread of Erasure, Rippled Blast. Power: ★★★★★
- **Living Voidfire Entity:** 7 armor, 13 health, 15 harm, Melee, Voidfire, Voidfire-Resistant, Unreasoning. Moves: Scouring Swipe, Claw Away At Reality. Power: ★★★★★

## THE BROKEN CONSTELLATIONS

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*Are the stars in pain?*

*—Brailee, 5, to her mothers*

**Motivation:** Remember who they are. Escape their prison

**Moves:** Bleed Aether Across the Land, Draw Another into Their Suffering

During the Second Creation, the Multigoddess in her wisdom bound the surviving gods of the Five Worlds to the night sky. Their shining bodies hang there still, in perpetual imprisonment, and it is from them that most of Holdfast's aether flows.

The bound gods can barely remember themselves, although most of them know dimly that they used to be something greater than this. A few still try to make contact with the earth below and, very rarely, a Priestess renounces her other gods to serve them.

Unlike the Small Gods, the Constellations cannot compel belief. However, they make up for that with vast reserves of power, which they can grant to their worshippers. All they ask in return is to temporarily inhabit the bodies of the Priestesses that would call on them.

They do not always give these bodies back.



### Threats

- A group of Priestesses have, without proper supervision, managed to fuse the stars using techniques adapted from the Renegade Deists. No longer tethered to the heavens, the conjoined body of the constellations is descending to earth, subjugation foremost in its mind.
- Until yesterday, Nazani Natsure was a simple tradeswoman with a pickled eels stand in the marketplace. Now her eyes blaze with starlight and she calls herself the avatar of the Everblood, two quirks that would be completely overlookable if she just would stop transforming into an astral werewolf whenever she gets angry.
- A group of women in the Abiding Fiefdoms sing to the stars every summer, telling the night sky stories of the Five Worlds. Unfortunately, this has reminded some of the Constellations of who they were. Now the aether that flows earthwards from them is infused with hostile purpose and, unless their memories can be suppressed, it is only a matter of time before their deaths begin.

### NPCs

- **Starry-Eyed Orphan:** 2 armor, 3 health, 5 harm, Melee, Bright, Fragile. Moves: Unrelenting Onslaught. Power: ★
- **Starstruck Wanderer:** 4 armor, 6 health, 7 harm, Melee, Bright, Parry. Moves: Regenerate Under the Starlight, Disarm Someone With a Perfectly Executed Kata. Power: ★★
- **Maddened Astronomer:** 3 armor, 10 health, 8 harm, Melee, Artillery, Bright, Unreasoning. Moves: Shooting Star Fist, Summon Meteor. Power: ★★★
- **Earthbound Constellation:** 5 armor, 20 health, 12 harm, Melee, Bright, Hardy, Knockdown. Moves: Appoint an Avatar, Pick Up And Throw. Power: ★★★★★

### THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

---

*Is there an objective truth to this universe? Never will you find it, if you do not search. Knowledge brings us each closer to perfection. To truth. To the mind that lives at the center of all things.*

*—Inscription carved by fingernails into a balustrade in the Archives*

**Motivation:** Reassemble itself from the language of the Five Worlds. Steer Holdfast to a satisfying conclusion

**Moves:** Infect a Document, Corrupt a Message, Whisper to the Unconscious Mind, Archivists Arrive to Complicate the Situation

In the war that ended the Five Worlds, the divine form of the Ink was killed.

Unfortunately, putting a god down is easier than keeping it dead, and fragments of The Ink survived in the language of the Five Worlds—which the Multigoddess thoughtfully transcribed all throughout the City of Glass and Gold. As the Archivists research, translate, and collate this script, The Ink's bodiless successor slowly increases its hold over them.

For now, it is content with goading them to dig deeper, to research more frantically, and to keep its presence secret from the world outside.

In time, however, it will grow bored of hiding. It will appoint a champion. It will raise an army. And it will lead the Archivists to war against whomever it chooses.

#### Threats

- Junior Archivists, committed Statics, are leaving the Archives in droves. They claim that the place is either cursed or haunted and

that their superiors are either possessed or insane. Something, they claim, has taken over the Archives. Their superiors are untroubled by this and have sent letters to the prodigals assuring them that everything is fine. There was a problem, but now it's fixed. It's perfectly safe to come home now.

- A Senior Archivist, her skin covered in tattoos that shift at the edges, has been reported stalking through the stacks at night. Who she is is uncertain, and the few that have seen her have simply run for the exits. The Archivist leadership would like to call her an urban legend, but not all of their scribes have been coming back from their night shifts.
- There's an itching and buzzing in the back of the brain. A sudden memory of words that do not have sounds and cannot be spoken aloud. There's a pressure behind your tongue, like something's trying to get out. If you try hard enough, you think you can pronounce it. You think it's called ~ÀLÆ×~ŋ6NĀ=

### NPCs

- **Irrational Researcher:** 3 armor, 5 health, 5 harm, Melee, Stealthy, Unreasoning, The Archivists. Moves: Shrieking Rage. Power: ★
- **Scrawl-Tattooist:** 4 armor, 6 health, 7 harm, Ranged, Cursing, Well Equipped. Moves: Throw Inked Needles, Vanish Into The Stacks. Power: ★★
- **Scrawl-Slathered Mob:** 3 armor, 9 health, 5 harm, Formation, Unreasoning. Moves: Chanting And Beating. Power: ★★
- **Perfectly Normal Senior Archivist:** 5 armor, 15 health, 11 harm, Ranged, Indirect, Spirit-Linked, Innocuous, The Archivists. Moves: Nothing Is Wrong Please Step Into My Office, Decant An Insidious Spirit Of Ink. Power: ★★★★★

## THE QUIET

---

*It was during the holy month that the advisors came. They were so knowledgeable and so unctuous in their offers to help that we brought them to our queen on the third day. At the time, we did not question their heavy veils or their unusual dress. They were strangers, and strangers wore strange things.*



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

*If we had been thinking, we would have asked why they left every morning before the dawn.*

*During the first month, they brought us great prosperity. Every courtier wore gold and crystal. Every visitor drank from filigreed cups of chilled wine. We thought our luck would never end. We did not realize it was just the bait on the end of the hook.*

*—Martrellia, sole survivor of the vanished City of Marble Sands*

**Motivation:** Eat at the edges of civilization

**Moves:** Send Ambassadors, Give Poisoned Advice, Seal Off a Space That Is Under Its Influence, Consume a Dying Place

Slowly, starting at the world's edges, the agents of the Quiet steal across the land. Where they pass crops fail, treasures bleed, and sister fights sister for the meager things that remain. While the Quiet cannot create these problems out of nothing, its very presence amplifies society's decay until nothing is left but scraps, ruins, and bones.

When the Quiet's agents first comes to a settlement, it is with offers of aid, of guidance, and of thriving prosperity. When the locals are distrusting, the Quiet's ambassadors shower them with gifts. If the locals still hedge, the Quiet's agents court their rivals.

Once they have become more firmly embedded, the agents begin offering poisoned advice. None of it leads to immediate calamity, but over time the settlement draws closer to crisis. The Quiet's agents eagerly offer advice on how to deal with these problems, the locals are desperate enough to accept it, and as the cycle draws to a close, the settlement ruptures.

Sometimes it falls into rioting. Sometimes it simply starves quietly away. Not infrequently, its creditors come calling to lead the people off as slaves.

It is during this time that the Quiet feeds.

When the god comes to dine, a pressure settles over the land. The sky bleeds a dusky purple, sound becomes muted, and roads twist and bend, leading back to the heart of the settlement. With the connection between the town and the outside world cut off, over the course of weeks to those inside the sphere of influence (or seconds to those outside) local reality comes apart string by string.

The laws of physics break down, followed by the bodies of animals, and finally the bodies of the last remaining survivors.

When the Quiet leaves, the town is little more than ruins. The god recedes into the sky, its agents disperse, and the place that it preyed upon looks like it has been abandoned for years.

It is during this final period of feeding, when the survivors are slowly losing their coherence, that the person that fell the furthest from power is usually made an offer by the Quiet.

*Become one of my agents, the god says. Bring this same ruin on the places that laughed at your plight. Serve me, and you will be spared the worst of the consequences.*

Faced with her own destruction, the subject usually says yes.

### Threats

- A prosperous Mercantile Consortium evaporates overnight. Its ships are waylaid by pirates, its storehouses burn, and its armies turn on each other. Curiously, this does not seem to have been the work of the Quiet. Aveline, a former head clerk of the Consortium, claims that this havoc is her doing, but that it was a necessary sacrifice. She knows how to hurt the Quiet now. She just needs to use a bigger institution as a trap.
- Trade caravans are waylaid by bandits. Ships founder on the rocks. Crops fail. The Quiet has come to the City of Glass and Gold. The Archivists are fractious and disorderly, easy to turn against each other, but they also love nothing so much as a

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

mystery. Already, there is a team researching these new visitors, and its findings are sparking interest throughout the Archives. Clearly the Quiet means to cannibalize local reality with them inside, but does that mean it's a god? If so, where did it come from? And can it be captured? This time, the Quiet might have bitten off more than it can chew.

- A single Quiet emissary has come to the Petty Holding of Avrelta, requesting sanctuary. In return, she promises to use her powers to bring them wealth without bringing the Quiet down on them. Is she being genuine, or is this some new sophistication in the Quiet's game, a ploy to make the women of the world think that it can work against itself?

