

THE ROAD



A **Gods & Monsters** Adventure

THE ROAD

Adventures at the crossroads for *Gods & Monsters*

by Jerry Stratton

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<http://www.godsmonsters.com/Guide/Road/>

*And yet what joy it were for me
To trod my feet upon the earth,
And journeying toward Aira's birth
To kneel again at Drasoli!*

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FINDING THE ROAD

"But why think about that when all the golden lands ahead of you and all kinds of unforeseen events wait lurking to surprise you and make you glad you're alive to see?"

This is not an adventure. It's more of a framework for adventure. This is a journey to the crossroads: the road from the edge of reality (Highland) to the center of it (the Eternal City). If they've been chasing somebody, such as Joe Lakono (see Resources), that person may be racing to the city ahead of them. If there is a villain involved, it should be a villain who has some ties to mythological origin stories, such as Tawhiri, Tiamat, or Satan.

Read through the whole thing, and plan ahead. For example, if they're going to encounter the Coriandrome, make sure they see some faded handbills along the road. There should be lots of thirteens and sevens on the way to the crossroads, as well as 61s and 49s. Other themes should be floods, getting things out of stone, crossroads, and trees.

While the journey can be its own reward in real life, we expect more from our fictional narratives. Even if the players think that their only goal is the Emerald City, it will still be a letdown if they arrive and the wizard cures all of their ills effortlessly. By the end of the road, they should either learn something, find something, or fix something that helps them succeed at a difficult task.

ABOUT THE ROAD

Inspiration

Many of the quotes at the head of each section come from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Much of the inspiration comes from Stephen King's *Dark Tower* and just about any blues song that involves the crossroads. You'll also find inspiration from episodic television science fiction such as *Star Trek* and *Firefly*. You might also find inspiration in the role-playing game *Dogs in the Vineyard*. Read and listen to and watch some of the works listed as inspiration. This is a loose collection of adventures. The general theme is that there are alien worlds beyond every cultural and physical horizon. This is what it shares with *On the Road*, for example.

1. Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.
2. Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series.
3. The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem: Rambles of Spring (The Makem and Clancy Concert)
4. "The Elves" from "Tales Before Tolkien"

Additional adventures

The Road is a great place to put adventures that don't fit in your "real world". If you've got any old-school adventures you've been aching to use, the road passes by small towns, emptying cities, and failing kingdoms. Reality isn't always working right. Sometimes it jumps a bit. You can pull some of the old-school classics from *Dragon Magazine*, *Judges Guild*, or *Fight On!* For example, I expect to use Graeme Davis's *Tower of Babel* from Pegasus 12 during this series of adventures, or Calithena's *House of the Axe* (*Fight On!* #4). It has the right combination of decay, revenge, and deceit for a Road adventure. I used Karl Merris's *Fell Pass* for the Station of the Sun railway tunnel. Jeff Rients's *Welcome to Slimy Lake* (*Fight On!* #6) belongs on the Road, too, and if you have the Paul Jaquays's *Caverns of Thracia*, it could go in the Yellow Forest or Prata Phoenix. It could even be used as the temple ruins in the City at the Crossroads, if you want to expand that part of the adventure.

My own *Song of Tranquility* (*Fight On!* #7) is a great adventure for the initial cold mountain pass and *Fabrica Solis: Forge of the Sun* can be used underneath whatever you put in the Route 49 tunnel and the Station of the Sun.

Technology

As in Highland, firearms don't work on the road. What does work is a combination of magic, steampunk, and cowboy goth, such as the train that carries water, coal, and grain from town to town.

THE PYRAMIDS

In Highland, the Red Road may be found amidst the pyramids of ruined Egypt in the Dark Forest, beside the great human-headed cat (sphinx). The path is marked by yellow trumpets, and leads into the southern mountains, but never reaches South Bend. The road is difficult to follow at first, but as they near the mountains becomes easier. When standing directly on the path between the trees, a pass is visible through the mountains. It exists only for those on the path.

The road between the yellow trumpets is overgrown, practically invisible unless you look between the trees. Then you can clearly see a stone here, another stone farther up, all the way to the mountain pass that isn't visible from any other angle, and beyond the brown tips and green pass, a shimmer of white and craggy peaks in cloud.

There is a painting of the trumpets, pyramid, sphinx, and road in the castle of the Stigmas di Cristo; the painting itself is magical and powerful.

THE PARADICE ISLAND LOUNGE

If you don't want the characters to need to head through the forest for several adventures, you can also put some doors in the basement of the Paradise Island Lounge in the adventure *Helter Skelter*. These doors are one-way. The door to High Road 49 appears in a cave on a snow- and wind-swept mountain, and on the mountain side of the door it is a brittle and beautiful door of ice; after they come through, a gust of wind will blow and it will crumble into ice dust.

Graffiti from previous visitors is carved into the walls of the cave. Some samples:

1. “Beware the man in the dugout canoe” in English.
2. “Joe was here” in Latin.
3. “Let the sleeper sleep” in Elvish.

On the left side of the cave entrance (with an arrow pointing North) is “Black Stag—678 miles” in English. On the right side, with an arrow pointing south, is “The Road—67 miles” in English, Latin, and Elvish.

Snow guardian

The snow guardian is immune to all bladed weapons, even magical ones. It takes double damage from heat-based attacks, however, and half damage from bludgeoning weapons. It can take many forms, although usually it will be a sinister white human-like shape with jagged sticks for hands and dark pebbles across its face. It can also form itself into a snow-drift that can seep through most small openings. Once every three rounds, it can form itself into a bitterly-cold blast of snow which does d8 damage to anyone in its path (an Evasion roll is allowed to avoid any damage). Its path is up to 15 yards long and 3 yards wide; at the end of the round the snow guardian will reform at the end of the blast. During the round that the snow guardian is blasting, it has a bonus of 4 to defense and reactions.

The guardian does not count as a creature for spells (**such as mage bolt**); guardians are inanimate objects made animate. The heart of the snow guardian is a snow globe from the Paradise Lounge.

The snow whirls around the y-shaped, jagged branches; black stones catch the drift and are forced upwards in a mockery of a human face, and the face atop a twisted and amorphous body. You can feel the cold wind that whips snow around the creature stinging your face and every exposed part of your body.

Snow guardian: (Fantastic: 7; Survival: 33; Movement: 15; Attack: snow fists; Damage: d10+1; Defense: 8; Special defenses: weapon immunity, not a creature; Special attack: snow blast; Size: Huge)

It is about noon when they arrive. South will lead further up the pass until the *Song of Tranquility* adventure about three miles away. North will lead generally down for forty miles to the base of the mountain, and another five miles to the end of the road. If the characters search the cave entrance and the area around the cave, they'll find debris from previous travelers: used matchbooks from the Paradise Lounge, empty bags of “potato chips”, and empty beer bottles.

