

Ravenloft Reincarnated Cluster: The Amber Wastes

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Cluster

The Amber Wastes

The Amber Wastes are desert lands parched by the relentless heat of the sun. There is no ebb and flow of seasons in these arid domains; the scorching temperatures are relentless. Here the Mists are not fog but instead shimmering heat mirages or blistering sandstorms. The Wastes can be harsh and unforgiving, and they breed hardy folk who are keen survivors. Life huddles near oases and rivers, and it hides beneath the shifting sands.

The deserts of the Amber Wastes—known to its natives as the Pharazian Peninsula—are home to four domains united by a common history. According to the common history, all of the peninsula was once controlled a mighty empire known as Assayad. After centuries of rule the empire collapsed, leaving behind cities that gradually sank into the desert sands, filled with decaying magic and strange wonders. The people of the Amber Wastes live in the shadow of these wonders, their lives filled with constant reminders of a brighter world that has passed into legend.

The largest and most populous region of the Amber Wastes is the nation of Pharazia. While the “Empire of Pharazia” claims to control the entirety of the peninsula and the territory of old Assayad, in reality it holds only the westernmost third of the region. Lowland Pharazia holds many rivers and oases, with crowded cities clinging to the life-giving waters and trading with merchants who arrive via the landward Mistways and the Sea of Sorrows.

As Pharazia sweeps upland into the vast, trackless desert, the population gives way to nomadic tribes who are constantly on the move between the few oases, herding camels and hardy horses as their ancestors have done for centuries. The highlands gradually

give way to harsh, stony mountains filled with ruins and hidden passes. South of the mountains lies the forsaken land of Sebuia, where the only people known to inhabit the ruins are tribes of wild children, surviving on the barest edge of starvation.

Somewhere in the mountains lies a pass to the realm of Al-Kathos, a land that is mysterious and exotic even in a region known for mysteries. The mountains of Al-Kathos are said to burn with fire and smoke, spitting out blood-colored lava without end. The humans of Al-Kathos live side by side with several strange races left over from the days of Assayad—animal-headed men, women with the bodies of lions, and stranger things still.

Beyond the mountains and countless miles of trackless desert is the domain called Har’Akir. Once a mighty empire of its own, predating even Assayad, the modern region is a pale remnant of its former self. A few dozen tiny villages cling to life on the fringes of diminishing oases, living in the shadow of mighty monuments to forgotten kings and tombs full of wealth that none would dare exploit for fear of awakening the inhabitants from their deathless slumber.

The people of the Amber Wastes tend to be short and lithe due to their harsh environment, ranging in skin tone from deeply tanned to nearly black. Hair is almost uniformly dark, but eye color can show a surprising amount of variation from region to region. Though many of the distant tribes still worship their pagan gods or ancestors, the vast majority of civilized folk in the region are followers of the Iron Faith, imported long ago from the Far Steppes (or, some say, exported from the Amber Wastes to the Far Steppes). Few other generalities can be made

of the many peoples that call the region home, due to the vastness of the area.

Languages

The only living language of the Amber Wastes is Pharazian, a language that excels at poetic expression and song. Pharazian is well known for its musical, liquid sound and its flowing written script, a writing system that looks more like complicated line art than letters. Over the last few centuries, Pharazian has also developed an extensive and complex language of scientific and mathematical terminology, useful for speaking about alchemy, astronomy, and medicine, all of which have been developed to advanced levels in the region.

Dozens of dead languages compete for space on the walls and scrolls of fallen cities, but the most common is Assayadi, the language used by the ruined empire of Assayad. The blocky, spiky script of Assayadi endures the passage of time better than many languages, not the least reason of which was the empire's preference for clay tablets over paper for its records.

Akiri is spoken only in the domain of Har'Akir. It is a linguistic forerunner to both Assayadi and Pharazian, surviving virtually unchanged for centuries in the distant isolation of its homeland. The pictographic script of Akiri is poorly understood even by modern speakers, however; literacy is yet one more skill that has fallen away from their gradually decaying culture.

Connections

The easternmost coast of Pharazia is a coastal region, fronting onto the Sea of Sorrows. Pharazians are excellent sailors, and many explorers have gone forth from the domain and later returned to write extensive travelogues and memoirs. The southern portions of Pharazia contain several Mistways that give passage to the Far Steppes, and the ancient cat statues dotting Nova Vaasa hint at

a connection to the old faith of Har'Akir and Al-Kathos.

The Iron Faith

Like the Far Steppes, the Amber Wastes is a land of religious devotion to the Lawgiver. The local version of the faith assigns him no other names, however, holding that giving anything other than a title to the highest of gods would detract from his glory.

Pharazia is the center of Lawgiver worship in the region, having converted to the religion several centuries ago at the height of the empire's power. The missionaries that converted the locals filtered their preaching through native beliefs in spirit worship and tribal democratic traditions to create a version of the religion radically different from that practiced elsewhere.

The central point of the Iron Faith in the region is that spiritual authority is reserved solely for the Lawgiver, and that therefore no man may claim to be spiritually superior to another. While still aspiring to order and emphasizing the need to obey temporal authority, the local Iron Faith is non-hierarchical. There are no priests of the Lawgiver among the Pharazian faithful, only ascetics and scholars who endeavor to understand the intricacies of law and the natural world; these teachers are highly respected but are not considered to be spiritually superior to any other practitioner. This makes the Pharazian branch heretical to the clergy of Nova Vaasa, while the Pharazians see their distant cousins as spiritually bankrupt and fallen from the true meaning of submission to god's will.

Spirit Cults

Despite the ascendancy of the Iron Faith throughout the civilized portions of the Amber Wastes, the region is still rife with cults. The dark wonders of Assayad and the inhuman empire of the Vossath Nor tempt the faithful away from the Lawgiver. Many of

these cults are relatively benign, simple worship of old spirits and veneration of ancient superstitions. When these cults stumble across something of true power, however, the results can be dangerous in the extreme.

The most dangerous and common of these groups are the Djinn Cults, groups that worship old beings of smokeless fire and powerful passions. Djinn are not inherently evil or sinful, but they have incredible power that magnifies their virtues and faults tenfold. Calling these groups cults are something of a misnomer since the djinn is generally not worshipped. Instead, they accept tribute from their followers in exchange for using their powers to benefit them. Such tribute is rarely easy or safe, and djinn are alien beings who often want things that humans would consider unwholesome or dangerous.

Al-Kathos

High in the mountains of the central Pharazian Peninsula lies a vast and barren plateau among fiery, smoking mountains. Oases are rarer here, and rivers little more than shallow, muddy streams. What water exists is often polluted by ash, sulfur, and gritty sand. The arid and sandy wastelands of Al-Kathos burn with heat during the day but see little respite at night due to the lava flows and ash falls from the nearby volcanic mountains.