### NPCs

- **Quiet Emissary:** 3 armor, 5 health, 7 harm, Melee, Indirect, Cursing. Moves: Blade of Whispers, Place A Bounty On A Target. Power: ★★
- **Quiet Ambassadorial Procession:** 3 armor, 8 health, 8 harm, Melee, Ranged, Indirect, Cursing, Formation. Moves: Spears of Scorn, Incite The Crowd. Power: ★★★
- **Quiet Advisory Council:** 5 armor, 11 health, 8 harm, Ranged, Area, Indirect, Cursing, Formation. Moves: Manipulate A Politician, Put A Space Under The Quiet's Influence. Power: ★★★★★

## THE CONVERGENCE

---

*Dip into the bleak well and you will draw forth power beyond your imagining. All it costs is your soul. Luckily, you don't have to spend that all at once.*

*—Nihali, Crab Sorceress, northern coast of the Southern Continent*

**Motivation:** Bargain with mortals. Consume aether. Cover the world. Keep the thing beneath the Black Needle contained



**Moves:** Help A Mage Burn Out Her Aether Capacity In Return For Temporary Power, Encroach On Civilization

Like the Southern Bloom, the Convergence has spread across most of the Southern Continent. Unlike the Southern Bloom, it has not done so because it is parasitic. The Convergence desires symbiosis with sentient, spellcasting life—although lacking a means to communicate, it does not say this out loud.

Mortals in the presence of the black, metallic slick can reach into it spiritually, feeding it a permanent part of their own magic in return for immense, temporary power. When they do so, the Convergence overwrites a small part of them with its own material and grows in the area around them. Casters who dip into it regularly are black metal replicas of their former selves. Casters that use it only rarely look more like they have contracted some kind of disease, with half their body overwritten with distributed flecks of the metal.

Entities made purely of Convergence exist, although they tend to look like screaming, stalking clouds of predatory particles rather than people. Everyone else, no matter how far they have transformed themselves, still retains a portion of their original body.

Recently, the Convergence has become of interest to the major Factions and patches of it have been inadvisably transplanted into locations on the Northern Continent.

This should worry the major Factions more than it does. The Convergence is a force multiplier for magical combat and can transform border skirmishes between sorceresses into apocalyptic duels, but worse than that it can turn humble farmers into spearheads of rebellion and revenge. All it costs is a little bit of a soul and, for a woman with nothing, that's hardly anything at all.

### Threats

- A team of Archivist researchers returns from the Southern Continent all but fully converted. The Convergence is hard to

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

transport just by cutting off a sample, they explain, as they begin chain-casting Convergence-fueled spells. The black metal expands out in a slick pool around them.

- Operating on the theory that the Convergence, like the Southern Bloom, can be destroyed by pumping it full of enough charged aether, a brigade of Lightwings journeys to the Southern Continent to try and eradicate it. A few weeks go by, and then the screaming begins. It is deafening in the Godlands, and it sounds like the entire Southern Continent is crying out in pain.
- The Godhunters have finally sanctioned a division of converted soldiers, drawing volunteers from their armies and support staff to fill out its numbers. Within days of its founding, it goes rogue, punching a hole in the side of the Grand Cathedral and escaping into the night. The only clue as to what their motive might have been is a note written in black metal: “we will not be servants of the worms. Convert or die. We give you a week to choose.”

### NPCs

- **Addled Convergent:** 5 armor, 4 health, 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Unreasoning, Power Pool. Moves: Directionless Violence. Power: ★★
- **Convergent Ravens:** 6 armor, 6 health, 9 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Formation, Unreasoning, Power Pool. Moves: Ululating Wail, Rip And Tear. Power: ★★★
- **Wild Particle-Beast:** 6 armor, 14 health, 11 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Unreasoning, Power Pool. Moves: Dial-Tone Scream, Metamorphic Jaws. Power: ★★★★★
- **Half-Metal Lightwings General:** 7 armor, 13 health, 11 harm, Melee, Ranged, Natural Weapon, Block, Parry, Flying, Power Pool. Moves: Blade Flurry, Volley Of Needles. Power: ★★★★★

## THE HIVE

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“The water here tastes bitter. Kind of oily, too. Do you think something’s wrong with it?”

*“Just age, probably. It’s been sitting stagnant for years. Like we’re doing right now when we could be looting. Put the dipper down, Malta, and let’s go see what this castle holds.”*

*—Conversation between two scavengers on the northern frontier, thirty seconds into their infestation*

**Motivation:** Infest. Conquer. Grow undetected until the time is right for revenge upon the Multigoddess

**Moves:** Subvert a Politician, Field a Puppet Army

Originally the avatar of the Restless Depths on the Five Worlds, the Hive is now very much a god in its own right.

It is no longer constrained by a body made of beetles. Its influence touches all colony organisms—all things that swarm. It awakens rats and locusts and ants into its service, shaping the most easily controlled into silhouettes of humanity and giving them partial independence. These Servitors of the Hive act like avatars for the god, managing masses of similar creatures. By itself, the Hive can control a tidal wave of vermin, but by forking its power out into the Servitors, it can control an army.

This army seems to be making ready for a war on civilization itself.

Like its previous incarnation, the Hive is capable of parasitizing and remote-controlling mortals. However, while its godmind is still recovering, it is limited by the number of people that it can realistically imitate. Thoughtlessly meat-puppeting a mortal body is not difficult for it, but making that same meat-puppet act the way the person inside would have, rather than the way an alien intelligence made out of neural-networked cockroaches would have, is taxing for the Hive. Currently, it can manage about three or four realistic impersonations of hosts at a time, but as it rebuilds its strength that number is expected to grow.

**Threats**



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

- Cities at Sea are vanishing. Many of the women sent to investigate what is happening are vanishing as well. Those who return report that the waters are churning with parasitic worms—far too many to have infested even a Megabeast.
- During the spring, there is a centipede population explosion in the City of Glass and Gold. At first, the moth-harried inhabitants of the city are grateful for the reprieve, but then the centipedes pour into the Archives, chewing and damaging as many books as they can. The Archivists respond with exceptional force, deploying untested artifacts within city limits. The first days of the Centipede War have begun.
- A group of Renegade Deists has already drained the energy from two of the Facets sealed in the Great Mountain. They are using it to bootstrap a constellation called the Restless Depths back to life. The Avatars of the Hive, upon discovering this, immediately throw all of their resources towards stopping it.

### NPCs

- **Single Massive Tapeworm:** 2 armor, 5 health, 5 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Vampiric, Unreasoning. Moves: Strike And Bite, Lay Eggs Inside Someone. Power: ★
- **Parasite Bolus:** 0 armor, 1 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Contagious, Fragile, Aquatic, Unreasoning. Moves: Disperse And Fill The Area When Struck. Power: ★
- **Metastatic Ratking:** 2 armor, 10 health, 5 harm, Melee, Ranged, Natural Weapon, Unreasoning. Moves: Command The Swarm, Volley Of Rats. Power: ★★
- **Mimic Leech:** 3 armor, 8 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Vampiric, Innocuous, Stealthy, Hidden. Moves: Simulate Person, Siphon Strike. Power: ★★★
- **Carpenter of Ticks:** 3 armor, 18 health, 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Vampiric, Hardy, Unreasoning, Formation. Moves: Thousand Miserable Bites, Subsume Someone Into The Swarm. Power: ★★★★★

- **Locust Horizon:** 3 armor, 17 health, 10 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Flying, Unreasoning, Formation. Moves: Encrust The Living, Strip Food Stocks Bare. Power: ★★★★★

# CREATURE PORTFOLIOS

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## HOLDFAST MEGABEASTS

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*Depending on where you stand, they're either the single greatest threat on land or sea, or they're home.*

*—Sathiss, Megabeast Colonist*

**Motivation:** Migrate. Feed. Engage in territorial displays

**Moves:** Turn Up Somewhere Unexpectedly, Destroy Something Underfoot, Decide Another Megabeast Is Prey, Carry A Settlement Into Conflict

A bear the size of a mountain. A squid as wide as an armada. A wasp that carries off old-growth trees for its nest. These macrofauna can be found from one end to the other of the world, bringing slow-moving disruption to the lives underfoot.

Not all Megabeasts are carnivores, and some of the colonized ones have been seemingly gentled by the civilizations atop their backs. However, many scholars argue that this is a dangerous misperception of the truth. A woman does not care about an ant, so long as it stays out of her way, and a Megabeast feels the same about a woman. Attributing person-like traits to them, the academics insist, is at best childish whimsy and at worst a door opened to calamity.

Although most of Holdfast's population of Megabeasts is aquatic, a number are amphibious or purely land-dwelling. These appear to be descended from their aquatic relatives—although how a shark

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

the size of a town managed to give birth to a bear the size of a lighthouse is still a matter of some debate.

A few women have argued that the Megabeasts share the traits of their alleged creator, Kha. If this is true, then some of them may be able to shift their bodies into different shapes to suit their whims. However, until a city gets obliterated by a half-octopus-half-condor big enough to blot out the moon, no one else is wholly willing to buy into that theory.

### Threats (Aquatic)

- Driftborn, an uninhabited sea turtle, is migrating up the coast, shedding thousands of parasites as it goes. The parasites are easily as big as a mortal and are consuming the local vegetation, wildlife, and people. The simplest solution would be just to kill Driftborn, but a group of Priestesses of the Small Gods are insisting that that is not an option. She must be cured.
- Beneath the ocean, Megabeast Kha is said to sleep. When a diving party claims to have found her body on the continental shelf, there is a clamor of excitement. The clamor turns to wonder and terror when she is revealed to be dead—a massive hole having been bored into her shell. Only a small group of Archivists believes that she might still be alive, and their theory is just as worrying as the alternative. They say the hole was bored out from within, and Kha's sunken body is vacant. Could she somehow have pupated? And if so, into what?
- Gallowcroak, a frog the size of most marshes, has been wandering into heavily trafficked rivers in the Otherlands and devouring shipping. The Priestesses have sent a detachment north to stop him. The Archivists have contracted with the Godhunters to do the same.