THE MOUNTAIN

Many paths to the King's Highway 49 lead into the mountains. The start of the road is always marked by flower-bearing trees: apple trees in bloom, or cherry trees, or yellow trumpets. The road is a hard red clay, cracked at the edges, twining through the worlds from the crossroads and the Eternal City. Long ago carriages plied the Road but today it is covered with sand. The road is difficult to follow at first, but as they near the mountains becomes easier. When standing directly on the path between the trees, a pass is visible through the mountains. It exists only for those on the path.

Even if the road appears to go towards low hills in the “real” world, on the road the land rises, and snow appears at the peaks, and soon the wind is tearing icy claws against their faces. The mountain is high, cold, and snow-covered. Very few creatures live here.

Mountain encounters

01-16	Bobcat (1d2)	16%
17-28	Dire Wolves (2d4)	12%
29-39	Yeti (2d6)	11%
40-50	Ogres (1d8)	11%
51-59	Trolls (d4)	9%
60-66	Bats, giant (2d20)	7%
67-72	Dwarves (1d20)	6%
73-77	Gryphons (1d4)	5%
78-82	Wyverns (1)	5%
83-86	Manticores (1d3)	4%
87-89	Pegasi (1)	3%
90-92	Grey-hooked Bats (1d6)	3%
93-95	Petraiaids (d6)	3%
96-97	Cheimon (1)	2%
98	Rocs (1d3)	1%
99	Gakemai (1d6)	1%
00	Phoenix (1)	1%

The chance of an encounter is 2% each day and 5% each night.

The cold this high up the mountain is deadly, and they are far above the tree line so there's little to burn. If they can find warmth, shelter from the wind, and an enclosed space when they rest during the night and if they have warm clothing during the day, they'll be fine (if cold). Otherwise, they'll each need to make a Health roll each day they spend in the mountains. A failure means they each gain one injury point.

A fire or other source of warmth for most of the night gives them a bonus of 8 on the health roll. Shelter from the wind gives them a bonus of 2. An enclosed space gives them a bonus of 3. Clothing that's inappropriate for the cold gives them a penalty of 2.

The wind blows south to north, usually, through the pass. Nights on the mountain are pitch-black. Most of the time clouds fill the air. During the rare moments when the clouds clear, only a few stars are visible, and a razor-thin moon no matter the phase where they came from.

Movement through the snowy mountain pass is half their movement. Snowshoes there can let them move at three-quarters movement.

Mountain adventure

The mountain is the perfect place for the adventure *Song of Tranquility*. This adventure, or something like it, is key to the flavor of what's happening on the road. It's important that the first major decayed artifact they find be something strange and exotic not just to the characters but also to the players. It isn't just technology that's unwinding, it's the world and all within it. All of the rest of the technology on the road should be the low end of steampunk. There are no transistors or solid state technologies on the road.

Especially if they come to the Road through a door in a high-technology world, the next adventure should be decidedly not modern technology.

If they enter the Road through a door, consider having the door open onto a massive snowstorm, a few miles from the ankh-marked grave. They should reach the grave marking just before it gets dark. The shattered ship is about a mile or two beyond; in other words, when they reach the ship, it's going to be bitterly cold and any shelter (and fuel for a fire) will be welcome.

About forty miles past the *Song of Tranquility*, the passage gets rockier; their movement goes down to a quarter movement for ten miles; then the passage starts twisting down, and their movement is normal until they reach the Glendale Train ten miles after that. During the rocky passage and the downward path, snowshoes won't help.

URBANA MYSTICA

Song of the Road, stolen from Oscar Wilde's *Rosa Mystica*. See <http://www.hoboes.com/FireBlade/Fiction/Wilde/Rosa/#rosa-rome> for the original.

Northwest

The corn has turned from gray to red,
 Since first my spirit wandered forth
 From the drear cities of the north,
And to the solar mountains fled.
And here I set my face toward home,
 For now my pilgrimage doth yield,
 Although, methinks, yon blood-red field
Marshals the way to Aureum.
O Mesiemblé, who dost hold
 Upon the central roads thy reign!
 O Mother without blot or stain,
Crowned with bright crowns of triple gold!
O Meshiaské, at thy feet
 I lay this barren gift of song!
 For, ah! the way is steep and long
That leads unto thy sacred street.

Southwest

And yet what joy it were for me
 To trod my feet upon the earth,
 And journeying toward Aira's birth
To kneel again at Drasoli!
And wandering through the tangled pine
 That break the gold of Marsu's dream,
 To see the purple mist and gleam
Of morning on King's forty-nine.
By many a vineyard-hidden home,
 Orchard, and olive-garden gray,
 Till from threaded Edekli's way
The central hill bears up the dome!

Southeast

A pilgrim from the northern seas-
 What joy for me to seek alone
 The wondrous Temple, and the throne
Of the sacrificial priests!
When, bright with purple and with gold,
 Come Flamines maiores,
 And borne along the sacred ways
The free-held Quirinalis sword.
O joy to hear before I die
 The silver city's people sing,
 And see the crystal spires ring
The seven axes of the sky.
Or at Dupater's stormy shrine,
 Hold high the bloody sacrifice,
 And show a God to mortal eyes
Behind the lightning and the wine.

Northeast

For lo, what changes time can bring!
 The cycles of revolving years
 May free my heart from all its fears,-
And teach my lips a song to sing.
Before yon field of trembling gold
 Is garnered into dusty sheaves,
 Or ere the autumn's scarlet leaves
Flutter as birds adown the wold,
I have walked the glorious road,
 And caught the torch while yet aflame,
 And called upon the sacred name
Of Marta who takes Ed'kli's cord.

HIGH ROAD FORTY-NINE



HIGH ROAD

“There is a road... no simple highway... between the dawn, and the dark of night...”

The road is paved with red clay and cracked, but very usable by horse or cart. Every once in a while a square red sign remains, with the numbers “49”, faded, with a cross in a circle beneath the numbers. Those who travel this road call it the High Road—49. The cross and the numbers are a rainbow of colors despite the obvious age of the sign. The numbers shine back like a cat’s eye in lantern light or the beacon of the train.

What’s beyond the mountains? Roads. “Hill folk, kings of the road, side winders. You just came off a side road, didn’t you?” Most travelers speak the language (a variation of Latin). A few speak something called English around where you came on. Once in a while someone comes on speaking the old tongue of the city (Elvish). “The circus folk patter city speak, but I don’t know how much they really understand.”

“The circus comes round once in a lifetime.”

The people and towns

The people here speak Latin. This side of the road is fading. It’s got a heavy old-west flavor, but without the gunfights. Think of it as a Roman Mexico after Rome left.