Only the hardiest plants and animals survive on the plateau of Al-Kathos—desert lizards, scorpions, jackals, camels, cacti, and scrub brush. The few oases are crowded with life, much of it poisonous or adapted for survival in the alkaline deserts. More than a few horrific monsters dwell in the wasteland as well, monstrous creatures adapted to survive on unwholesome fare. Perhaps the most infamous are the cockatrices, hybrid bird-lizard monsters capable of eating rock to

survive—and whose venom can transmute flesh to stone.

Despite the harsh environment, many different peoples call Al-Kathos home. While most of them are humans of short stature and dark skin, several unique races of beast-folk dwell in the region as well. Humans and the beast-folk consider themselves equals in Al-Kathos, and the domain suffers none of the prejudices against non-humans that many other lands endure; marriages between humans and beast-folk are both common and accepted, though such unions cannot produce children.

One of the most unique aspects of society in Al-Kathos is the disparity between the number of women and men. Females of both major races outnumber males by almost four to one due to a higher rate of female births. Because of this, males are considered rare in Al-Kathos and are not permitted to enter dangerous professions, such as hunting or soldiering. Extended families in which several women are married to one man are common; men in such extended families are pushed into scholarly or mercantile positions while the women collectively raise children and work in professions often reserved for men in other areas.

Most of the people of Al-Kathos cling to the cities, which are built around deep aquifers and suffer few of the privations of the rest of the plateau. This puts the folk under the tyrannical rule of the sorcerer-king Malbus, a cruel goat-headed man who rules from his Burning Citadel. While Malbus can be very cruel to those that draw his attention, his demands are few and so people risk the chance of coming to his notice rather than dwell in the desert wastelands. The majority of buildings are made from black volcanic basalt, making the cities of Al-Kathos look somewhat sinister to outsiders.

Unlike most people of the Pharazian Peninsula, Al-Kathosians are not followers of the Lawgiver in large numbers. The Iron Faith's insistence on the inferiority of non-

humans makes the religion unpopular with the local populace. Instead, the spirit cults are openly followed in Al-Kathos, including the djinn cults and temples that worship the elemental spirits of the deserts and mountains. Malbus has an entire order of lesser wizards who serve his djinn cult and act as both bureaucrats for his government and enforcers of his will; these white-clad templars are greatly feared by the people for their ruthlessness and power.

Tropes

Al-Kathos is a decadent desert kingdom, the sort that is often referenced as an enemy nation in the stories and myths of old Arabia. Despite its strangeness, it is not a place that is anymore inherently evil than any other land in the Amber Wastes, but it is more openly prone to corruption, dark magic, and strange mysticism. In some ways, it is intended to be a “sword and sandals” domain to serve as a counterpoint to the “Arabian Nights” theme of the rest of the Cluster, while still holding to the general aesthetics of Arabian mythology.

Themes

- **Dark is Not Evil:** The people of Al-Kathos have a sinister demeanor to them. Many of them aren't even human. They openly worship demonic entities and dabble in black magic. Most of them are perfectly nice people who just seem creepy to outsiders. At the same time, the most genuinely evil people in the domain—the templars of Malbus—wear white and evoke the power of the sun as part of their magic. Shadows and light seem strangely inverted in Al-Kathos.
- **Buried Alive:** The entire domain of Al-Kathos is a place that is slowly falling apart or being covered in ash. The volcanoes cover villages in ash, the desert swallows oases, and even the cities look more like tombs than places for the living. The mountains can suddenly shift

to bury travelers under tons of debris in landslides, and earthquakes can swallow people whole, leaving not a trace. Everything in Al-Kathos is suggestive of burial or entombment—and things that are buried rarely stay in their tombs peacefully. People feel vaguely trapped in Al-Kathos, even if they could walk away at any time.

- **No Such Thing as a Free Lunch:** Kathosians are well known in neighboring domains as shrewd negotiators and canny merchants. Some say that a Kathosian would sooner see his own mother starve than give her a loaf for free. While this isn't quite true, the people of the domain are loathe to give up anything without getting something in return. Almost every interaction in Al-Kathos is an exercise in give and take—with the locals looking to take as much as they can. For what it's worth, such bargains tend to be honest... more or less.

The Darklord

The dread sorcerer-king Malbus is the darklord of Al-Kathos, a powerful beast-headed wizard and binder of djinn who dwells in a perpetually burning palace at the heart of the desert. The flames permit entrance only for those that Malbus wishes to enter—and those who set foot in the Burning Citadel are rarely seen again. Malbus is feared by his people for his infrequent acts of cruelty, but he generally leaves the daily business of his kingdom in the hands of his white-clad templars.

Malbus began his life as a human woman from a desert-dwelling tribe on another world. In her culture, men dominated the tribe politically, but only women were permitted to learn magic. Ambitious and clever, Malbus tried to buck tradition by using her magic to manipulate the male leaders of her tribe. When the senior witches of her tribe discovered her transgressions,

they bound Malbus and enacted a terrible curse upon her. Physically, Malbus was transformed into a man, then had her powers locked away. If she wanted to be male so badly, the witches told *him*, then male he would be. They then branded him and cast him out into the desert, there to die.

Instead, Malbus made bargains with powerful desert spirits to save his own life and regain his magic. To repay these services, Malbus returned to his tribe and murdered every single woman there, cutting out their hearts as tribute to the djinn—including his own mother, who had been part of the coven that cursed him. When the men of his tribe returned to find what he had done, they tried to kill him and were crushed beneath his mystical might.

Malbus wandered the desert for weeks after taking everything he could from the ruins of his tribe's possessions. Before he saw another living soul, he found himself starving and dying of thirst. The djinn offered him survival, but at terrible price. Malbus gladly paid what they required of him, falling ever deeper in debt to his terrible patrons, his body twisting ever further from the woman he had once been. By the time he was done, Malbus had garnered for himself a mighty kingdom, which he ruled from an impregnable fortress crafted from elemental magic—but found himself a virtual prisoner of his own bargains, and a literal prisoner of his own palace, as well as horribly deformed and barely human anymore.

Now, Malbus can only leave his palace and the watchful eyes of his “allies” by making terrible sacrifices to them, which garners him only temporary freedom. The rest of his time is focused on performing pointless or horrific rituals to maintain his powers, which in turn offer him little pleasure since he has so little time or freedom to enjoy them. He has tried more than once to return to his original gender and appearance, but each time a crisis has arisen that required him to use his stored favors—and then some—to overcome them.

The djinn, for their part, intend to keep Malbus alive forever if they can; they've never had a mortal so willing to stay in perpetual debt to them before, and they will not tire of him for centuries yet, if ever.