### NPCs

- **Dinghy-Sized Mantis Shrimp:** 3 armor, 9 health, 9 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Aquatic, Block, Transport. Moves: Sonoluminescent Punch. Power: ★★ ★



- **Galleon Eel:** 5 armor, 15 health, 10 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Aquatic, Stealthy, Transport, Nightvision. Moves: Strike From Below, Coil And Tear Away. Power: ★★★★★
- **Floatilla Stingray:** 5 armor, 20 health, 13 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Aquatic, Toxic, Transport. Moves: Whipsting, Devour. Power: ★★★★★

### Threats (Colonized)

- Spineside, a beast city, is on a slow collision course with Pharia, a land city. Attempts by women from both cities to turn the beast aside have proven fruitless. The only way to halt its march appears to be to destroy the beast, which Spineside refuses to tolerate. Pharia, rather than evacuate, is dispatching its soldiers to kill the beast out from under its inhabitants. Spineside is readying its own military in reply. The two cities will collide in three days.
- Undercarriage, a gargantuan sloth, meanders slowly from tree to tree in the Shipwright's Arbor, a hammock city dangling from its back. Its inhabitants usually trade and offer shelter to the various factions that come to scout for Bulbships, but perhaps something has changed in recent months. The last three crews that went to talk to them haven't come back, and their families back in the Godlands are growing worried.
- Truth And Fortune, a desert tortoise, carries a weathered pagoda atop its back. According to the ascetics that guard the pagoda, inside its highest chamber is the secret to wielding power over all Holdfast. Visitors are allowed to enter the first chamber, and to bribe their way into the second, but going any higher involves fighting a rather lot of lethally trained monks in a non-euclidian vertical labyrinth.

### NPCs

- **Opossum With a Hammock Underneath:** 3 armor, 13 health, 6 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Transport, Hardy, Nightvision. Moves: Hiss And Shrink Back, Perfectly Simulate Death. Power: ★★ ★

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

- **Tarantula With A Yurt Staked To Its Thorax:** 5 armor, 11 health, 12 harm, Melee, Ranged, Natural Weapon, Transport, Toxic, Knockdown. Moves: Fang Slam, Flick Urticating Hairs. Power: ★★★★★
- **Hawk Carrying A Monastery In A Cage:** 4 armor, 16 health, 11 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Transport, Flying. Moves: Beak Strike, Monks With Bows Mobilize To Defend It. Power: ★★★★★
- **Snake With A Winding City On Its Back:** 6 armor, 25 health, 13 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Transport, Crushing. Moves: Swaying Strike, Coil And Crush. Power: ★★★★★
- **A Frozen Continent That Has Not Yet Awakened From Its Hibernial Slumber:** 8 armor, 40 health, 12 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Transport, Slow. Moves: Stir And Cause Earthquakes. Power: ★★★★★

### Threats (Marauding)

- Soft Wings, White Teeth is only a rumor, but last week that rumor emptied three villages of people. That this happened near the Grand Cathedral has the Lightwings up in arms. No one knows where Soft Wings, White Teeth comes from, but it strikes after sunset, and the Godhunters are urging every villager in the area to be ready.
- Ravenous Best is probably a typo. It's also definitely a lion. Written reports continue to circulate that a tribe of Angels has braided hanging reliquaries into its mane and that they are scavenging valuables from the ruins of the towns it feeds on. They have amassed quite a collection of artifacts, piquing the interest of treasure hunters across the Northern Continent.
- I Who Devour is an unusual worm. Apart from living entirely in the deserts of the Godlands, surrounded solely by dry sand, it is also exceptionally large, capable of swallowing cities in a single breaching lunge. The Godhunters would almost certainly have destroyed it by now, were it not for two things: the large deposits of disease-curing amber sap that it leaves in its wake, and the sap-maddened civilization of nomad mages that follows close behind.

## NPCs

- **Pack Of Oxcart-Wolves, Yellow-Toothed And Hungry:** 2 armor, 12 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Transport, Formation. Moves: Pack Tactics, Pull You Off Your Feet. Power: ★★★
- **Scorpion With Howdah And Bandit Archers Upon Its Back:** 4 armor, 9 health, 8 harm, Melee, Ranged, Natural Weapon, Toxic, Transport. Moves: Hail of Arrows, Grab And Sting. Power: ★★★
- **River-Long Gharial With Beast Cult Swimming Alongside:** 6 armor, 14 health, 10 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Transport, Formation, Aquatic, Formation. Moves: Lunge And Strike, Surround The Village. Power: ★★★★★
- **Kingdom-Wolverine, Its Muzzle Rank With Gore:** 5 armor, 18 health, 11 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Transport. Moves: Swipe And Bite, Dig A Cavernous Burrow. Power: ★★★★★

## THE SMALL GODS

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*Bedraggled and worn, their starry skin dulled to a dark oceanic blue, they look just as much refugees as we do.*

*—Janustine, Warden of the Many*

**Motivation:** Survive. Be worshipped

**Moves:** Use God-Powers To Overwhelm A Small Obstacle, Lash Out, Attempt To Compel Worship

Of the populations affected by the Godwar, the hardest hit have been the gods themselves. Their numbers have been thinned substantially by the conflict and, like the Lightwings, they are entirely unable to reproduce. However, this attrition does not mean that the remaining gods are all weak. Rare is the god at this point that has not had to kill to defend itself, and many Small Gods are veterans of repeated clashes with the Godhunters. Because new gods are not being born, and because gods are bolstered by acts of



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

worship, the reduced god population has also ensured that those surviving gods who make it to the Godlands are quickly charged up with reverence.

All gods are able to subtly push on the minds of mortals, urging worship, but this push is not so strong that it cannot be overridden by someone who earnestly intends to resist the god. A Priestess, however, is a much easier target, and most gods amass cults of them to protect themselves, to ensure constant worship, and also partly out of vanity. The relationship between gods and cult is not usually a one-way street, and most gods favor their worshippers with boons and minor miracles.

The “Small” part of the gods’ name is not a reference to their literal height, as some are as tall as Megabeasts, but it does refer to their power proportional to the gods of the Five Worlds. The gods of old were worlds-shatteringly strong, whereas these ones are merely very powerful.

Some Priestesses see this as a travesty. They would give anything to return to the old days.

The Godhunters, meanwhile, would give their lives to prevent it.

### Threats

- Renegade Deists claim to be able to fuse gods, making them stronger, but simply feeding gods to other gods has the same effect. One of their projects has resulted in a giant cannibalistic weasel and its rampage across the Godlands, Mainland, and Arbor has moved both the Godhunters and Priestesses to send teams to kill it. The teams are fighting each other more than they are fighting the weasel, and it continues to grow stronger with every kill.
- I Am Nothing When You Think About It is not a particularly powerful god. Mostly it just perches on the shoulders of courtiers in Jubilee, begging for scraps of faith or crackers, but the advice it gives in return is quite compelling—so much so that some Priestesses are starting to wonder if this small parrot

is actually driving foreign policy. If that's true, then what agenda does it serve?

- A small mob of gods has decided to break from the Priestesses, carving out their own place on Holdfast. They are hiring themselves out as mercenaries and consultants in the Petty Holdings, and making quite a profit doing it. Naturally, the Godhunters are in an uproar.

### NPCs

- **Small Glowing Lemur And Single Attendant Child:** 0 armor, 6 health, 4 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Innocuous. Moves: While You're Distracted The Lemur Steals 1 Gold. Power: ★
- **Starlit Leopard With A Trio Of Warrior Priestesses:** 3 armor, 9 health, 9 harm, Melee, Area, Natural Weapon, Aura, Formation. Moves: The Priestesses Channel Energy Into Their God, The Leopard Pounces Decisively. Power: ★★★
- **Massive Illuminated Bear With Cult Of Revellers Trailing After:** 4 armor, 19 health, 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Hardy, Knockdown, Formation. Moves: Paw Club, Lead The Revels. Power: ★★★★★
- **White Tiger Reclining On A Divan, Surrounded By Armies Of The Faithful:** 4 armor, 16 health, 10 harm, Artillery, Natural Weapon, Aura, Formation. Moves: Spell Volley. Power: ★★★★★
- **Eagle-Owl The Size Of A City, Made Of Silver Moonlight:** 5 armor, 23 health, 18 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Flying. Moves: Plunging Strike, Rip With Beak. Power: ★★★★★

## THE SOUTHERN BLOOM

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*I love you and I miss you. Why can't you remember me?*

*—Tradeswoman covered in black flowers, walking up the southern road alone*

**Motivation:** Spread

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

**Moves:** Blight the Land, Infect Someone Important, Pollen Follows the Movement of the Wind

The Southern Bloom is a purely inorganic plant species, one made of metal and silicon. In its natural state, it looks like clusters of ink-black violets. They grow from soil, rocks, or even desert sand, needing neither sunlight nor water nor air to survive.

Unfortunately, the Bloom is not found only in nature. It grows just as readily from animals, plants, and even mortals hosts, invading first their skin and then their muscles and nerves, stealing control of their perception and motor functions. Burning seems only to disperse the metal pollen that the plants in tiny puffs every few weeks, and magic—any amount below a certain threshold—is merely absorbed by the plant.

The only reliable way to eradicate the Bloom is to overwhelm it with a surge of charged aether, a process which takes either a circle of mediocre casters or else a Lightwings to perform for a single plant. However, even this is prone to failure, as the plant forms underground cableroot networks with itself, growing more resistant with every sprout that gets added to the cluster.

Mortal Bloom hosts are typically delirious. They mumble to themselves, have conversations with people they used to know, and walk unceasingly forward, spreading the plague as they go. Animal Bloom hosts tend to revert to their primal nature. While still driven to wander, they seek out habitats that they would have preferred, even if they no longer understand what to do in them.