The only towns still inhabited are on the main road (High Road 49) and in Caulfield (to mine the coal for the train). There are many abandoned towns down sand-covered side streets. The people stay in the towns they were born in. Partially this is just because. But it’s also because they have farmland scratched out near these towns, and it’s very difficult to start new farmland in this hard soil.

Each town is also the location of a well; towns without a well are abandoned.

Money

Coin	Weight	Front	Back	Metal	Worth
Aureus	.02	medusa head and snakes	winged victory holding wreath and palm leaf	gold	25 monetary units
Denarius	.01	Quirinus and flame	anvil, tongs, and hammer	silver	1 monetary unit
Dupondius	.03	Marsu and scythe	sceptre, garlanded	brass	1/8th monetary unit

The coins of the road are the brass dupondii (dupondius), the silver denarii (denarius), and the gold aurei (aureus) of the last emperors. The dupondii and denarius is by far the most common. The aureus is worth about 25 denarii, and a denarius is eight dupondii. These coins are tiny, and old. They were originally the size of a dime, but have been worn with time. If the characters are from a place, such as Highland,

where the silver shilling is the size of a quarter and six times the weight of the denarius, they may try to talk down prices—“our coins are worth much more than your coins!” Most people here will have none of that. A coin is a coin. There’s no value in the coin itself, it’s just a symbol used for trade. In the larger cities of Aquestern, Silverwood, Tupose, or Glendale, they might, on a Charisma roll, be able to convince an interested merchant to trade them Denarii on a 2, 3, or 4 to one basis for Highland shillings (from a weight standpoint, it should be six to one or more).

The people will generally not accept copper or bronze coins. If it isn’t gold, silver, or brass, it isn’t a coin. That brass is just a copper alloy doesn’t matter. It’s the symbol that matters, and brass is the symbol.

Technology

The Road has a proto-“steampunk” level of technology, though most of the people in the world are no longer able to use this technology. There are no radios or transistors or vacuum tubes, but there are gears and steam and coal.

Firearms do not work along the road. Magic does. The train itself is part magic, part machine.

Clothes are made from a flax- or hemp-like plant. They’re rarely colored.

All of the cities are equipped with underground Roman aqueducts (often overground across chasms), several public baths, and several elaborate fountains. All are empty of water. With the decline of the city, water has become a precious resource. Most buildings have indoor plumbing, which doesn’t work anywhere except Glendale. Buildings will usually have several washrooms and possibly one or two toilets, depending on the size of the building and its proximity to the old sewer lines. None of these are used anymore, and if the building is occupied the rooms will usually be converted to other use.

Astronomy, Climate, and Geography

The sun is a gift from Central Station before the end of the world, though few remember that. Peco and Jon do remember. There are no stars at night, nor is there a moon, but the skies are a faint purple that gives the equivalent of starlight for seeing by. Rain rarely comes; when it does, it’s got a faint brown tinge to it.

The mountains to either side of the valley are barren and hot—no sign of the high, cold mountain that they came through (if they came over the mountains). The change is gradual, taking perhaps an hour or two, but eventually the mountain pass and snow fade. They’re stuck here unless they can find the flowering sage that marks the entrance to the pass.

It gets cold at night here, and coal is important.

Time

The people of the road use a calendar of ten months, though the months have begun to get out of whack. Martius (for Mars), Aprilis (for the forgotten god), Maius (for Maia), Iunius (for Juno), and then the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth months: Quintilis, Sextilis, September, October, November, and December. Ten months of thirty or thirty-one days each, and a winter of sixty-one days in between December and Martius.

The year is 10,986. It has been 589 years since the end of the world. Add 9,994 to the Highland year for the City year.

Numerology

Ten is the number of civilization. When we learned to reason, we reckoned on our hands. There are ten months, commissions are ten men, and the crossroads meet at ten squared plus ten. Before reason, our number was two, an animal number, instinct. Day and night. Act or don't act. Run or fight. There are two roads on the crossroads; their number combines to ten.

Water

Water is a precious commodity here. They generally have barely enough of it from thin muddy streams or saved up from when the river flows or brought in by the train. Baths are unknown; they're not even decadent, they're unimaginable.

Food

The people grow wheat as best they can, lentils, chickpeas, American corn, and root vegetables resembling parsnips and turnips. They eat the greens from both of those vegetables. They also eat an agave-like cactus when its fruit are available.

They will also eat small animals when available, and can spice their food using salt, a garlic-like bulb grown in basements, and a fennel-like weed that's becoming more and more rare.

Some grow small chickens. In the past the area also had pigs, but no longer.

Their alcohol is mostly a beer from wheat (in the southeast) or parsnips (in the northwest), or fermented cactus nectar (in the west).

Animals

There are lots of small animals: rabbit-like creatures, rat-like creatures, scrawny birds, and scrawny coyotes. The largest animal still around is the donkey.

Buildings

The towns have far more buildings than people. Most of the buildings on the edges of the towns are deserted. The buildings are either stone, often two or three stories, possibly with adobe walls, or are completely adobe. Most adobe buildings are one or at most two stories. The roofs are vaulted or domed, because this doesn't require wooden beams.

Weapons

Just about everything that needs to be made is left over from better times. That includes the swords of this world: they're short swords left over from the times of the City. They've been resharpened so often that they're thinner than they should be. Most people don't need them unless they live off of the road near the abyss, so swords are most easily found in Glendale.

Pax Urbana

One of the reasons that people still live in the towns on the road is that the road feels safer. It is safer: the City's Peace is a magical charm lain on the roads of the city forbidding violence. It originally extended throughout the entire cities; today it extends for most of the towns, a good hundred yards around the road. But the Pax Urbana is failing; it's gone from all of the side roads, and recently disappeared from the Caulfield spur of the road—thus enabling the train robbery and the wyvern attack.

Even on the main road, the Pax is fading. Anyone wanting to begin a fight must make a Willpower roll, at a penalty of 2, to do so. The Pax Urbana does not affect defensive actions, only offensive actions. Continuing a fight does not require a Willpower roll, only starting one.

The Pax Urbana applies only to intelligent creatures. Animals can and do still attempt to feed or protect their territory along the road. This puts people in a bit of a fix: they have to wait until a predator attacks before defending themselves, but the predator is not under any similar restriction.

“The world has not become more violent since the Pax Urbana. The city became less violent—and no longer able to keep the peace.”

Where Pax Urbana Roads cross, there is a place of power, +1, Order.

The Circus

All the inhabitants have to look forward to is the circus (see the *Coriandrome Circus*). The circus comes around once every generation or two. Prizes from the midway are handed down as heirlooms; they should be oddly creepy, yet understandably nostalgic.

Some of the things people will keep from the circus: colorful sunglasses with large round lenses, forever flowers in perpetually bright colors, super-bouncing moldable clay, a hemispherical jar of eye-agates in liquid, colorful wooden birds that fly when thrown.