Malbus has everything he could ever want—and yet he has nothing, because he has neither freedom nor his own body. Every time he looks in a mirror, he is reminded of what he has lost and can never regain. Every time he must bargain with his “servants” for a simple meal or the right to walk in his own garden untended for an hour, he is reminded how little his immense power really means.

When Malbus wishes to close the borders of his domain, he must bargain with the djinn to do so. The longer the borders remain closed, the deeper into debt he goes. Because of this, he rarely spares the energy to keep the borders closed for more than a few hours. For most enemies, he instead sends groups of his templars to harry them or squads of soldiers to patrol the passes out of Al-Kathos.

Har'Akir

A land of vanished empires where the sands erode ancient monuments and the folk live in the shadow of faded glories, Har'Akir is the most distant part of the Amber Wastes, though not quite the most forsaken. The burning sandy deserts of the domain drift up against the towering cliffs to the east and peter off into endless, impassable wastelands to the west. Several deep, powerful rivers cut across the domain, and the landscape is dotted with rich, fruitful oases.

Every year, the rivers flood their banks and seed the surrounding land with rich black soil that allows the natives to produce far more food than they need. Traders from Al-Kathos connect their rich farmlands to the eastern markets, bringing them virtually everything else they need in exchange for grain, dates,

and exotic fruits. The major thing that prevents the Akiri natives from expanding their influence over the domain is the prevalence of monuments and tombs virtually littering the landscape.

Due to the vast number of ancient grave sites, the Akiri consider almost all of the land beyond the rivers—and some along it as well—to be forbidden and cursed. Their superstitious dread of the forsaken lands of their ancestors keeps their numbers small and their travel limited. There are dozens of cities in Har’Akir—all of them ruins, half-covered by sand and filled with the restless dead of ages past. Har’Akir was once the heart of the Assayad Empire, but today it is an impoverished hinterland. The modern people cling to life in tiny villages whose buildings are squat structures of whitewashed mud or sandstone.

The Akiri are short, wiry people, their features weathered by the desert sun and winds. Their skin is dark, ranging from dusky bronze to deep brown. Eye color is usually deep brown, but some Akiri have eyes flecked with gold or copper. Their straight, stiff hair is either dark brown or flat black, but many stain their locks a luxurious glossy black and braid them into tight coils. Male Akiri are clean-shaven, and many shave their heads entirely. Both men and women wear loose, white robes of linen belted at the waist with a sash; the ubiquitous Akiri head cloth can be drawn across the face when stinging sand becomes windborne. Humble sandals are the customary footwear, though Akiri go barefoot indoors.

While Akiri are suspicious of outsiders, their customs insist that they offer hospitality for desert travelers—which they offer grudgingly and with little enthusiasm. Even in their own company, Akiri tend to be quiet and reserved. There is a tired sadness to their daily routines, as if they remember vanished times of happiness and nobility. Every waking moment is spent preparing for the afterlife, in which the Akiri believe they will be judged by

the spirits of their ancestors and by the gods of the old empire. Most Akiri believe they will be found wanting in such judgment.

This point of belief is reinforced by the priesthood of the Akiri, who venerate the old gods and a long line of dead kings and queens that they say are watching their people from beyond the grave. The priests spend much of their time investigating old tombs and making sure they have not been disturbed and viciously punishing anyone foolish enough to attempt such desecration—if the tomb’s inhabitants don’t get the offenders first.

Priests also manage the domain’s population of slaves, lending them out to people wealthy enough to rent them; generally, slaves are drawn from the ranks of criminals and those that fall into debt, and tradition holds that no one can be enslaved from birth. A few slaves are foreigners, people who committed crimes such as grave robbing and were sentenced to servitude to repay their debt to the Akiri.

Tropes

Har’Akir is Egypt as viewed through the lens of classic horror movies, a place of tombs, mummies, and curses. Old gods and unquiet dead are the order of the day in Har’Akir. Anything from trap-laden tombs to magical artifacts with unexpected evils are possible in the domain, but the big draw is the mummy. As one of the “big five” of the Universal horror monster franchises (along with Dracula, the Wolf-Man, the Creature, and Frankenstein), it remains a highly resonant enemy for horror stories.

Viewed through the lens of Gothic horror, Egypt is a land of exotic frontiers and timeless mysteries. Outsiders come to Har’Akir to purchase artifacts and delve tombs. While the natives forbid such things as a matter of course, there are always villagers willing to risk curses and worse for a pocketful of silver or a share of the plunder.

Every tomb has treasures—but they are also full of dangerous monsters and cursed relics.

Themes

- **Fallen Empires and Faded Glories:** Har’Akir is a land where great and terrible things once occurred—long ago. The land was the seat of a mighty empire with powerful kings—long ago. Everything that was important in Har’Akir comes from the distant past, a time so ancient that virtually no one remembers much of it. Enormous monuments speckle the deserts, but none can say if they were palaces or tombs. The great threats are also from the distant past, in the form of timeless monster, undead priests, and constructs left as guardians by forgotten peoples.
- **Time and Again:** The people of Har’Akir believe strongly in reincarnation and the cycle of time. Old things never remain buried forever, but instead come back from beneath the sand to threaten the world once more. Spirits of the ancient time find new life as new people—but those that survive from the past may not be willing to let go. Lost loves might be won or lost anew, while ancient enemies born into new flesh can become the obsessive focus of an immortal. The classic story of the mummy rising from its tomb to seek the reincarnation of the love of its life is a common tale in Har’Akir.
- **The Desert Deeps:** While the desert is a common feature in the whole of the Amber Wastes, nowhere else does it seem as foreboding and trackless as in Har’Akir. The deepest parts of the desert are featureless wastelands of sand dune and sporadic rock outcroppings where mere survival is an ordeal. The desert can claim a man’s life even if he thinks he is well prepared—and the unprepared will surely die horribly.

The Darklord

Once a priest of the sun god Ra, Ankhtepot desired immortality more than anything else. He performed horrific experiments on slaves for years, seeking the mystical secrets of everlasting life. As he grew older, his bitterness made him lash out against his divine patron and the gods as a whole, cursing them and destroying their temples. A vision of Ra came to Ankhtepot, telling him that he would have the immortality he desired—but that he might not appreciate it as much as he thought he would.

At first, the fallen priest was elated but he soon came to understand the extent of his curse. Everyone he touched died horribly, making him a walking desolation. Rather than repent, Ankhtepot turned to the dread art of necromancy to gain control over the dead. This final blasphemy was too much for the people, and the remaining priests of his faith lead a rebellion against Ankhtepot, striking him down.