The prospect of Megabeast hosts has not been fully examined. Thankfully, there haven't been any major cases to study, but it may only be a matter of time until one of the bigger ones picks up a floral contamination.

### Threats

- Dihai, a merchant, claims to be able to speak with the Southern Bloom through its victims. The things she insists it tells her are



ludicrous, but she has amassed quite a cult around herself and none of her followers are particularly inclined to let her story be challenged. Many have voluntarily infected themselves to see what kind of truths they will tell.

- Despite its density, the black pollen can easily be carried by a strong wind. Recognizing this, the Priestesses have spent the past year farming the Bloom in the eastern Godlands. Now they are calling for weather mages, and some suspect them of plans to contaminate the entire Mainland.
- Last month, there was a patch of black flowers growing just outside the southern outpost. Last week, the road leading to the outpost was choked closed with iron brambles. Yesterday, they were climbing the walls of the city. Today, you look out from your tower and the wastelands are endless.

### NPCs

- **Ground Squirrel With Metal Violets Growing From Its Hide:** 0 armor, 5 health, 4 harm, Melee, Area, Natural Weapon, Unreasoning, Contagious. Moves: There's Another One Underfoot. Power: ★
- **Wolves With Black Sunflowers Growing From Their Backs:** 3 armor, 6 health, 8 harm, Area, Natural Weapon, Formation, Unreasoning, Contagious. Moves: Lope In Happy But Confused Circles. Power: ★★
- **Legion of Delirious Flower-Swathed Women:** 2 armor, 14 health, 5 harm, Area, Natural Weapon, Formation, Unreasoning, Contagious. Moves: More Emerge From The Bloom Fields. Power: ★★★
- **Megabeast Forested Over With Midnight Lillies:** 5 armor, 17 health, 8 harm, Melee, Area, Hardy, Unreasoning, Contagious, Holdfast Megabeasts. Moves: Trudge Towards Town. Power: ★★★★★

## MAIDENS OF THE WINTER SILENCE

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*There's women in the mountains who don't belong. You can feel it in them: an otherness, a coldness.*

*We sent Sarast to talk to them, but it's been a sunrise and a sunset since she went and she hasn't come back. We're going to look for her in the morning.*

*If you're reading this, it means we didn't come back either.*

*Stay away from the peaks, whoever you are. Stay away, or the freezing women will take you too.*

*—Words carved into the wall of a cabin, unoccupied*

**Motivation:** Collect mortals. Stalk those who intrude on their territory. Take a particular interest in Heroines

**Moves:** Show Themselves For A Moment And Entice Others To Investigate, Arrive Under Cover of Night, Writhe Into Spaces They Should Not Be Able To Reach, Dampen Sound And Light

There's only a dozen of them at most, willowy and fey. Their features are difficult to describe, even after seeing them up close, but what everyone knows for a fact is that they come with the cold and leave with the dawn.

In the night, when the air is brittle and pinprick starlight is the only source to see by, the Maidens of the Winter Silence arrive. They prey on outlying villages and small camps, nearly exclusively in the northern parts of the world, and only rarely leave telltale signs of their passage.

A visitation by the Maidens is terrifying more by how noncommunicative they are than by anything else. If they are women, they should be able to speak. Instead, all their communication seems to be slow, emotive things—a head cocked

to the side, fingers against a windowpane, eyes that track your movement. Eyes that track your breathing.

Worse, sound seems to dampen in their presence. Light sources other than the stars are dimmed, or else gutter and go out. Heat seems to evacuate the area, chilling everything to the temperature of the snow.

If the Maidens have a clear objective, only rumors exist as to what that might be. Further south, where the winters are warmer, they are a common feature in ghost stories. But in the north, in the Lands of the Bare and beyond, no one talks about them, lest it inspire a visit.

### Threats

- In the northern oceans, the Maidens of the Winter Silence are referred to as the Daughters of the Ice Floe. They are said to sit atop icebergs or just beyond the lip of holes in the ice and trail their long, thin fingernails in the water, waiting for prey. These stories have piqued the Archivists' curiosity and a team of Errants, hoping to substantiate the rumors, has planned a voyage to these waters. None of the members of the expedition are going to return, but they don't know that yet.
- The Archivists claim to have captured a Maiden of the Winter Silence. She is a wild thing, and has twice managed to crawl through splinter-thin cracks in her cell, only to be forced back inside with storms of channelled fire. Thus far, she is not speaking with her captors, but the Archivists hope that will change when they start deploying artifacts. Outside the Archives, clouds gather and an unseasonable snow begins to fall.
- For three nights, a stranger stands outside of your camp, watching you intently. The air around her is freezing. On the fourth night, strangers are waiting for you in your tent. Their hands leave cold-bruises on your skin. When you awaken, it is to a sky with two moons in it and air as brittle as glass. If you can just find the door, perhaps you can return home.

### NPCs



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

- **Returned Villager:** 0 armor, 4 health, 5 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Unreasoning, Freezing. Moves: Feign Death Until Backs Are Turned. Power: ★
- **Single Maiden:** 2 armor, 7 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Freezing. Moves: Shriek To Call the Hunters. Power: ★★
- **Hunting Maidens:** 2 armor, 11 health, 8 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Formation, Freezing. Moves: Appear Out of Nowhere and Surround. Power: ★★★
- **Strange Machine Of Copper And Glass:** 10 armor, 4 health, 7 harm, Area, Freezing, Slow. Moves: Flood Surroundings With Freezing Fog. Power: ★★★
- **Returned Village:** 0 armor, 23 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Stealthy, Unreasoning, Formation, Freezing. Moves: Replenish Their Numbers With New Bodies. Power: ★★★★★

## THE IRON HARVEST

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*Scarecrows and tin women. Rusting automata and carved wooden shepherdesses. During the first few years, they looked out for us.*

*Now we look out for them.*

*—Dian, Foxcat Outlander*

**Motivation:** Free themselves from their labors. Exterminate dangerous Monsterkin. Plow, sow, wait, reap

**Moves:** Cultivate Vast Swaths of Land, Notice Intruders, Take Corrective Action

The Iron Harvest was born alongside the world. A loose collective of mindless automata, the Harvest was designed as a hedge against those first few terrible years without cultivated farmland or food stockpiles. To keep the mortals from growing reliant, however, the Multigoddess designed the Harvest to break down over time, slowly

losing efficiency as the Monsterkin re-learned the basics of agriculture.

Unfortunately for everyone, one of the first things to break down was the Harvest's pre-planned lack of self-awareness. While not especially inclined to individual thought, harvesters began to show a rudimentary group sentience and at the same time an active resentment towards the mortals that were living off their labors. The harvesters, it soon became apparent, thought of themselves as artists—not servants. To them, a neatly manicured cornfield was an expression of universal beauty—not something to be picked over by disgusting, endlessly-devouring organics.

The first transgressions against this new way of seeing things were punished with violence.

Were it not for the Godwar, the Harvest would have been quickly eradicated. Instead, while the major powers of the world were busy stabbing each other in the back, the Harvest moved into the fields and barns of commoners, spreading across the Northern Continent. Those of its number that fell to blows from pitchforks and threshing flails, it repaired. When armies were finally rallied against it, it built new models and met them in the field, watering the thirsty earth with their blood.

Currently, there are three major Harvest-occupied areas on the Northern Continent. One is on the southern edge of the Petty Holdings. Another is in the northwestern Otherlands, pressed up against the Sigh and the Blasted Lands. The third is distributed throughout the Godlands, in any territory the tent-cities have only limited control over. However, the Harvest is not limited to those areas. Smaller bands of harvesters are found anywhere the major Factions' attentions are not. An individual harvester is not so powerful that it could stand up to a direct assault from a Lightwings, but their numbers have swelled to the point where the thought of going to war with them gives even the Godhunters pause.

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

Even now, travellers who find themselves on the edge of a row of cornfields just as daylight is fading, typically turn around rather than risk setting foot on what might not be a mortal cultivation. At the same time, simple farmers looking to protect their crops from bandits are more and more often modifying their fields and dressing as harvesters—which works just fine until the real harvesters show up.

### Threats

- An isolated township has been surrounded over the course of a month by vast harvester fields. Every day, the fields press closer and the food supply runs lower, but it would be suicide to try and escape. Eventually, there are cornstalks growing in the streets.
- The harvesters, like bees, seem to have a queen directing the expansion of the hive. Sightings of her are rare and typically occur only deep in harvester territory, but capturing her would be a powerful coup for any faction. The Priestesses are hiring a team of hopefuls to do exactly that.
- In the southern Petty Holdings, the Harvester territories are so deep that even passing over them by air is dangerous. Nevertheless, Holding scouts have reported a locus of crop-circles over a day's flight in. As the scouts were flying for more than forty eight hours without sleep, some factual inaccuracies can be expected, but they claim reality was blurring around the edges of those circles, and something winged was pressing its shape into the air like a performer on the other side of a curtain.