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They also keep the fliers that advertise the circus, though most of them are heavily faded.

The encroaching abyss

People here don't talk about the encroaching abyss; to do so is rude and boorish. If a sidewinder tries to talk about it, "let's talk about something else" is the most polite response they can expect.

This is boring

Yes, one of the points of this part of the world is that nothing is happening here. Except for the conflicts brought in by the player characters (such as Joe Lakono) this is a dead world. But even though this is going to be boring for the characters, don't let it be boring for the players. Unless something comes up that interests them, you can probably travel the entire 3,000 miles within two or three nights of gaming: one for the train robbery, one for the dragon attack, and one for the rest of the trip where they find traces of Joe and possibly get spat upon.

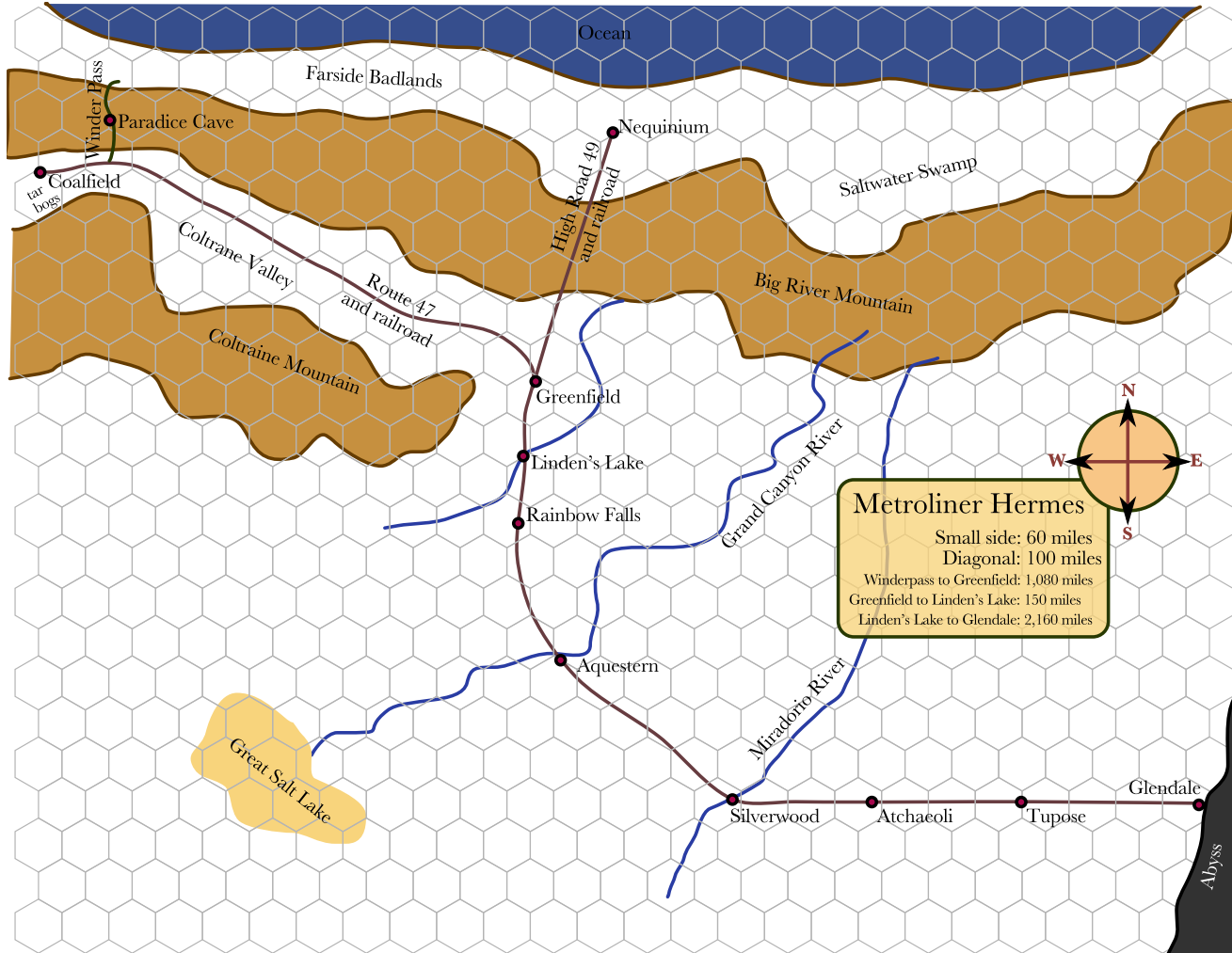
Play up the scenery, the desolation of each town. The Arizona-like desert, the dry riverbeds, the trickly muddy water where water exists, and the rusting, cannibalized structures. Then send them on their way to the next town.

Sample Names

You can mark what you've used each name for in the empty column as you use them. They rarely use “family” names; when they need to identify a particular person, it will be by town and/or by occupation. Anthony of Greenfield, or Lucius Digger.

Male	Female
Anthony	Antonia
Augustus	Aurelia
Cato	Camille
Cicero	Claudia
Cornelius	Constance
Cory	Drusilla
Davin	Felicia
Fabian	Hortense
Felix	Juliana
Gaius	Justine
Horatio	Lucille
Juba	Lucretia
Laurence	Marcella
Lucian	Marina
Lucius	Orbiana
Marcus	Patricia
Octavian	Tatiana
Otho	Turia
Roscoe	Valery
Valerian	Vesuvia
Victor	Vivian

THE GLENDALE TRAIN



The train picks up food in the towns. It picks up coal and water—useable only for watering crops—in Coalfield. Sometimes they're lucky and they pick up fresh water when the side roads open up and a river of cold mountain water flows through.

Inspiration

1. C.W. McCall: Great Big Rollin' Railroad (web site)
2. New Riders of the Purple Sage: Glendale Train (New Riders of the Purple Sage)
3. C.W. McCall: The Silverton (Black Bear Road)
4. Larry Groce: Muddy Boggy Banjo Man (Junkfood Junkie)
5. Rod McKuen: Train to Quivira (Scandalous John)
6. Arlo Guthrie: Last Train (Last of the Brooklyn Cowboys)

The Glendale Train follows the High Road to the chasm at the end of the line. It runs on coal, very efficiently. It's a coal-burning steam locomotive, a variation of the streamlined Challenger 4-6-4 with an art-deco front and long horizontal straight lines along its dark sides. The engine itself is partially magical, which is how it can run so efficiently, though even that has been winding down. If a sorcerer listens to the engineer talk about how the engine works, or reads the dog-eared manual, they can make a Reason roll to realize that what's being described sounds a lot like magic (the roll is at +4 if they're reading the manual).