Ra’s promise was good, however: Ankhtepot was not truly dead. Unable to control his newly undead body, he went mad as the priests embalmed and mummified him. By the time he had gained the ability to control himself again, he was sealed inside a tomb. Now, Ankhtepot spends decades at a time slumbering in his moldering crypt. He can neither truly sleep nor die, but he can forget the world for a while and daydream about the lost pleasures denied him. He dreams of becoming human again; he would gladly throw away his immortality for the chance to live again as a mortal man for just a few years.

Events of great import rouse Ankhtepot from his slumber, as he can sense the unease of his people. Great enough need wakes him and brings him to settle the matter, though his coming usually portends only more death and destruction. The people of Har’Akir dread the possibility of “waking the pharaoh,” which becomes ever more likely as foreigners

trample their ancestors' graves and loot them for relics.

When Ankhtepot wakes, he can close the domain borders at will, though this distracts him and gradually fatigues him, pushing him closer to returning to slumber. When the borders are sealed, an impenetrable wall of heat rises up from the desert sands. Anyone trying to push through suffers horrible dehydration and burns until they either turn back into the domain or burn to ash.

Pharazia

Pharazia is a land of endless, searing deserts as pitiless as the judgment of god. The rolling dunes and rocky badlands offer no respite or release, save for the sparkling oases that break the harsh tedium of the wastes. These oases feed the domain's brackish, muddy rivers as they wend their way to Phiraz, the greatest city of the domain. Phiraz sits at the conflux of several rivers where they empty into a deep bay, a great port that accepts trade and travelers from across the world.

The western part of the domain is home to the al-Hajar Mountains, tall and barren peaks that claw at the sky. They stretch the length of the domain, providing a natural barrier to the border with Al-Kathos. East of the mountains is the blasted desert known as the Nameless Quarter, a place considered uninhabitable by all but a few desert tribes. Even the nomads avoid the deep desert, holding to the oases and rivers.

Pharazians themselves are a handsome and trim people, their features angular and their skin ranging from light olive to dusky bronze. Almost all Pharazians have deep brown eyes; the desert nomads leave children with black eyes behind to die in the desert due to superstitions calling such births unlucky. The vast majority of Pharazians have black hair; men keep their hair trimmed short, while

women grow it exceptionally long. Neatly groomed beards and mustaches are common among men, while a large or unkempt beard is a sign of holy madness.

Pharazians of both genders wear long, loose robes over trousers or skirts. Men and women alike wear head cloths, both for the sake of modesty and to guard against windborne sand. Women of strong religious bent typically cover their hair and wear veils to hide their faces in public. Sandals and slippers are customary footwear, and jewelry and makeup are considered vulgar in public.

The vast majority of Pharazia's population lives in and around Phiraz or along the rivers that feed it. A common saying is that "Pharazian culture is a thousand miles long and three miles wide." A few nomadic tribes dwell in the desert, considered by city-dwellers to be little more than vagabonds, thieves, and bandits. A consequence of this is that the habitable areas of the domain are densely populated, putting the people in constant close contact. The common social unit in Pharazia is the clan, a sort of extended family unit, creating a social safety net and protection network for those who belong to a family. People without families, such as orphans and outcasts, are the lowest of the low; they have literally no one to rely upon.

Pharazian society emphasizes moral purity and propriety, and has a tendency toward patriarchal structures. Despite the emphasis on male dominance in the family, divorce is reasonably easy to obtain, and women have both inheritance rights and control over their own property. Part of the reason for this is the confluence of the Iron Faith meeting local traditions and superstitions, creating a syncretic faith regarded as heretical by devotees of the Lawgiver from other domains.

Tropes

Pharazia is very much a pastiche of the stories of the *1001 Arabian Nights*. It is a

land where destiny turns street rats into sultans against a backdrop of vast and barren desert vistas. More broadly, it is a place for Middle Eastern legends and myths, flying carpets, magic lamps, camels, and the like. If Har'Akir is *The Mummy*, then Pharazia is the dark mirror of *Aladdin* or *Lawrence of Arabia*. The darker side of Pharazia owes a debt to H.P. Lovecraft's "Nameless City," and to the legends of Irem, City of Pillars, taken from the Quran.

The domain should convey a sense of age and grandeur, power and wonder, with the understanding that forces beyond mortal knowledge lurk just out of sight. Pharazia is intended to act as a setting for any number of Arabian-inspired adventures. The cities are hotbeds of politics and religious rhetoric, but the deep deserts hold alien wonders, ruined civilizations, supernatural tribes, and stranger things still.

Themes

- **Destiny and Fate:** Arabic stories emphasize the importance of destiny in the lives of every person. This impersonal and all-powerful force can bring the virtuous to ruin or raise the meek to positions of great power. The heroes of Arabic stories are not those that seek to thwart fate, but those who use cunning and wit to turn destiny to their advantage. Prophecies inevitably have a kernel of truth to them, though their final dispensation might well be very different than expected.
- **High Fantasy, Low Magic:** Pharazia is an exotic land of magic and possibilities, a place where a genie's lamp can be found in a trash heap or where a journey through the desert can stumble onto an invisible palace. This powerful and wondrous magic is the province of the past, of the inhuman, or the outright alien. Such powers are encountered only indirectly, seen more by their effects than

by their workings. No modern mage can perform such amazing feats, not without becoming something other than human.

- **Decline of the Golden Age:** Pharazia is, above all else, a land living in the twilight of a better world. While Har'Akir's glories are so far in the past as to be nearly forgotten, the time of glory is a recent—even painful—memory for the people of Pharazia. The former age was a time of greatness and riches, but the modern world is much diminished from that time. People now struggle just to get by rather than building up anything of note. The greatness of the world is fading away, a piece at a time, and it will never again return.

The Darklord

None quite understand the nature of the being known as Diamabel. During the day, he appears as a radiant man of soul-searing beauty, resplendent with his black hair, emerald-green eyes, and vibrantly colored wings. He heals the sick, gives charity to the poor, and brings wise counsel to kings. At night, his demeanor and appearance change entirely; he becomes an ebon-skinned creature with eyes like fire, covered in strange, gold-glowing runic patterns. In his darker guise, he is an agent of fury and vengeance, turning his wrath against any unfortunate enough to cross his path. Diamabel has destroyed tribes, burned villages, razed farms, and cast down rulers.

Diamabel rarely answers questions about himself, and when he does, his answers are ambiguous or unclear. The peoples of Pharazia have countless stories and legends about him. Some think him a powerful djinn, while others believe he is an angel of the Lawgiver. Others whisper that he *was* an angel of the Lawgiver, cast out for pride and vainglory. No matter what people believe, all know one thing: Diamabel is an agent of Fate

itself, as random and uncaring as the thunderbolt that strikes the tower.