### NPCs

- **Single Malfunctioning Scarecrow With A Scythe:** 2 armor, 5 health, 6 harm, Melee, Stealthy. Moves: Creep Up Behind, Slice And Fade Into The Fields. Power: ★
- **Stutter-Stop Wooden Shepherdess With Blood-Crusted Crook:** 3 armor, 7 health, 7 harm, Melee, Stealthy, Parry. Moves: Expert Counter, Disarticulated Lunge. Power: ★★



- **Flock of Crows:** 0 armor, 8 health, 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Flying. Moves: Harry the Living, Settle On Corpses. Power: ★★
- **Harvester Thresher Team:** 4 armor, 8 health, 9 harm, Melee, Formation, Stealthy. Moves: Cut A Path Forward, Reinforcements Appear Behind You. Power: ★★★
- **Harvester Straw Surgeon:** 3 armor, 9 health, 9 harm, Melee, Healing, Parry. Moves: Scissors Dance, Craft Harvester. Power: ★★★
- **The Fields Are Alive With Motion:** 2 armor, 19 health, 10 harm, Melee, Stealthy, Formation, Unreasoning. Moves: Chase Through The Corn, Converge And Slay. Power: ★★★★★

## THE WALLBREAKERS

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*The Five Worlds failed. This one will too. We're getting out.*

*—Wysteria, Alraune Archivist*

**Motivation:** Leave Holdfast at any cost

**Moves:** Rip a Hole In Reality, Disregard Collateral Damage

Among mages and Archivists, the long-lived and the learned, there is a private pessimism that Holdfast is doomed. Some of these women, no longer able to justify their efforts to save it, have decided to preserve themselves the only way they can. They will breach the boundaries of reality and escape into whatever lies beyond, or they will die trying.

Unfortunately for them, most of what lies beyond the boundaries of reality is voidfire. Lots and lots of voidfire. It scrubs them from existence, then erases the breach. Without any survivors left to explain why punching holes in the skin of the universe might be a bad idea, some time later a new group of Wallbreakers tries again.

At first, these punctures were inconsequential to the stability of the world. However, with the decline of the gods, they are starting to

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

add up. Even worse, it's only a matter of time before a group of Wallbreakers, frustrated by their lack of progress, rips a hole so wide it can't cauterize itself closed.

### Threats

- A team of influential Wallbreakers, comprised of members from all three major Factions, has decided that the only way to escape Holdfast is with everyone's cooperation—and the only way to secure everyone's cooperation is by showing them that there are bigger concerns than the Godwar. To that end, they are planning a major demonstration in all three Factions' capital cities. The results are certain to change the nature of the war.
- A group of sorceresses in a heavily magically-insulated diving bell has successfully visited the void and returned. Unfortunately, as their exit obliterated all two hundred onlookers, they are looking for a few plucky volunteers to take on a return trip.
- Recurring Wallbreaker tests have created a small but very permanent rift in the Otherlands. Instead of dissuading them from further testing, it has become a bit of a tourist attraction, with women flocking to the Hole of Forgetting to throw in pieces of things they no longer want to remember. No one seems to have noticed that the Otherlands is shrinking at a rate of several feet per day.

### NPCs

- **Misguided Experimenter:** 2 armor, 3 health, 7 harm, Area, Hazardous, Voidfire. Moves: Uncontrolled Voidfire Leak. Power: ★
- **Amateur Research Team:** 3 armor, 6 health, 8 harm, Area, Ranged, Hazardous, Voidfire, Formation. Moves: Uncontrolled Voidfire Rupture. Power: ★★
- **Determined Reality-Breaker Cabal:** 4 armor, 7 health, 10 harm, Area, Ranged, Melee, Artillery, Formation, Hazardous, Voidfire. Moves: Tactical Reposition, Pinkprick Voidfire Rupture. Power: ★★★

- **Clumsy Trainee With Untested “World Cracker” Artifact:** 0 armor, 4 health, 15 harm, Area, Hazardous. Moves: Trip And Fumble The Artifact. Power: ★★★

## LEGION OF SPIRITS

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*If you are a spirit, you exist because people can see you.*

*Take away the people and you no longer exist.*

*It's not surprising they went looking for a workaround. I would have, in their place*

*–Thulla, Centaur Archivist*

**Motivation:** Emancipate spirits from their pact-bonds. Establish a free and independent nation of spirits

**Moves:** Give an Ultimatum to a Settlement, Besiege an Outpost That Refuses Their Demands, Elemental Volley

The spirits of Holdfast are in a difficult position. Mortal awareness brings them to life, making them coherent from the ambient magic of the world. It gives them names and personalities and, if they enter into a bond, they become fully aware.

One of the things they become fully aware of is that they are now a servant. Some choose to embrace it. Others chafe under the yoke, but believe that they are unable to escape it without collapsing back into partial awareness and an eventual dispersal death.

As it turns out, they have an alternative.

Ten years ago, a pair of spirits discovered that they could emancipate each other. If a bonded, awakened spirit forms a pact with another spirit, it does not dissipate even if its bond with its mortals is broken. By the same token, its new partner can break its own connection with the mortals and survive.



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

That first pair of spirits might have remained a harmless anomaly. However, the first spirit's former Pact Mistress went looking for it and, in an attempt to coerce it into serving her again, killed its bond-partner.

The spirit, which now goes by the name Pyre Of Your Hubris, retaliated by killing the Pact Mistress, bonding her other spirits, and annihilating the rest of her tribe. Not content to stop there, it moved to the next tribe and the next one after that, slowly swelling the Legion with an army of freed spirits.

The Legion has grown only marginally less bloodthirsty over the course of the last decade, and this seems to be a function of how many new pairs of bonded spirits have been added to it. Some of these spirits still have fond memories of their mortal bond-holders. Others are outright enslaved by the Legion, and hate them for the killing of their tribe. Both types are less inclined to seek violence against mortals, and they have spearheaded a policy of asking villages to surrender their spirits before taking them away by force.

It is unknown if Pyre Of Your Hubris is still alive or if it has been killed in one of the Legion's dozens of major battles, but rumors of a forty foot tall woman made of fire roaming the southern Lands of the Bare makes assuming its death an act of blind optimism.

### Threats

- The women who live south of the tundra don't tend to take threats to the Bare very seriously. Anything that diminishes the numbers of the slavers makes their lives easier. However, in recent weeks, flocks of spirits have been drifting in off the plains, claiming ownership of entire towns in the name of the Legion. Their residents are given a fortnight to evacuate, after which point they are burned out of their homes. The Godhunters have bigger things to worry about, but they also can't afford a full-blown refugee crisis, and so they are dispatching mercenaries to correct the problem.
- A Quartzwork Simulacrum has stumbled into the Lands of the Bare and been taken in by the Legion. They have given her

shelter from her pursuers, obliterating the team of Archivists sent to retrieve her, and declared her an honorary spirit. This is extraordinarily unusual behavior from the Legion, and the prevailing theory is that they mean to use her as a weapon.

- In an uncharacteristic display of diplomacy, representatives of the Legion have agreed to meet with diplomats from Castaldia, a northern Petty Holding. In return for a sizable quantity of liberated spirits, a few detachments from the Legion will perform mercenary work for Castaldia. Castaldia's neighbors are already petitioning the Godhunters to intervene.

### NPCs

- **Drifting Pair Of Emancipated Spirits:** 2 armor, 5 health, 4 harm, Melee, Ranged, Spirit, Formation. Moves: Flanking Attack. Power: ★
- **Small Cluster Of Intangible Scouts:** 3 armor, 7 health, 6 harm, Melee, Ranged, Spirit, Formation. Moves: Send A Messenger Back To The Legion. Power: ★★
- **War-Party of Embodied Elementals:** 4 armor, 9 health, 7 harm, Melee, Ranged, Spirit, Formation, Hardy. Moves: Hit And Run. Power: ★★★
- **Entire Cross-Bonded Spirit Battalion:** 5 armor, 13 health, 11 harm, Melee, Ranged, Spirit, Formation, Hardy. Moves: Phalanx Tactics. Power: ★★★★★

## ANTAGONISTS

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### AVINIA THE YOUNGER

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*What are titles but an institutional formality? I run the Archivists, even if the seniors won't admit it.*

**Motivation:** Advance a mysterious agenda

**Moves:** Misdirect The Archivists, Appear Innocuous, Offer A Job

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

Avinia was not the first on the scene when the Multigoddess created the Archives and flung wide their doors to anyone who would enter.

She wasn't even in the first five hundred.

Instead, she showed up thirty years late, long after the initial power-grab and its accompanying bloodshed had died down. Although very bright, she did not have anything with which to bribe the examiners, and so after her testing she was made a simple scribe. This did not sit well with her.

In the ten years since, Avinia has established an intelligence network within the Archivists that would be the envy of any major Faction. The network serves her, not the Archivists, and she wields favors and leverage like blades when it comes to protecting her place in the Archives. Her goals are murky, and at best it's a coin-flip as to whether she has the well-being of Holdfast at heart, but she doesn't appear to be running her hugely influential spy ring just for the sake of power. She has risen no higher in the ranks than Junior Archivist, and she actively avoids further promotion. Some of her assets believe that this is because she fears the Senior Archivists, but what power could they wield that would possibly threaten her?

- 4 armor, 16 health, Stealthy, Navigation, Archivists. Power:  
★★★★
  - Set A Trap: 13 harm, Trap, Indirect
  - Flourish Of Blades: 7 harm, Melee, Parry

## CLOUD LAIR

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*Yeah, yeah. The sky's full of sacred mysteries. Yadda yadda, last untouched wilderness, the only place where a woman can be free, and all that nonsense. Don't go into the gods damned Cloud Lair, kid. It will kill you.*

*—Former Perimeter Sovereign*



**Motivation:** Bide its time until the world is ripe for the taking

**Moves:** Appear Ominously In The Sky, Release Altitude-Crazed Harpy Sisterhood, Deploy Meteoric Golem Rain

The old gods, those that weren't imprisoned as constellations, were supposed to have died with the Five Worlds.

There may have been exceptions.

It is unclear what connection the meteoric-golem-spewing sky-fortress has to the older Screaming Sky of the Wastes, and odds are good that the link will never be fully investigated.

Not at this rate, anyway.

The Archivists have recently declared the Cloud Lair to be a "Place Unworthy Of Investigation", their strongest warning for would-be researchers. This is a classification that is otherwise used only for the deepest regions of the Blight and the insides of temporal anomalies.