Most folks know this train as the Glendale train, because that's where it ends in this direction. But Peco knows the old name: Metroliner Hermes. The other end doesn't even have a name any more, it's just coal fields in the mountains. The train has 25 cars, not including the engine and the caboose. There are three Pullman sleepers, two open coal hoppers, four grain hoppers, eleven boxcars and seven flatbeds.

The train will only respond to someone designated to drive it. Currently, those people are Peco the engineer and Jon the fireman.

The train needs about a quarter car full of coal to go from Caulfield to Glendale or back at normal speed. If it runs at normal speed, its water supply will last from Caulfield to Glendale. If it has had to move at high speed for half an hour or more, it may have to stop sometime between to refill the water tanks.

Peco the engineer

The engineer can take them anywhere on the line for a shilling a person or a pound for a whole car. If they've proven helpful, he may also hire them as bulls to guard the train from raiders and hungry townfolk.

The train goes up to Glendale station, and then turns around.

“Can't pay you anything but coal dust. But if you want a ride anywhere on the line we got an empty car for your horses, and a genuine Pullman sleeper with a mattress and clean sheets.”

“My father drove this train to the other side of the mountain; my grandfather drove with Big Jim all the way to the city. That track is closed

now, but we still remember. In its heyday this train could do 90 miles an hour carrying everything from oil to gold, crops from Greenfield through Phoenix Meadows all the way to the city itself. When my grandfather drove the Phoenix Meadows route, High Road 49 was one of the main roads to the city, and these rails were the backbone of the world.”

Jon the fireman

The train carries extra coal to Glendale in case it ever runs short due to theft or other loss.

Sidewinders

“You’re looking for the city? Can you still return home, sidewinder? There is no city.”

“We’re railroad men, but we’ve picked up a few walkers. If you seek hidden ways, look for flowering trees flanking a path or door.”

“Every once and a while there’s a stream of fresh water when one of the side roads opens up.”

“That way is gone. You can’t get there from here.”

Central Station

“It isn’t just the raiders, though they’re likely to get the train sooner or later. I can’t keep running from ’em. The more stress I put on her, the sooner she breaks down, and you can’t find parts for this girl any more. Bailing wire can’t hold under boiler pressure and even bailing wire is hard enough to find. And the mines are slowly but surely all shutting down.”

“The three great trains of the Eternal City, doing ninety miles an hour in ten thousand-mile spokes down the crossroads.”

“No, this isn’t one of the big three. You’re riding Metroliner Hermes, nonstop service between Phoenix Meadows and the Eternal City.”

“No, we don’t go to the city today. The city’s on the other side of the end of the world. Across the end of the world, across the mountains, the trains still run between Phoenix Meadows and the City. Phoenix Meadows itself is a great city, sometimes called the Second City.”

“When the world ended, central station told three engineers to go on to the other side. Reliable service to the end of the world and beyond, that was Central’s motto. They sent over Big Jim the Engineer, Little Joe the Warrior Chief, and Noble Philomenes. Philomenes brought over the legendary Isanta Express. Little Joe drove the Avielen Airstream all the way from the Silver City. They came through the mountain with the darkness draped over them and the creatures of the abyss crawling the rails.”

“Today the Isanta lies half in a dead zone, and the Avielen provides parts for Hermes here.”

“Go into a dead zone, and the train just sputters. You ever pushed 400-tons on a dead line?”

Getting places

The train technically has a top speed of 90 miles per hour and a safe operating speed of 70 miles per hour. Nowadays, though, it runs at 40 miles per hour, or 1,000 miles per day. It will take 27 hours to get to Greenfield (assuming nothing happens), since Greenfield is 1,080 miles away.

“How’d that song go, Jon?”

“We’re a great big rollin’ railroad, one that everybody knows. We deliver your great cargo and come rollin’ home for more. We’re a million miles of history a shinin’ in the sun. We’re the Metro-Pacific and our story’s just begun.”

“From the green fields of the prairies to the City on the shore we were born of gold and silver spikes ten thousand years ago. Down the high ways of the crossroads feel our coalfired engine power. We’re the Metro-Pacific doing ninety miles an hour.”

If you google “Great Big Rollin’ Railroad” you can get the melody of it; it’s the Union-Pacific ad.

“Green fields of the prairies? We’re coming up on Greenfield next stop. That’s the first prairie station.”

Peco and Jon might decide to show off if they’re inspired by the player characters. They’ll be able to get it up to 90 miles per hour before the train starts failing and the coal furnace begins to bulge from the pressure.

Red hot power coruscates through the furnace. The engine appears to breathe—or gasp—with the ebb and flow of the deep red light.

The circus

“No, the circus never rides the train. The circus takes its own time moving down the road; moving off into the side-roads once in a while, coming back with new people. But it never takes the train.”

“Circus heirlooms are the closest thing to treasure we have.”

THE TRAIN ROBBERY

“O bandit, to these warriors glorious surrender!”

From the road aside a mountain, they look down to see a great snake winding its way through the valley alongside a wide road. Clouds of white breath rise from its black nostrils as it huffs and puffs toward whatever destination a creature like that can have. A mournful melody permeates the valley, rises, and then falls. There is a man atop the snake’s head, jerkily playing a musical instrument (violin). Suddenly there’s a monstrous screech and the creature halts, still huffing and puffing.

Seven men are hiding behind rocks and sage. A door opens in the creature’s head. A man steps out. One of the concealed men stands up and points something at him; the man stepping out trips and falls downwards gashing his head.

The one with the wand waves the rest of his team up; two of them stand with crossbows pointed at the fallen.

Four move to the back end of this thing, which appears to be composed of pieces on wheels. Not a creature but some great machine, it must have twenty or more sections.

They slide open a wide door in one of the compartments; they pass jugs to one another down to the ground.

If they choose not to deal with the ambush, the ambushers will steal supplies from the train, including food for the railroad towns.

The ambushes have set rocks and dirt across the railroad tracks to force the train to stop.

The leader of the ambushers, Cally Cornelius, has a *wand of sleepfall* with eight charges. It is at the fifth level of effect: 15-yard range, affects one target, causes penalty of 3 to all actions that round (including both attack and defense), and requires a Willpower roll to avoid dropping any held objects such as weapons. The trigger is the Latin word “tripudio” (meaning “jump”). The wand is brushed aluminum, thin, tapering, and is 18 inches long.

They each carry two daggers. Two of them have a crossbow, with twelve crossbow bolts each.

There are seven ambushers. They are hiding in the rocks and sage at the base of the foothills, ready to run out to the train when it stops at the dirt and rocks they’ve placed on the tracks. They are about twenty-five feet from the tracks where the train will most likely stop.