In his former life, Diamabel was one of the first Pharazians to embrace the word of the Lawgiver. He took the role of a priest, not for any true devotion or belief but because it suited his ego and sense of self-importance. He harassed and tormented nonbelievers, punishing those who would not embrace the Lawgiver with terrible scourges. He thought to command a mighty empire of the faithful, putting himself above all others—above even his own god, in whom he barely believed.

Eventually, Diamabel came into conflict with a fellow servant of the Iron Faith, a scholar and teacher who taught his followers about submission to the will of god rather than the will of man. Diamabel ordered this teacher brought before him, intending to kill the man and destroy his followers. Instead, he found himself tricked into a contest of wits—one which he lost. Diamabel's rage was so great that he lost all pretense of faithfulness as he cursed and railed against the teacher. Seeing him for just another man, Diamabel's followers turned on him and drove him into the desert, leaving him with nothing save an arrow in his stomach.

Wandering alone and wounded in the desert, Diamabel cursed the teacher's name, cursed the god he served, cursed Fate itself. Perhaps it was this final act of hubris that brought the transformation upon him. He became a sort of idealized version of himself—something partway between human and divine. He acts now on impulses he barely understands, charitable and giving during the day, but hateful and vicious at night. Much of the time, he roosts in an abandoned temple in the deep desert, brooding about his nature as a slave of Fate. Whether he truly serves Fate or is simply mad is anyone's guess.

When Diamabel wishes to seal Pharazia's borders, a cloud of stinging sand and dust rises up all around the domain. This sandstorm can flay the bones from a man in

mere minutes, and even the canniest navigator cannot help but lose his way within it. Diamabel can close the domain borders until sunrise or sunset comes, but then he must leave them open until the next time the sun rises or sets. From time to time, even if he wishes to close the borders, he finds himself unable to; sometimes, Fate (or his own madness) simply does not permit it.

Sebua

Tucked into the southwestern corner of the Amber Wastes is a region unclaimed by Pharazia. Beyond the deep deserts, outside the circuits wandered by the nomads, lies the wasteland known on some maps as Sebua. Though there are oases in Sebua, no tribe claims them; most of them are dry now, and many of the remaining ones are foul and tainted. By day, heat scorches the land even though the sky is often dark and overcast. Storm clouds gather throughout the morning, sometimes releasing a brief, intense downpour that is all too quickly swallowed up by the rocky ground. This is a forsaken land.

The eastern border of the domain is marked by a massive rock formation. Cutting through the center of the formation is a chasm known to legends as the Valley of Death. The valley's cliff walls tower as much as a thousand feet above the canyon floor. The walls of the valley are carved with monuments and idols to forgotten gods, and dozens of half-ruined temples to those gods speckle the landscape.

Near the middle of the region, not far from the mouth of the Valley of Death, lies the ruined city of Angalla. Like the temples and tombs, time has ravaged the city, leaving behind only building foundations and the occasional archway. At the center of the city is a vast oasis, one of the last pure sources of water in the domain. A handful of poorly built mud-brick houses surround the oasis, a

sad substitute for the grand buildings that once filled the city. The ruins and houses are overrun by ill-tempered monkeys and vicious baboons that harass and steal from those few travelers who come to the oasis. It is said that the ruins are also home to a handful of shy, elusive children. Though their origins are unknown, it is said that these children never age or grow up.

A massive estate lies on the edge of the ruined city, a mostly intact palace from which can be seen lights. At night, travelers can hear the sounds of merriment echoing from the walls, but none who have investigated have ever returned to say what they found. Legend speaks of the mistress of the estate, a dark-haired beauty who can sometimes be glimpsed from beyond the estate's walls.

The nomads of the Pharazia's Nameless Quarter sometimes make their way into Sebuia, either intentionally to seek out lost treasures or by mistake when their navigation fails. Few seek to remain in the domain for long, however. The entire place has an uncanny, desperate air about it—a sense that something dreadful lurks just out of sight.

Tropes

Sebuia is a land of mysteries and unease, a place of ruin and loss. While it plays into the same Egyptian tropes as Har'Akir in many ways, Sebuia is more literally a land of utter desolation where only the bones of the dead and the vaguest of ruins gives any hint that anyone ever lived here at all.

The “Dream Cycle” stories of H.P. Lovecraft and his contemporaries give an insight into the sort of stories that can be told with Sebuia. Places like Sarnath—once glorious, fallen into ruin, with only legends to suggest why—are the heart of Sebuia's existence.

Themes

- **Within Every Mystery, Another Mystery:** Nothing is ever truly solved in Sebuia.

Every mysterious event suggests a dozen more possibilities, none of them comforting or pleasant. Sebuia should be a domain for questions with no easy answers. What happened to the kingdom? Who are the feral children? Who built the abandoned village by Anhalla's oasis? Every time a question is answered, it should give rise to another, stranger question. Within each box is another sealed box, and the price to open them grows with each one opened.

- **Dream Quests and Visions:** People who tarry too long in Sebuia begin to have strange dreams—visions of the past or future, always with a kernel of truth in them. These dreams may be pleasant or nightmarish, but they are always uncanny and disturbing. People who travel together sometimes share their dreams as well, finding themselves increasingly bound together through shared false memories. Dreams can point the way to answers... but remember that answers are rarely satisfying or safe in Sebuia.
- **A Heap of Broken Images:** Proof of the glory of Sebuia can be found everywhere. Palaces, temples, monuments, tombs, estates—all fallen into disrepair and ruin. Sebuia is a land virtually filled with testaments to the prowess and skill of its former inhabitants. Yet somehow they all vanished into the mists of history, leaving behind only their works, and even those are crumbling into the desert sands. Time erases all glories, leaving only hints of a better world.

The Darklord

More than a thousand years ago, at the height of the Akiri kingdom that called itself “the Black Land,” there was a girl named Tiyet. Her father was a scribe who served the fourth son of the king, and Tiyet drew the attention of the young prince quite easily. He asked for her hand in marriage, making her

his second wife. This arrangement suited the ambitious young woman poorly, and she cleverly manipulated circumstances to have her husband's first wife caught in a compromising position with a male slave. The prince had little choice but to put her to death, elevating Tiyet to a higher position within her husband's household.

A powerful priest of the household suspected Tiyet's culpability in her sister-wife's death. Rather than voicing his suspicions to her husband, he approached her with praise for her cunning and beauty. In time, this unlikely pair fell in love and spent much of their time together in secret. As an adulteress and murderer, Tiyet feared for the disposition of her soul in the next world. She asked her lover if there was any way to avoid the torments of the afterlife; he knew of a method, he said, but he was unwilling to try it, as the consequences were unknown.