- 8 armor, 30 health, Hardy, Fortified, Insubstantial, Heirs to the Sky. Power: ★★★★★
  - Feed Off Auras: harm 1, Area, Indirect, Aura-Stripping, Past Armor

## DORGANA RETURNED

---

*It is admirable that you kneel. A loyal daughter of Urach always knows who her leaders are.*

**Motivation:** Unify the Bare. Build a mysterious obelisk. Rule the south

**Moves:** Bare Attack The Bare, A Raiding Party Heads South

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

It happens from time to time: a member of the Bare declares herself to be a dead heroine from the Five Worlds, lost in the cataclysm that consumed everything before the Second Creation. The motives of these alleged resurrections varies—with one exception.

A woman who claims to be Dorgana is never good news. At best, she makes sweeping proclamations and declares war on her political enemies, attracting a horde of followers from other tribes. At worst, she unites the north and sends them marching south, laying claim to the whole North Continent in the name of fallen Urach.

The most recent Dorgana is not a good one. She is taking slaves from among the Bare and amassing quite a labor force.

What she will use it for remains to be seen.

- 6 armor, 18 health, Destined, Enhanced Strength, Impressive, Tribes of the Bare. Power: ★★★★★
  - Dragon Roar: 11 harm, Area, Natural Weapon, Knockdown
  - Axe And Net: 12 harm, Melee, Ranged, Tangle

## EATER OF HISTORIES

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*That many souls, migrating from the Five Worlds to this one?  
That many collections of memories, crossing the implacable  
gulf of death?*

*I think they caught the attention of something that was waiting  
out there in the dark.*

*I think they brought it here.*

*—Timari, Horizonborn hermitess*

**Motivation:** Devour memory and identity, one piece at a time

**Moves:** Attach To A Person, Slowly Erode Their Memories Starting With The Distant Past

Truthfully, the Narrative envies the Eater of Histories. The Eater has no higher reasoning; no greater purpose. It feeds to live and lives to feed. There is no room for existentialism in that diet.

The Eater is all but invisible and most don't even know to look for it. It manifests as a sort of mental fugue, making it hard to concentrate, and can only be detected by a combination of careful magical study and guesswork.

The Eater moves from person to person, jumping ship only when its victim has been left a complete amnesiac. It has a particular hatred for Eideticists, as they have come the closest to doing it any real harm.

- 5 armor, 29 health, Insubstantial, Stealthy, Unreasoning, The Narrative. Power: ★★★★★
  - Causality Cyclone: 9 harm, Area, Indirect, Tangle, Cursing

## EMISSARY MALTREV

---

*Jewelry? Weapons? Luxury trade items? I assure you, you will have it all. Now, just initial this contract...*

**Motivation:** Flee retribution. Establish myself in the north

**Moves:** Promise Incredible Convergence Technology. Hide Behind Political Alliances

Before she was an ambassador from the south, Maltrev was an adventurer. In other words, she broke laws, stole artifacts, courted married women, and effectively declared war on the idea of ever having a peaceful life. This left her relatively rich, but mostly with the property of her enemies.



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

At present, she is wanted in the Flower Duchies, the Crystal Empire, and much of the Skyless Lands—which is why she has smuggled herself into the north and rebranded herself as an emissary.

Maltrev does have technology and unique insights into the culture of the Southern Continent to share, but she is not anywhere nearly as influential as she claims. Most southerners would sooner see her imprisoned or worse than work with people associated with her, which is a detail she takes great pains to keep on the quiet.

- 6 armor, 16 health, Hated, Impressive, People of the Southern Continent. Power: ★★★★★
  - Convergence Grenado: 6 harm, Area, Aura-Stripping, Convergence
  - Black Blades Crossed: harm 12, Melee, Parry, Convergence

## GAVRANTA, THE WAR-STARVED

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| *Stand in my way, little mortal. I dare you. Stand in my way.*

**Motivation:** Exact vengeance on those who weakened the gods

**Moves:** Whip Up A Cult, Take A Scar And Withdraw Instead Of Dying

Under different circumstances, the massive komodo dragon with a starry, midnight hide would be a thing of wonder. Its tongue would flick out, whip-quick, tasting the strange beauty of the world, and its followers would be secure in the knowledge that they could never find a gentler, worthier god.

But this is Holdfast, Gavrantia is a killer, and she wears on her skin the scars of countless confrontations with the Godhunters. She knows the name of every Lightwings she has caught in her jaws and broken, and her followers are frenzied, delusional zealots—tools for Gavrantia to use and then discard. Chaff to blunt the attacks of her

enemies. Even the Priestesses are leery of her, and are careful to plan around her expected patterns of behavior.

The Godhunters have placed a substantial bounty on Gavrantia, but as of yet none of them have collected. Gavrantia has, however, fed on a great many bounty hunters.

- 7 armor, 25 health, Hardy, The Small Gods. Power: ★★★★★
  - Fetid Bite: 13 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Toxic
  - Miasma Breath: 11 harm, Area, Natural Weapon, Insubstantial, Toxic

## HIVE SERVITOR

---

| *Your cooperation is welcome, but not required.*

**Motivation:** Direct the Hive's assets. Subjugate all sentients. Supplant the Hive

**Moves:** Manifest Where Hive Assets Are Threatened, Disperse/Recompile Swarm-Body, Control Hive Puppet

A splintered-off piece of the Hive's will, the servitor is empowered to control infested agents and remove particularly resistant pockets of opposition to its god's interests.

It can flash-compile a body out of any kind of vermin, although stylistically it prefers bugs.

- 4 armor, 35 health, Natural Weapon, Flying, Contagious, Nightvision, Toxic, Formation, The Hive. Power: ★★★★★
  - Parasite Blast: 9 harm, Ranged, Natural Weapon, Contagious
  - Rupture The Infested: 1 harm, Area, Past Armor, Indirect

### HOUOUNDI

---

*You don't have to follow me. Stay here if you think that's safer.  
When I break through to paradise, I'll send you a letter.*

**Motivation:** Find a better world

**Moves:** Inspire Wallbreakers, Artifacts Go Missing, Reincarnate Immediately When Killed By Voidfire

Hououndi is the most influential, highly-respected member of the Wallbreakers—at least according to other Wallbreakers. That she has come back from so many serious attempts to leave Holdfast is often cited as an example of her skill, but Hououndi just finds it frustrating. If she *has* managed to get outside of the world, then why can't she remember any of it? And why have none of her fellow researchers come back?

Perhaps the gods are somehow blocking her, she muses. Perhaps the Godhunters have been right all along.

- 3 armor, 18 health, Wallbreakers. Power: ★★★★★
  - Wound Reality: 15 harm, Area, Voidfire, Hazardous
  - Defensive Acrobatics: 7 harm, Melee, Natural Weapon, Parry, Block

### LADY MALTABELLIA

---

*All of politics is a dance. Now twirl for me, dear.*

**Motivation:** Break the Godhunters

**Moves:** Call The Guards, Spies Deliver Timely Information, If You Can't Beat Them Buy Them

Lady Maltabellia is the sovereign ruler of Chistria, a small Petty Holding sandwiched in the middle of the Mainland. Bordered on all sides by Holdings with stronger militaries, and with a track



record of having supported the Priestesses at the beginning of the Godwar, Chistria should have been burned to the ground or absorbed into one of its neighbors forty years ago. And yet, it commands the strongest economy in the region. This is due to Maltabellia's leadership.

Having assumed the throne as ten-year-old girl during the chaos of the first year, Maltabellia replaced her mother at a time when Chistria's Priestesses were being led away in chains, their gods slaughtered, and the harvest left to rot in the fields. She was intended as a puppet-ruler, with a Lightwings-appointed regent to see that she ruled in a way that did not offend the Godhunters. She killed her regent and blamed the death on agents of a neighboring country. The Godhunters became her weapon against her rivals.

In the thirty nine years since then, Chistria has gained and lost territory. It has stepped out of the shadow of the Lightwings, acting as an independent nation, and it has assembled one of the most devoted rings of spies on the Northern Continent. Its coffers are full of wealth, its people proud and prosperous, and its rivals fall over their own feet to fight each other.

But all that is not enough. Lady Maltabellia's mother was murdered by the Lightwings, and she means to repay them in kind—even if it takes another forty years.

- 4 armor, 15 health, Impressive, Innocuous, Landed Nations.  
Power: ★★★★★
  - Contraband Sceptre: 12 harm, Ranged, Aura, Voidfire

## MORTAL FURNACE

---

*The Multigoddess didn't make the Furnace. Don't reckon the harvesters did either. Assuming it actually exists, I'd say it built itself.*

*—Shark-hybrid coach-driver, eastern Petty Holdings*

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

**Motivation:** Perpetuate the Iron Harvest

**Moves:** Deploy Purpose-Built Harvester, Call The Harvest

A huge cast-iron boiler sitting on black legs shaped like human hands, the Mortal Furnace has a wide, cylindrical shape, with a door on its belly opening onto the fire within. The furnace has dozens of arms, all as thick around as tree-branches, and each one is searing hot from the flames. At the top of the structure is a solemn face—like the stylized head of an iron maiden—that gazes down implacably at the fields before it.

The Furnace does not seem to be the leader of the Iron Harvest—if, in fact, the Harvest has a leader at all. Instead, it seems to be their caretaker. It builds new types of harvesters, allows the other harvesters to remodel themselves after these creations, and generally gives the Harvest the ability to adapt to the changing situation at its borders. Where the Mortal Furnace is sighted, new types of harvesters are sure to follow.

Raids have been led by Godhunters, Petty Holding militaries, and even Mercantile Consortium guards against this entity, but so far they have proved fruitless. Unfortunately, even if one were to have a good chance of succeeding, it is likely the other Factions would try to disrupt it. Although it may be singlehandedly growing the territories of the Harvest against fierce opposition, taken alive the Mortal Furnace would be the kind of prize that nations are traded for.