Cally Cornelius: (Thief: 5; Moral Code: Evil; Survival: 22; Move: 14; Attack: dagger; Damage: 1d4; Defense: 5; Special attack: sleepfall)

Titus, Marny: (Thief: 3; Survival: 11, 12; Move: 14; Attack: crossbow or dagger; Damage: 1d6 or 1d4+1; Defense: 3)

Julie, Sergio, Claud, Vester: (Warrior: 2; Survival: 9, 10, 12, 13; Move: 13; Attack: dagger; Damage: 1d4+1; Defense: 2)

Cally has the magic wand, and will stand back to use it on anyone carrying a weapon (or fiddling with magic ingredients).

Titus and Marny have crossbows, and will flank Cally and try to get the drop on anyone likely to give trouble.

Julie, Sergio, Claud, and Vester are for a show of force and in case there's a brawl. Often there is a brawl, because Julie, Sergio, Claud, and Vester enjoy brawls.

They will load their booty onto a donkey cart. The donkey and cart are hidden about five hundred feet away so that they aren't visible from the train. The donkey's name is Homer. The cart has some old blankets, some clothes, a couple of dead rabbits, and some parsnips. (Homer likes parsnips.)

The bandits have 11 denarii and 38 dupondii among them.

Peco and Jon

Their response is one of disappointment. The roads, including the rail, are supposed to be safe.

“The train is sacred (taboo). The rails must roll. Now people are getting the idea that they can steal from the train. I guess that means we'll have to start hiring guards on.”

“If we give them something from the train without getting something in return, what will the miners eat?”

The bandits

They're from Greenfield, or a town near Greenfield. But they live in the mountains “helping” sidewinders. (That is, ambushing them and stealing their stuff.)

Calley “borrowed” the Sleepfall wand from a man who came out of the mountains just a few weeks ago. The man had left it near his campfire when he walked away from his camp to piss or something. They don't know what he looked like; he wore a brown hooded robe. (Joe Lakono let them take the wand, knowing it would make them more effective against sidewinders.) There was a piece of paper next to it; this had “tripudio” written on it.

JOE LAKONO

If the player characters are aware of Joe Lakono and consider him an antagonist, he's following the road ahead of them. He's setting up opportunities for trouble; letting the bandits find the magic wand to help them rob the train, for example, and putting roadblocks in their way if they're going towards the city. He'll try to get them to do something stupid (such as attack an innocent barmaid in Linden's Lake) or to turn around and go somewhere else (such as the much more interesting-sounding Monster City).

Joe most likely didn't take the train. He "walks" from place to place using the night road. He sends his familiar ahead of him. It can travel thirty miles an hour and of course travels "as the crow flies". Then he looks through his familiar's eyes to learn the area well enough to manifest the night road to it.

Lakono will attach spirits (that's one of his specialties) to provide both misdirection and trouble. And whenever one of his "traps" is triggered, he has the specialty Spirit Channel and can make his presence felt in that area for up to nine minutes. This will also let him travel back to that location if he wants to, though it will take several hours, by night road.

If they desire to talk, Joe can use Branch of Truce (perhaps attaching it to his familiar so that he doesn't even need to be in the area) to ensure civility, or even to goad them into hurting themselves by attacking either Joe or his familiar.

He stopped in Greenfield because it's the first town. He stopped in Linden's Lake because he knows the train always stops there—he learned that in Greenfield. He skipped Rainbow Falls and stopped in Aquestern and Silverwood. He stopped in Atchaeoli because it's what a city should be, and then in Tupos and Glendale.

He'll use Home Rule to pass through the abyss on his way to the city. If Joe is around, there needs to be clear evidence of Joe going this way, so that they know he went through the abyss.

What's Joe up to?

Joe is the Hooded Goblin Mage. He came to Highland a century ago to weaken the tree and to acquire the tablet of war, in our game the stone of Clanricarde. When the stone disappeared from Highland, Joe tried to follow it, but could not. When he met Alvin Clanriquen at the gate of the crossroads, he returned to Highland for rumors of the stone, found none, but left spies in the Celtic lands should it resurface.

When he heard that someone was searching for the stone, he returned ostentatiously as Orlando Fontaine to learn as much as he could, and to flush out the adventurers seeking the stone. He learned that the stone was not there, but that an heir of Clanricarde was about to follow the stone on the road. He followed the road as well, one step ahead of them.

Joe wants all of the tablets, so that he can return them to Tawhiri and the worlds of the tree undone, their civilization leaking into the abyss.

NEQUINIUM

The train never goes to Nequinium any more. The folk of the road call it “the city of lost monsters” where all the creatures that crawl out of the abyss make their way, living amongst themselves in a mockery of the silver city. There are rumors also of ancient cities within the mountain and of strange debaucheries in the city.

Peco and Jon only say that the city is empty of civilization and filled with all the monsters of the abyss; the ocean has receded from it, the bogs are encroaching upon it, and the smell from the ocean is unbearable. There’s no reason to go there.

Nequinium is populated by the monsters of the abyss, and by a race of winged people.

DRAGON ATTACK

Joe used Fantastic Servant on two wyverns from the abyss to attack the train; their trigger is the train. When they see the train, it attacks the cars with faces. If there are no faces in the windows, it doesn't attack, but continues on. "Follow the train up Route 47. Kill whoever you see in the cars."

Bat-winged, barbed, and leathery, they float along the side of the train. Their breath condenses in clouds in the cold night air as they look in from window to window. Their bodies are sixteen feet, with long barbed tails whipping slowly behind them.

Wyvern (Dragon: 6; Survival: 41, 49; Move: 13/20; Attack: claws/bite or tail; Damage: 2d6 or 1d6; Defense: 6; Special attacks: tail poison, claw poison)

A Wyvern's damage does not heal unless the victim makes an Evasion roll—even survival points. It's tail contains a deadly poison that may be used three times per day. It has an action time of one round, a strength of 4, and does d3 injuries.

If Joe thinks another creature is necessary, he'll try for another Wyvern, but will get a different creature, such as a Gryphon.

Greenfield's reaction

A battered sleeping car will be a real sight in Greenfield and Linden's Lake. People will be asking what happened, and how? Who would attack the train? What's happening with the world that even the road isn't safe?

News in this world travels with the train, and the characters are going to hear about the train attack in every inn they visit if they travel by train.

GREENFIELD

The wind blows dust in swirls around the building, stark against the barren ground. Brown plants, tangled in a ball, roll along the streets and fly against the train's wake. A sign welcomes you to Greenfield, population 215, crossed out to 155.

There's no longer much of the green in Greenfield.

The train pulls into the dusty station, and crowds of people await it. The engineer pulls out a sheaf of paper and reads off names. He hands down boxes to the merchants who answer. When he's done, the people crowd around begging for more, but he slams the boxcar's doors shut.