Tiyet's husband was not as blind or foolish as she had imagined, eventually setting a servant to spy on her. The servant discovered her indiscretions and reported them to her husband; Tiyet managed to overhear that report and escape her home before her husband sent for guards to arrest her. She knew a fate worse than mere death awaited her, followed by an eternity of torment in the next world. She returned to the temple and begged her lover to perform the ritual, an act that would require him to take her life since it could only be performed on the newly dead. He refused, so she took matters into her own hands—by plunging a dagger into her own heart before his horrified eyes.

Tiyet's lover performed the ritual on her, removing her heart and placing it into a sacred urn, before poisoning himself to avoid the prince's wrath. She rose from the dead the next night, returning to her home to kill her husband and devour his heart. With this sacrilege complete, she returned to the

temple and laid down beside her lover's corpse to sleep. When she awoke, she was completely alone in the land, with no idea of what had transpired to bring her homeland to such desolate ruin. Tiyet now dwells in her former estate, surrounded by the phantom sounds of revelry echoing out of the distant past—but she is still alone.

Physically, Tiyet remains a beautiful woman appearing no more than twenty years old, despite her undead nature. She is dark-skinned with jet-black hair, oiled and plaited into the long locks of a noblewoman of her era. She is small and slight but possesses an imposing charisma. Her large, almond-shaped eyes are dark and lined with kohl, while her fingernails and lips are stained with ochre. Her dress is revealing and flowing, and she adorns herself with copious amounts of jewelry. The only flaw in her beauty is a thin white scar above her left breast where her heart was cut out.

Tiyet craves companionship to ease her eternal loneliness, but her craving for blood and living hearts always overwhelms her eventually. Because she despises what she has become, she avoids contact with the living whenever possible. Still, at least once per year, she must devour a living heart; if she goes without it, the beating of her own lost heart begins to overwhelm her until she goes mad and must eat. When she finally gives in after such a period of deprivation, a single victim is often not enough to satisfy her cravings—and she gorges.

Tiyet cannot close the borders of her domain. Her poor understanding of her own nature and her general loneliness make her unwilling to seal out those who might abate it, even knowing that she will inevitably take their lives. She can command the restless dead of Sebu, however, and sometimes takes advantage of this ability to either herd travelers toward her estate or drive them away, depending on her mood.

Appendix: The Doomed and the Damned

This appendix hosts some of the heroes, villains, and beasts of the Amber Wates. In this section you will discover enemies and adversaries aplenty, as well as the secrets of those whose power shapes the land.

Basilisk

Deep in the desert wastes dwells a creature sometimes known as “the king of serpents.” This reptilian beast possesses a deadly gaze and toxic blood, able to turn anyone who meets its eye to solid stone. Despite how poisonous its blood is, that same blood holds the key to saving any affected by the basilisk’s gaze.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Leathery hide.
- **Poison Blood:** A basilisk’s blood is highly toxic. When the basilisk receives a wound, all adjacent creatures must attempt an Agility roll to avoid being struck by the poisonous droplets. Those who fail suffer a level of Fatigue. If blood freshly taken from a basilisk (no more than an hour old) is applied to a person turned to stone by the basilisk’s gaze, they are restored to flesh and blood, though they also suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Stone Gaze:** Anyone who meets a basilisk’s gaze risks being turned to stone. At the beginning of an opponent’s turn, he must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or turn to stone permanently. The opponent can gain +2 or +4 on this roll by averting his gaze, suffering -2 or -4 on attack rolls against the basilisk until the beginning of

his next turn. If he blindfolds himself completely, he need not make the Vigor roll at all, though he suffers -6 on all attack actions (as though blind). Creatures turned to stone by a basilisk’s gaze can be restored to life via the creature’s blood (see above) or the *greater healing* spell.

- **Size +2:** Basilisks can be up to ten feet in length.

Beastman

The humans of Al-Kathos live side-by-side with animal-headed humanoids of various sorts, collectively known as “beastmen” (or sometimes *taheen*). Though the beastmen organize themselves into clans and covenants based on their animal type, humans tend to think of them as a single race.

Beastmen may be strange in appearance to outsiders, but the humans of Al-Kathos think nothing of their unusual looks. Indeed, Al-Kathos may be one of the few domains in the whole of the Land of Mists where a person can get by with no one caring about their race or origin.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Natural Weapons:** Str+d4. Virtually every beastman has claws, fangs, horns, or some other form of natural weaponry.

Beastmen as a PC Race

At the GM’s discretion, a beastman from Al-Kathos could serve as a player character. Despite their unusual appearance, beastmen are perfectly civilized and capable of the same sorts of moral judgments as humans.

While they will certainly suffer prejudice and scorn in less accepting domains, few places would be willing to label them monsters to kill on sight.

- **Natural Weapons:** Beastmen possess natural weapons that deal Str+d4 damage. They are always considered armed as long as they can bring their natural weapons to bear.
- **Outsider:** Beastmen suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma when dealing with people outside of Al-Kathos.
- **Strong:** Beastmen are somewhat stronger than humans. They start with a d6 in Strength instead of a d4.

Camel

These beasts of burden are a common pack and riding animal throughout the Amber Wastes. Their hardiness and ability to go without water for days on end make them more useful in the deep deserts than horses or oxen.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Desert Adapted:** Camels gain a +4 bonus on Vigor rolls made to avoid fatigue from desert environmental conditions, such as heat and thirst.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Camels roll a d10 for their running die instead of a d6.
- **Kick:** Str.
- **Size +2:** Camels are about the size of riding horses.

Djinn (Wild Card)

In the lore of the nomads of the Amber Wastes, the djinni (sometimes *jinn*s or *genies*) are a race of magical beings who dwell in the deepest parts of the desert. Sometimes known as “the people of smokeless fire,”

djinni are naturally magical creatures who live partway between the human and spirit worlds. They appear as beautiful humanoids made out of the four elements, and some scholars place them in four tribes according to their elemental affiliation.

The Iron Faith teaches that djinni vile, demonic tempters who seek to corrupt the faithful away from the Lawgiver, though the nomads say that djinni have free will and can thus choose between good or evil as much as any human. Some stories even speak of humans and djinni falling in love and bearing children together. Still, all of the legends agree that most djinni are tricksters who have no innate understanding of the fragility of human life. Even without being “evil” as humans understand it, this can make them dangerous.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Magical silks.
- **Body of Smokeless Fire:** A djinn can become as ephemeral as a breeze with light concentration. They can maneuver through any non-solid surface, including the ability to move through any crack small enough to allow smoke to pass through.
- **Flight:** Djinni can fly at a rate of 10” with a Climb of 2.
- **Improved Dodge:** Attacks targeting a djinn suffer a -2 penalty.
- **Invulnerability:** Djinni can be Shaken by non-magical attacks, but they can only suffer wounds from magic.
- **Magic:** Djinni are powerful innate spellcasters. They possess 20 Power Points and generally know the following powers: *barrier* (air, fire, ice, or stone), *bolt* (fire, ice, lightning, or stone),

elemental manipulation (air, earth, fire, or water), *invisibility*, and *teleport*.