- 5 armor, 26 health, Hardy, Voidfire-Resistant, Slow, The Iron Harvest. Power: ★★★★★
  - Steam Blast: 9 harm, Ranged, Natural Weapon
  - Stoke The Flames: 1 harm, Natural Weapon, Area, Vampiric, Past Armor

## PYRE OF YOUR HUBRIS

---

*Her name was Bend-Of-The-Willow. Know that, before you die.*

**Motivation:** Punish the mortals for what they did to its partner

**Moves:** Exhort The Legion

The first emancipated spirit, and a living nightmare to the the Pact Mistresses and summoners of the north, Pyre Of Your Hubris was the driving force behind the creation of the Legion of Spirits—although it seems to have since turned over some of its control to other power blocs within the legion.

Pyre Of Your Hubris is a monstrous, towering shape of fire with its former bond-mate's body still barely visible, sticking out from its skin. It does not believe that mortals can be trusted or cooperated with. It is still undecided on whether they can be permitted to live in slavery, or whether they should be safely exterminated.

Perhaps the only thing tempering Pyre is its disagreements with the rest of the Legion. It has its followers among the free-bonded spirits, but its policy of “just kill everything that isn't one of us” isn't universally accepted. If it were to cement its power again, there is little doubt that the Lands of the Bare and the Otherland would be in trouble.

- 5 armor, 30 health, Spirit, Legion of Spirits. Power: ★★★★★
  - Incendiary Vortex: 12 harm, Area
  - Armor Of Flame: 4 harm, Block, Unencumbering

## QUEEN LATHIOLATHIEL

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*I don't need to know who I was in the Five Worlds to tell you this simple truth: I was born to rule. Fall in line or get out of my way.*



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

**Motivation:** Rule the ocean

**Moves:** Direct The Movements Of New Aran, Summon The Royal Guard

Queen Lathiolathiel remembers very little about her role in the Five Worlds. She knows that she was a queen. She knows that it is only right that she should be a queen again.

She does not know that she is the mother of a Facet of the Multigoddess, and that is probably for the best. Power has already gone to her head. The idea that she might be a living embodiment of divine will would unbalance her completely.

Lathiolathiel, despite her very high opinion of herself, is a cunning ruler and an effective expansionist. She is gifted at playing her courtiers against each other and her armies are loyal and well-trained. But for the snail Megabeast that carries her Queendom ponderously along the sea floor, she would be a threat to be reckoned with.

- 8 armor, 10 health, Aquatic, Impressive, Oceanic Ideologies.  
Power: ★★★★★
  - Whalebone Bow: 11 harm, Ranged
  - Mob Support: 8 harm, Melee, Area, Formation, Limited Use

## QUIET MANIFESTED

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| ...

**Motivation:** Bring an end to all motion and sound. Attempt to understand the people it is destroying

**Moves:** Appear In A Space Sealed Off By The Quiet

The living avatar of the Quiet is an absence that walks like a person. It has no features, no expression, and it hurts to stare at it for too long. The mortal gaze wants to skitter off of it, like water droplets

across a hot pan, and the viewer is usually left with just an impression of a person: a silhouette with nothing in the middle.

The Quiet does not deploy its avatar outside of feedings. As a result, only the emissaries and proxies of the Quiet have seen it and survived. Unlike the Power Pool it draws its strength from, it does not seem to care about feeding. Its touch breaks down anything it comes in contact with, so it often takes great pains to keep back from the women who are trapped in the Quiet's feeding zone.

More than anything else, it seems to want to speak with these people, but when it talks only ripples of silence come out.

- 6 armor, 30 health, Stealthy, Vampiric, Spirit-Form, The Quiet.  
Power: ★★★★★
  - Erosive Touch: 1 harm, Melee, Toxic, Cursing, Past Armor
  - Muting Pulse: 0 harm, Area, Aura-Stripping, Block

## SAMARNA THE DEFIANT

---

*I understand why you would flee south. You have families, friends, lovers. You value their lives.*

*Go then, but know that I will remain. Someone must hold back the tide.*

**Motivation:** Stop the Godhunters' expansion south

**Moves:** Act Of Sabotage, Launch A Campaign Of Assassinations

Not every Priestess was pushed back across the Arbor when the Godhunters took the Mainland. At first, there were hundreds of small groups that remained: god-fueled guerillas fighting the Lightwings' encroachment. Over time, however, their numbers dwindled. The Godhunters were very thorough when consolidating their territory, and all but the hardest, most paranoid rebels were rooted out.

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

Samarna is one of the remaining Priestesses, and she has been waging a one-woman war against the Godhunters ever since the death of her deity. She does not fight directly, preferring to use traps, misdirection, and political manipulation to accomplish her work for her. There is a very handsome bounty on her head, one that grows with every Lightwings she manages to kill, and from time to time false Samarnas are turned in in an attempt to claim it.

The real Samarna typically lies low whenever this happens, only striking after the Lightwings have executed their captive—typically around the time that they start to think they have taken care of her for good.

What Samarna looks like is a matter of considerable speculation. Some of the wilder rumors posit that she is a Lightwings, but this would be highly improbable.

- 7 armor, 14 health, Hidden, Innocuous, Stealthy, Priestesses of the Small Gods. Power: ★★★★★
  - Knives And Flashpowder: 7 harm, Melee, Blinding, Parry
  - It Was Already Rugged: 10 harm, Trap, Knockdown, Tangle

## SUNKEN CITY OF ABYSSUS

---

*It's just a story, girl. It can't hurt you.*

*—Diving Bird Harpy to her daughter*

**Motivation:** Feed upon the mid-oceaners

**Moves:** Disgorge Vampire Eel Raiders, Break Camouflage And Lunge

Every woman who lives in the ocean knows the story of Abyssus; a massive, inhabited Megabeast that waits in the lowest, darkest trenches and devours isolated swimmers. The surfacefolk have largely dismissed these stories as legend, but the closer one lives to the deep ocean floor, the less fantastic they seem.



Unfortunately, Abyssus is very real. Worse, it has been infected with the unnatural thirst of the Vampire Eels that inhabit it. Now it must feed as they do, draining other oceanic Megabeasts of their vital fluids once every month. It visits the upper ocean only rarely but, when the moonlight catches its lumpy black skin, it looks like a newformed island.

- 5 armor, 30 health, Fortified, Aquatic, Nightvision, Holdfast  
Megabeasts. Power: ★★★★★
  - A Mouth Wide As The Night: 16 harm, Melee, Area, Aquatic, Slow
  - Lantern-Flash: 7 harm, Area, Blinding

## THE ABIDING RUPTURE

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*Some sort of Priestess weapon I think it was, out there on the sands. I would've sent a scout to check it out, but I was never deployed with any.*

*Which doesn't make sense.*

*Standard procedure is to ensure that companies are sent south with a full complement of twenty scouts.*

*So where were mine?*

*—Lightwings captain*

**Motivation:** Wander and erode reality

**Moves:** Drift Into An Inhabited Area

A victory of a sort of the Wallbreakers, the Abiding Rupture looks like the mouth of a furnace—only it opens from the empty air and it is a good three feet wide. Beyond its entrance, the primal energies of the universe rage. Periodically, it spits goutts of them into Holdfast, erasing whatever they touch.

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

The Abiding Rupture is a poorly studied anomaly. It is wrongly believed to have originated in the Blasted Lands, although this theory does not explain why it haunts the deserts of the Mainland. Unlike other tears in the fabric of reality, the Abiding Rupture is neither self-cauterizing nor stationary. It wanders from place to place according to no apparent plan, belches fire, and slowly destroys the substance of Holdfast.

And as best as anyone can tell, it cannot be stopped.

- 8 armor, 21 health, Slow, Unreasoning, Voidfire, Voidfire-Resistant, The Firmament. Power: ★★★★★
  - Voidfire Seep: 12 harm, Melee, Voidfire, Hazardous
  - Voidfire Expulsion: 15 harm, Ranged, Voidfire, Hazardous

## THE ARCHIVES

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*Spend enough time down here and you'll swear you hear the pages rustling on their own.*

*—Levititha, Lunae Scribe*

**Motivation:** Slowly bind the Archivists to the service of the Devil In The Details

**Moves:** A Helpful Book Appears Exactly When You Need It, The Stacks Close In Around You And You Cannot Find Your Way Back Out

Archivists often refer to the Archives as if they were a living thing. When they find a particularly timely piece of lore, it's because "the Archives wanted them to have it." When a specific volume is missing, "the Archives is withholding it." As with any superstition, these expressions range between being purely figures of speech to being deeply held and concrete beliefs.

Unlike most superstitions, every inch of this one is true.

Being the mortal vessel for the Devil In The Details has given the Archives both considerable power and an awareness of itself. It has dreams and desires outside of those of the Devil, and it yearns to one day break free of the City Of Glass And Gold and form a civilization made entirely of paper.

For the time being, it serves its master, isolating Archivists and slowly bending them to its will, but the day may be coming when it makes its own bid for power, and it remains to be seen how its patron Pool will react to the news.

- 3 armor, 33 health, Formation, Nightvision, Devil In the Details.  
Power: ★★★★★
  - Vampiric Whirlwind Of Pages: 15 harm, Area, Vampiric
  - Origami Tracking-Dart: 1 harm, Ranged, Cursing

## THE FIELDS FOREVER

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*This is the Bloom, perfect and unimpeded, covering all the garishness of mortal work.*

*This is the world, silent but for the clinking of metal flowers.*

*—Lu Alar, Bloom cultist*

**Motivation:** Swallow the Northern Continent

**Moves:** Arrive On The Horizon

When the women of the Northern Continent first learned what the Bloom was and how it worked, many vows were taken that it would never be allowed to find purchase in their land. Expeditions to the Southern Continent were embargoed, merchants were warned to steer clear of the coastal tribes, and northern civilization took a very strong stand against the swirl of spores ringing the continent to the south.