"These are bound for further down the line, friends. I got customers in Rainbow Falls, Silverwood, Atchaeoli, and Glendale all waiting on food and coal. Don't worry, if the good lord's willing and the road winds tight, you'll see me on the other tracks soon enough."

"Larry, we got any passengers bound for the line?"

"Not today, engineer."

The people look disappointed, some even angry. He looks at you sadly.

"That's another reason this train's gonna stop someday," he says. "Not enough goods to carry and fewer people caring about the next town on the line. Fewer people caring whether there's another run and only about what they can get this time. The Pax Urbana is failing."

They don't stop in Greenfield, because Linden's Lake is only two and a half hours up the line.

LINDEN'S LAKE

"These rails keep getting longer and this feeling's getting stronger, she won't let me be."

A dry, hot desert town, a sign by the road welcomes them to "Linden's Lake, Population 74."

This is the only adventure they're likely to have this side of the road: a trap left by whoever they are chasing. I'm assuming that they're chasing Joe Lakono, and he's left a mob mentality triggered on their appearance.

Inspiration

1. Merle Haggard: I Won't Give Up My Train (Going Where the Lonely Go)

"We always stop at Linden's Lake."

They do this because Peco has a girlfriend in Linden's Lake, and Peco has a child who waits for the train.

They don't take the train off of the main tracks here: there are no other trains to worry about, and the side tracks are fallen into disrepair.

"There were once three major trains going from the city to the coalfields. The Stratoliner, the Aerocaster, and the Turborail. We're not any of them, we're just one of the lesser trains that had to make way for the big trains."

Bar attack

In Gavin's Inn in Linden's Lake, the proprietor and main bartender is 38-year-old Livia, daughter of Gavin. The bar is a two-story stone structure with adobe sides and a vaulted adobe roof.

Joe used *Divine Service* on Livia to spit on anyone who asks about him. She'll do so without realizing she's doing it. He lay another spirit attachment on her to misdirect them. If they mention the "silver city" or "High Road 49" or "High Road 61", to tell them that they're going the wrong way, and they should go to Nequinium to find what they seek. She'll not remember saying that, either. She will remember the gold (a gold-like gambling chip from Vegas) that she got from a hooded traveler thirteen days ago.

Joe has the *Spirit Channel* specialty, so if any of this happens, Joe will know and even possibly be able to make his presence felt.

Livia has a flier from the circus on the walls that is practically unreadable. Her father put it there when he his father ran the place; he was sixteen when the circus came to town.

RAINBOW FALLS

There is no sign welcoming them to Rainbow Falls. Just outside of town, the train goes over dry river, and they can see where the falls used to be to the west, a high cliff into a canyon sparsely populated with scrub and thin bushes. Not even a trickle of water remains. There are 94 people living in Rainbow Falls.

AQUESTERN

Population 524, and once a great city overlooking a canyon, parts of the city long ago fell into the canyon.

The city is bisected by the canyon, and the only way to cross is over the rails.

Grand Canyon River and the Great Salt Lake

The Grand Canyon river once dug out a mighty canyon, and the train must cross it. But the river today is but a trickle that doesn't even reach to the great lake. The lake itself is a shallow, briny mess.

Only the rails go over the canyon: the road has fallen into the river.

SILVERWOOD

At Silverwood, population 694, the air remains dry and the land sparse, but the temperature drops to a cooler 73 to 85. Dust storms come by at least once a month, scouring the city.

Waiting for Rain

At Silverwood they see rain as likely, so they stop to wait for a trickle of water to come down the Miradorio river. The Miradorio is often dry, but birds are indicating storm clouds out of sight up north. The Miradorio bridge is much closer to the water here than over the canyon.

They'll need to stop to wait for rain—perhaps after trying to run the train at high speed during the wyvern attack—to replenish their water supply.

The storm will have one visible effect in Silverwood: a dust storm. When the winds build up, the markets, streets, and people will clear out within twenty minutes, closing their doors and windows and emptying the streets.

After the dust storm is over, the people will head out to the Miradorio river to fill up water jugs. Jon and Peco will be among them. The water is cleaner than normal for here, but filled with the debris of a normally dry river suddenly running again. Even running, though, it's only a few feet deep and a couple of yards wide.

ATCHAEOLI

Almost deserted, its residents who still survive have mostly gone to Silverwood or Glendale.

TUPOSE

On the edge of the badlands leading into the Glendale farmland, Tupose, population 858, is probably one of the better places to live on this part of the road.

GLENDALE

The train stops at Glendale station at the edge of the world. It should take several weeks to get there by train, though this is mostly because of waiting in Linden's Lake.

Glendale, population 707, is a farming town. It's a good place to live, or it would be if it weren't for the encroaching abyss and the creatures that come out of it. There are even trees here, oak-like scraggly things coming out of the low hills and against the rocks to the west. There's even one grove of trees tended by carpenters within the city in the abandoned area to the south. There are thirty-four trees there, and several more tree stumps of trees that have died.

The river

One of the reasons that people stay in Glendale is the river. It's not much of a river, but it does provide some fresh water for the rest of the world.

The aqueducts

The aqueducts once ran from the eastern mountains and delivered water throughout the city. Where they run from now, no one knows, and their "water" is used only for waste disposal. It does mean that the toilets of Glendale work and are available in most buildings. The water is an undrinkable briny mess.

Dreams

Near the abyss, the characters will have unquiet dreams of insects and darkness and cold.

"The roots of the world grow weak. Insects nip at the branches and gnaw at the trunk. The branches of the tree are the paths of the world: the road and the tree are one."

The Ambrosia Tavern

Rufus is currently the proprietor of the Ambrosia Tavern and Inn. It's the place that Jon or Peco will recommend.

Rufus will remember Joe Lakono if you're using him.

The trap

If there is a character without a moral code, and Joe Lakono knows about it (for example, if this character could see Joe when he used the

Ethical Invisibility spirit manifestation) Joe will leave a trap, an item with a Divine Service Trickster spirit attached to it. He will leave it with Rufus, since he knows Peco will recommend the place. He'll leave an envelope with a note, an empty matchbook, and a denarius. The note will read something like

NAME, this is specifically for you since you've been such a quick study. If you want to know more about the abyss, open the matchbook and say 'tell me about the abyss'. I've also left you a coin. You can use it if you ever want to talk to me. Hold it and say, 'help me Joe Lakono'. These will only work for you, so don't let anyone else waste them.

The note is in English. Examples for the spirit manifestations set up on the matchbook and coin:

Matchbook: Trickster spirit with Divine Service at third level. On manifesting, Joe will whisper "walk the rails into the abyss now and learn". Remember that for Divine Service to work, the victim must either share a moral code with Joe, or must not have any moral code.

Denarius: Death spirit with Deplete Vitality at first level targeted on the person saying the words.