- **Quick:** Djinni discard and redraw initiative cards of 5 or lower.
- **Slam:** Str.

Karkadann

This large beast lives in the grasslands of the Amber Wastes, between the rivers and the desert. It has a pebbled hide in dark grey or black and a single mighty horn jutting from its snout. The karkadann is well known for being both near-sighted and short-tempered.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d4

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick hide.
- **Fleet Footed:** Karkadanns have a d10 running die instead of a d6.
- **Gore:** If the karkadann take a Run action in the same turn as a horn attack (with the usual multi-action penalty), it adds +4 to its damage total.
- **Horn:** Str+d6.
- **Large:** Attacks against a karkadann gain a +2 bonus due to its large size.
- **Size +4:** The karkadann is a very large beast.

Lycanthrope, Werehyena

Hyenas are often despised by civilized folk as scavengers of the deserts, but the nomads understand that hyenas are some of the world's greatest survivors. Lycanthropes of hyena stock travel in close-knit packs of up to a dozen members, dominated by the females of their pack.

Werehyenas stay in animal or hybrid forms unless interacting with humans, typically to lure a hapless victim into the wilderness

where the pack can devour it. A werehyena's favorite game is to enter a human village as a traveler, shower gifts and trinkets on the locals until they are trusted completely, and then lure a choice victim out to be eaten.

Unlike werewolves, werehyenas cannot spread lycanthropy through their bite. A person is either born a werehyena or not. While a werehyena is extremely attractive and charismatic in human form, they have a deformity they must go to great troubles to hide: a second mouth on the back of their neck. This mouth mimics everything said by their real mouth, but makes no sound. A werehyena must keep his hair long or wear a neck covering to conceal this orifice.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Persuasion d8, Survival d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +4 (human form only)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 2.
- **Fear:** A werehyena transforming into its beast or hybrid shapes provokes a Fear check from onlookers.
- **Invulnerability:** Werehyenas can only be Shaken by normal attacks, not wounded. They suffer damage normally from magic and from cold iron weapons.
- **Infravision:** Werehyenas can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Werehyenas suffer normal damage from cold iron weapons.

Rukh (Wild Card)

This massive bird is large enough to pick up elephants and whales in its mighty talons. Fortunately for humans, most rukhs roost in isolated aeries, far from civilization.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14

Special Abilities:

- **Bash:** A rukh can lift up to several tons (the size of a small sailing ship) and still fly. Its favored tactic is to snatch up prey and dash it to death on rocks.
- **Flight:** Rukhs have a flying Pace of 16" with a Climb of 2.
- **Huge:** Characters add +4 to their attack rolls against rukhs due to their immense size.
- **Size +8:** A rukh can have a wingspan of nearly 200 feet!
- **Talons:** Str+d6, AP 4. Heavy Weapon.

Templar of Al-Kathos

The templars of Al-Kathos serve Malbus, acting as enforcers of his whims and bureaucrats to run his government. They wear white robes and cloaks, signifying their purity of spirit—and their wealth, since it is hard to keep clothing white in a land where ash falls from the sky almost constantly.

The average templar is little more than a zealous (but slightly better educated than average) thug who reveres the authority Malbus grants him and looks for chances to advance his position by rooting out treason or sedition.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Bureaucracy) d6, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal

Gear: White robes, short sword (Str+d6), chain shirt (+2 Armor, torso only).

Senior Templar (Wild Card)

The elite of Malbus' priesthood are sorcerers themselves, able to use focused sunlight to burn their enemies where they

stand. A senior templar wears a golden sunburst amulet to show his rank.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Bureaucracy) d8, Notice d8, Socialize d6, Spellcasting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Hindrances: Arrogant

Gear: White robes, golden amulet, short sword (Str+d6), plate corselet (+3 Armor, torso only)

Special Abilities:

- **Sun Magic:** A senior templar has 15 Power Points and knows the following powers: *bolt* (sunbeam), *environmental protection* (from heat, sun exposure, and ash falls), *light* (sunlight), and *smite* (white fire on blade).

Major NPCs

Ankhtepot (Wild Card)

Ankhtepot wears white strips of funeral linens yellowed with age and ragged where he has torn them free in order to move. Where his flesh can be seen, it is withered and desiccated, and his eyes are merely glimmering gold-orange lights hovering in empty sockets. A golden ankh hangs on a chain around his neck, and he wears a ceremonial headdress, but he has otherwise removed the rest of his funeral vestments.

In life, Ankhtepot was a powerful spellcaster who turned to necromancy prior to his death. He retains much of his sorcerous ability, as well as having the powers of an ancient mummy. One of the rituals known by Ankhtepot allows him to sacrifice an innocent person in a pre-dawn ceremony to regain his mortality until the sun sets. During this time, he retains his spellcasting ability but otherwise becomes an ordinary human; if slain, he remains "dead" until his

body is properly interred, at which point he rises again. Knowing how temporary the pleasures of the flesh are prevents Ankhtepot from truly enjoying his scant hours as a living man.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Notice d10, Spellcasting d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12 (2);

Charisma: -2

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Leathery skin.
- **Darklord of Har'Akir:** Ankhtepot can close the borders of his domain at will while he remains awake and active. Each day he keeps them closed, however, he must make a Spirit roll with a cumulative -1 penalty or suffer a level of Fatigue. If he reaches Incapacitated this way, he must return to his tomb and slumber for days, weeks, months, or years to recover. Any creature trying to cross the border suffers 2d10 points of heat and fire damage each round until he turns around and goes back into Har'Akir.
- **Fear -2:** Ankhtepot inspires utter terror in those who look upon his withered forms.
- **Fearless:** Mummy lords are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor versus magic, and +4 to rolls made to resist magic effects.
- **Mummy Rot:** Any character who is Shaken or suffers a Wound from a Ankhtepot's slam attack must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or contract mummy rot (long-term chronic, major debilitating). Any character who dies from this disease or is killed by Ankhtepot's slam attack rises from the dead as a zombie 1d4 hours later.