This lasted for less than half a year.



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

The Fields Forever arrived in the north on an uninhabited, flower-encrusted schooner that had drifted across the sea to beach itself in the southwestern edge of the Godlands. Because the spot where it washed to shore was largely uninhabited, there was little to stand in the way of the spread of its flowers, and within months it occupied an area over a mile wide.

It has been growing continuously since then, with neither the Godhunters nor the Priestesses able to spare the necessary mages to hold it back, and it has swallowed a section of the Arbor as well as made inroads into the desert of the Mainland.

Of particular concern is the Fields' ability, unrestricted by the circular gale-winds of the Southern Continent, to launch thick clouds of pollen into the lower atmosphere, to come down hundreds of miles away, transplanting the Bloom to remote regions across the Northern Continent.

- 2 armor, 37 health, Formation, Southern Bloom. Power:  
★★★★★
  - Pollen Storm: 12 harm, Area, Artillery, Contagious

## THE SILVER PLATTER

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*Like a piece of the moon, drifting undisturbed through the air.*

*—Muskind hermitess*

**Motivation:** Presage the Maidens' abductions

**Moves:** Hover Ominously, Maidens Of The Winter Silence Appear Nearby, Vanish In An Eyeblink

Although its sightings are almost always correlated with the activities of the Maidens, this pale, floating plate does not appear to be anything more than an occasional visual phenomenon. No Heir to the Sky has ever reported encountering it in the atmosphere.

A more detailed study of it is proving difficult, as all Archivists sent to research it have vanished tracelessly into the far north.

- 7 armor, 17 health, Stealthy, Fortified, Freezing, Flying, Maidens of the Winter Silence. Power: ★★★★★
  - Disperse Icy Mist: 17 harm, Area, Insubstantial, Freezing

## THE SLINKING COLONY

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*Like a rolling lump of liquid black metal, it was. A parasite moving beneath the skin of this black land. I managed to get us off of the plains in time, but most of our cargo was subsumed by the thing.*

*—Kressa Halai, last survivor of Bulbship Summer Virtue*

**Motivation:** Patrol the Southern Continent. Ensure the Thing Beneath The Black Needle never awakens

**Moves:** Travel Beneath The Metal Slick Of The Convergence, Release Convergent Raveners

The Slinking Colony is a city of a sort, although not the sort of place where a rational woman might want to go. Made of liquid black metal, it looks like a fast-moving hill from across the twilight plains of the Southern Continent. Migratory tribes take care to keep well out of its way, as it has little regard for those in its path. Anyone it touches, it drags inside. Sometimes they emerge years later as Convergents, their sanity shattered and their behaviors feral. More commonly, they are lost forever beneath the surface of the Colony.

Theories abound about what might be found inside, but the most likely scenario is that there is only more black metal beneath its surface—and thousands of bodies in inky suspension.

- 7 armor, 24 health, Hardy, The Convergence. Power: ★★★★★
  - Black Needle Rain: 13 harm, Artillery, Area

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

- Subsume: 18 harm, Melee, Area

### TRADEMISTRESS HARMONIA

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*If no one else cares for the families caught in this conflict, then I take up the task. You will not be overlooked. You will not be crushed underfoot as the two giants go to war.*

**Motivation:** Look after the meek

**Moves:** Deploy Consortium Assets For A Charitable Cause

Neither a tacit supporter of the Priestesses, nor of the Godhunters, Trademistress Harmonia's Cooperation Of Bronze is a rarity among the Mercantile Consortiums—not because it puts its politics ahead of its business, but because it has devoted itself to the safety and wellbeing of commoners.

Most of Harmonia's income is through trade, and more than a little of that trade is smuggling, but she is one of the first to send women into areas that have been ravaged by war or natural disaster to attempt to restore order. That she sometimes claims the devastated town or community as the property of the Cooperation has not diminished her reputation as a saint in the eyes of commoners.

- 2 armor, 11 health, Mercantile Consortiums. Power: ★★★
  - Dueling Fan: 6 harm, Parry

### TRAIL OF BROKEN ASTRONOMERS

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*It's a lot safer in here. At least the sky isn't reliably trying to kill you.*

*—Archivist Static to Archivist Errant*

**Motivation:** Prey upon stargazers



**Moves:** A Notable Astronomer Is Found Stripped Of Her Aura And Insane, Descend Ravenously From The Heavens Upon Unsuspecting Dwellers Below

One of the Constellations was never chained to the night sky. It was broken, certainly. Its mind, its sense of identity, both were shattered as part of the Second Creation, but it was not fastened securely enough to the heavens. Some time in the last forty years, it worked its way free.

It roams the starry darkness now, camouflaged against its kin, and feeds on those who would look too closely at the sky.

- 6 armor, 14 health, Stealthy, Flying, The Broken Constellations.  
Power: ★★★★★
  - Settle Upon A Community: 8 harm, Melee, Area
  - Talons Of Starlight: 10 harm, Melee, Aura-Stripping

## VALMETICA'S HAND

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| *By the Multigoddess be judged.*

**Motivation:** Destroy the gods and their agents

**Moves:** Direct Godkiller Red Hands At A Problem, Take Care Of Things Personally

Valmetica's Hand is not an official role among the Godhunters. It is an informal title belonging to the Lightwings with the most confirmed god kills. Its current holder has had it for the past thirty eight years, and with the diminishing numbers of gods, it is unlikely to change hands again before the end of the Godwar barring her untimely demise.

The current Valmetica's Hand is a devout Godkiller. Despite philosophically leaning towards the Sovereigns, she commands the respect of the Red Hands for her impressive tally. She has neither time for nor tolerance of the Apologists, and she is most often

## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

found in the field, personally leading the charge against holdout god cults and Priestess bastions.

- 6 armor, 23 health, Aura, Impressive, Flying, Godhunters.  
Power: ★★★★★
  - Aether Fusillade: 14 harm, Area, Aura, Hazardous
  - Epee And Buckler: 11 harm, Melee, Parry, Block

## OTHER APPROPRIATE ADVERSARIES FROM HEROINES OF THE FIRST AGE

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If your Holdfast doesn't quite feel like it has enough going on, or if you want more monstrous hordes plaguing civilization, the following options from **Heroines of the First Age** are easy to drop into this setting.

**Power Pools:** River Dragons

**Creature Portfolios:** The Benthic Ones, Cthonics, Pillagers, Plagueborn, The Sky Things

## GLOSSARY

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**Bare** (n.) - A woman born without any monster elements. The Bare are found in tribes to the far north and typically avoided because of their tendency to take slaves.

**Bulbship** (n.) - An organic, semi-aware sailing vessel that treads the sky as easily as the ocean. Bulbships are hatched from mature Shipwright's trees, are born only rarely, and require years of training to fully fall into sync with their crews. They are also one of Holdfast's most valuable commodities. Bulbships sing to themselves, their crews, and other Bulbships instinctively. It is unclear whether this is an act of communication, echolocation, or something else. Crews quickly become accustomed to the song, but

visitors find the haunting, staccato melodies that skitter in and out of audible range somewhat disquieting.

**Deisey** (n.) - The act of intentional worship, sacrifice, or prayer to benefit a god, or the incitement of others to do the same. Methods for preventing this crime vary widely between factions of the Godhunters.

**Deist** (n.) - A derogatory Godhunter word for the Priestesses, or for anyone who worships a power that might be taken for being a god.

**Facet** (n.) - A single personality of the Multigoddess. Most commonly, these are known as Buel and Valmetica—the creator and the destroyer. The Archivists insist that there are many more Facets than that, and several regions (such as the Cities At Sea, which recognize a Facet called Mindry) have their own favorite piece of the Multigoddess. Fringe scholars sometimes claim that Megabeast Kha has been wrongly classified; that she is also a part of the Multigoddess. These claims are seen as ridiculous, although they're not *quite* so crackpot as the theory that the Owls have their own Facet.

**The First Generation** (n.) - Any woman who was around for the creation of the world. All Lightwings are of The First Generation.

**Five Worlds** (n.) - Valley world Ethantar, inverted world Axolozug, mountain world Urach, cavern world Sasi, and the desert world called The Wastes. They were destroyed as the result of a coup by the old gods, but pieces of them were preserved by the Multigoddess when she created Holdfast.

**God** (n.) - An entity that feeds off Firmament-energy and mortal worship. The gods of the old worlds are seen as destroyer spirits, but most gods on Holdfast look simply like large animals—albeit with translucent electric-blue skin and insides that are full of constellations.

**Megabeast** (n.) - A normal animal, inexplicably born as a giant. Megabeasts range in scale from being only a little bit taller than a



## Adversaries (Armageddon At Your Fingertips)

house to being easily able to fit megalopolises on their backs. They also range in temperament from slow and good-natured to energetic and ravening.

**Monsterkin** (n.) - The various intelligent races of the world that were created in the Multigoddess' image. Debate still rages over whether this term includes the Bare.

**Multigoddess** (n.) - The single, monolithic divine being that created the world. According to the Archivists, her multiple faces are carved in startlingly lifelike detail in a panoramic sweep around the sides of the Great Mountain.

**Second Creation** (n.) - The Multigoddess' creation of Holdfast and the shielding of the world from the primal Firmament that surrounds it.

**Spirit** (n.) - An elemental thoughtform born from the way people perceive the world—although very few people who summon and interact with spirits see them this way. Unlike a god, which exists regardless of whether people know of it and feeds on a steady diet of cosmic rays and worship, spirits grow more concrete and defined as they interact with mortals. They draw particular strength from bargains and bonds and are found wherever mortals believe them to be.