- **Shuffling Gait:** Mummies roll a d4 running die.
- **Slam:** Str+d4.
- **Spells:** Ankhtepot is a powerful spellcaster, possessing 30 Power Points and knowing the following powers: *armor* (ghostly bronze armor), *blind* (curse of the pharaoh), *deflection* (blessing of Ra), *disguise* (semblance of life), *dispel* (dispel magic), *fear* (mummy terror), *intangibility* (ghost walk), *smite* (magic weapon), *zombie* (lesser mummy).
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Mummies take +4 damage from fire.

Diamabel (Wild Card)

Once a man of great charisma who used his position of spiritual authority to command and control those around him, Diamabel is now an inhuman being of divine aspect. During the day, he appears as a clean-shaven youth with shimmering wings and glowing eyes. At night, he becomes an ebon-skinned terror, his skin cracked into glowing runic patterns. In either form, he is an agent of Fate: during the day, he delivers blessings and aid to the innocent and worthy; at night, he carries forth destruction and pain.

Whether Diamabel is actually an agent of any divine force or is simply mad remains an open question.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8; **Charisma:** +4 (day) or -4 (night)

Special Abilities:

- **Acrobat:** Diamabel is graceful, gaining +1 to Parry (included above) and +2 on nimbleness-based Agility rolls.
- **Agent of Fate:** As a servant of Fate itself, Diamabel has four Bennies when he appears rather than two (as usual for a Wild Card). When Diamabel spends a Benny to reroll, he gains +2 to the final result.
- **Darklord of Pharazia:** Diamabel can close the borders of his domain through a brief invocation to Fate. When he does so, a mighty sandstorm blows up at the edges of the land. Anyone foolish enough to enter the storm suffers 2d10 points of damage each round and is completely lost; even turning back may not save the fool. This closure lasts until the next time the sun rises or sets. Diamabel then cannot close the borders again until the next sunrise or sunset.
- **Day/Night Cycle:** Diamabel is a very different creature during the day and night hours, though his statistics remain largely unchanged. During the day, he possesses the Very Attractive Edge and the Pacifist (Major) Hindrance. At night, he gains the Berserk Edge and the Bloodthirsty Hindrance.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing Diamabel in his wrathful state at night must attempt a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Diamabel is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Fiery Sword:** Str+d10. Anyone struck by Diamabel's blade has a chance of catching fire (*SWDE* 88).
- **Flight:** Diamabel has great wings, allowing him to fly with a Pace of 10" and a Climb of 2.
- **Invulnerability:** Diamabel can only be Shaken by non-magical attacks, not wounded. He can be hurt normally by magic and magical weapons.

- **Level Headed:** Diamabel draws two cards for initiative and acts on the better of them.
- **Partially Divine:** Diamabel's status as something more than human gives him +2 to recover from Shaken and allows him to ignore wound penalties.
- **Spells:** Diamabel has the ability to perform several miracles. He has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *bolt* (flame bolt), *blast* (fireball), *burst* (cone of fire), *greater healing*, *healing*, and *smite* (fiery runes).

Malbus (Wild Card)

The sorcerer-king Malbus is a horrific creature to behold. His head is that of a diseased ram, while his body bears the marks of privation and dozens of scars and debtor's tattoos. His rich clothing is often stained and dirty, and he moves as though uncomfortable in his own skin. Despite his great power, he is miserable and unhappy, constantly on the verge of lashing out at those around him.

Much of the sorcerer-king's frustration comes from the nature of his powers. Due to a curse laid upon him, Malbus cannot regenerate his magical strength naturally and must propitiate his djinni allies to do so. Thus, every time Malbus uses his magic, he goes deeper into debt with supernatural forces, making him loathe to rely on his magic unless absolutely necessary.

Still, previous pacts have given Malbus a wide array of sorcerous powers outside of his spellcasting prowess. He is rarely without a bound elemental or demonic servitor, and he has become at least semi-immortal due to his bargains with the djinni.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Notice d8,

Persuasion d10, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (2);

Charisma: -4

Hindrances: Mean, Ugly

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Enchanted silks.
- **Boon of the Djinn:** Because of his bound servants and many bargains, Malbus can spend 5 Power Points to use Persuasion in place of any other skill. This represents his ability to coerce his patrons into aiding him in various situations. This effect lasts for the duration of a single roll.
- **Darklord of Al-Kathos:** Malbus can close the borders of his domain by bargaining with the djinni who grant him his powers. Each hour he keeps the borders closed costs him 1 Power Point—a precious resource he expends only with the utmost seriousness. When the borders are closed, they become coruscating illusions that blind the eye and baffle the mind, eventually turning travelers back into the domain.
- **Horns:** Str+d4. Malbus can use his powerful horns to gore or butt his foes.
- **Indebted:** Malbus owes powerful supernatural patrons his power and position. He can only regain Power Points, heal wounds, or recover Fatigue by performing appropriate rituals and making extensive sacrifices.
- **Low Light Vision:** Malbus can see normally in conditions of Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Reliquary:** Malbus owns several powerful relics, though he generally only carries one or two of them at a time on his person. He is known to possess a ring that allows him to become invisible, a flying carpet, a dagger that seemingly warps time, and several other items.

- **Spells:** Malbus is a talented spellcaster. He has 30 Power Points and knows almost every spell with a Rank requirement of Veteran or lower except for healing magic. However, he is loathe to use his magic, since he cannot regain Power Points naturally.

Tiyet (Wild Card)

Despite being more than a thousand years old and one of the undead, Tiyet looks like nothing more than a woman of twenty years. Her lustrous black hair and healthy brown skin give no hint of her nature. Tiyet is a woman of remarkable beauty and poise, her presence all out of proportion to her petite height of barely more than five feet.

Tiyet awoke in Sebuia more than two centuries ago, a queen of nothing but the dead and a few feral children. Though she prefers to prey on unwary travelers who stumble into her domain, her hunger for blood and hearts sometimes grows great enough that she must prey upon the children instead.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8; **Charisma:** +6

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Sebuia:** Though she cannot close her domain borders (and would not even if she could), Tiyet can command any number of mindless undead at any range. She can control any of the undead native to her domain, even dimly perceiving through their senses. This gives her the ability to keep tabs on any travelers to Sebuia—and to push them toward her estate, if she so wishes.

- **Fatale:** Tiyet can perform a Test of Wills against a target using Persuasion, opposed by their Spirit.
- **Inhuman Charisma:** Tiyet is a woman of heartbreaking beauty. She has the equivalent of the Charismatic and Very Attractive Edges.
- **Fearless:** Tiyet is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor versus magic, and +4 to rolls made to resist magic effects.
- **Immortal:** Tiyet can be wounded and even “killed” by ordinary weapons, but she rises again a few days later unless her

heart is found and destroyed. Her heart can only be pierced by a magical blade or burned by the hottest of fires but is otherwise indestructible.

- **Slam:** Str+d4.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer wound modifiers.