The reason Joe is doing the first one is to convince them not to follow the road. If he can just convince them to forget about it and go home, they won't mess up his plans. The second one is just so that if they do get across, he'll find out about it. He has the Spirit Channel specialty, which lets him hear and see everything going on for nine minutes after an attached spirit manifests. (This is how he can whisper the service command for Divine Service.)

Remember that circumstances might lead Joe to recall those spirits to free them up for use elsewhere.

Wyvern tracks

If they search the edge of the abyss north of the rails, they might see the small swatch of dead grass where Joe Lakono called the two wyverns up about four weeks back. A standard perception roll will find it. Anyone with tracking will recognize that there are large footprints of some lizard-like creature with a tail behind it; they might even see the human tracks near the lizard (wyvern) tracks. The pestilence trail goes for twenty feet and then the wyverns took to the air.

The abyss

The abyss is half a mile out of town, or about one mile from the Ambrosia Tavern.

The abyss is an invisible, malleable field of force. Looking into the darkness, it is utterly black. If a person looks closely and carefully, however, there are strange, ponderous movements in the utter darkness, as if a thing of even more absolute darkness were moving at some unknown distance.

There is a steam engine on the east-bound tracks halfway into the abyss. Engineer Garem tried to get through to the other side twenty years

ago; he's probably still inside. They didn't find him for at least twelve hours, and the Metroliner Hermes didn't arrive to try and pull it out for another week. (This was before Pecos and Jon were running the rails.) If they do pull the engine out, Garem is there, looking as if he died just seconds past.

Remember that people don't talk about the abyss. They'll tolerate sidewinders mentioning it, but will not discuss it themselves nor will they take part in any sidewinder discussion, brushing it off with a "let's talk about something more important." If they get someone drunk, they might be able to tell some of the stories about it, such as when someone stuck their head in and almost died.

Because of the abyss, there are more weapons in Glendale than elsewhere. The outlying farms especially need them. The city itself is immune because of the Pax Urbana. If the Pax Urbana failing on Route 47 is news, it will travel with the train and be something people talk about if it or the Pax Urbana or weapons is mentioned. In fact, the Pax Urbana is weaker here, too, though people won't believe it. The town is wider than the Pax's effect.

Creatures of the abyss

Within the abyss is an area of semi-reality where monsters are born and live in a hellish hot world. The barrier between that hell and the area around the abyss is thin and easily broken, allowing the monsters and animals to crawl into reality from semi-existence. There is no way, once real, to crawl back into semi-reality. The abyss is forever up and down.

Most creatures will be weakened when they leave; they may spend some time poking around Glendale but will eventually be called to Nequiniem and follow the rails. Remember that any creature will need to make a reaction roll to attack anything on the road or rails. That includes monsters attacking player characters and player characters attacking monsters.

CROSSING THE ABYSS

The tracks continue on across a great chasm, with a black abyss beneath it and a dark, thick mist around it. There is an old engine at the start of the chasm, stuck partially in the mist. The tracks are in a full-stop dead zone. Moving through it is like moving through molasses. The engine is left from when someone tried to blast on through to the other side. Peco could pull the engine out with his own, but he leaves it to serve as a warning, and who knows what might come with it?

No one knows what is on the other side. The only things to come out are occasional creatures that die at the edge of town. There may be many ways to get across; here are some options. Peco and Jon know that the other side used to be the Station of the Sun on the road to the City through Phoenix Meadows. But whether it's still there? No idea.

The bridge is 320 yards across. The mist begins ten yards in front of the bridge, and ends five yards from the other end, so the mist is 325 yards across. Peco and Jon know about the bridge and about the canyon that it crosses. Most people assume that the abyss is also a canyon,

though they won't be sure when questioned about how they know; it's just something everyone knows.

Walk across

The most obvious means of getting across is to take a leap of faith that there is another side and walk across. Walking across the railroad bridge is dangerous. The dark, thick mist is cold and empty. Each round within the mist, characters will gain 1 injury, and movement is at a third normal because of the thick, molasses-like quality of the mist.

The aqueducts

Where does the brine come from?

Use magic

A sorcerer might be able to research a spell to keep the dark mist at bay.

The more effective option is a seventh level spell to fully negate the effects of the abyss within a bubble. This will create a safe bubble within which the characters will be safe from the mist. The bubble will not keep denizens of the abyss from crawling onto the tracks, however. Someone's going to need to protect the sorcerer from loss of concentration while horrific things try to eat them.

Another option is to create a fifth level spell to negate just the deadly effects of the abyss, but not the slowness.

Range: self

Formula: words, gestures, ingredients

Ingredients: ash leaf or oak leaf

Duration: concentration

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: half-level yards diameter

Reaction: none

Schools: Summoning

Remember that concentration itself has a movement reduction for the sorcerer, and (for the fifth-level option) this is cumulative with the abyss's movement reduction.

If the caster loses concentration, the bubble will collapse in one round. The caster will have one chance to cast the spell again before possibly taking damage. Anyone around the caster will need to make an Evasion roll or gain an injury point. The subsequent round, the caster is allowed an Evasion roll to avoid gaining an injury point, but everyone else gains injury points as normal for being in the abyss.

Use ritual

This is not a place of power. But if they have access to one, such as through a specialty, they can try to perform a ritual to part the darkness. Remember that they'll need to use symbolism in the drawings, in what they sacrifice within the drawings, and in their chanting. It'll take a serious sacrifice to cut through the abyss.

Use divinity

It will take at least a fourth level spirit manifestation—such as Home Rule—to maintain their world's laws through the void. This is how Joe Lakono got through if they're chasing him.

The road

The road starts rising about twenty yards in: it's an arched bridge. The road is the safest way to cross, but it has potholes, and tentacles will burst through the potholes and try to grab anyone near them.

There are bodies on the road, of people who have tried to cross. Most are in about twenty to thirty feet of the edge (on either side). On the far side, some of the bodies are ogres and saurians.

The rails

The rails go straight across. They are a metal rail with a metal frame and wooden slats. Many of the wooden slats are broken, almost torn off. The tentacles have a freer hand on the rails. They can reach through the slats of the railway, and they'll start doing it about 80 yards in.

Dangers of the Abyss

The children of tumu-ra-i-feuma, the octopus who bound earth and sky, still grasp for the light within the center of the abyss.

Po-tentacles (Fantastic: 6; Moral Code: Chaotic Evil; Survival: 38; Defense: 5; Attack: 2-4; Damage: d8)

The tentacle-creature will send four to eight tentacles up, and every two tentacles get an attack. It will attack the first round, and then try to grab someone the next round. It has a low intelligence and will react intelligently.

THE PHOENIX HIGHWAY

"I got the key to the highway."—Muddy Waters



On the other side of the mountain pass, High Road 49 continues. Travelers call it the Phoenix Highway.

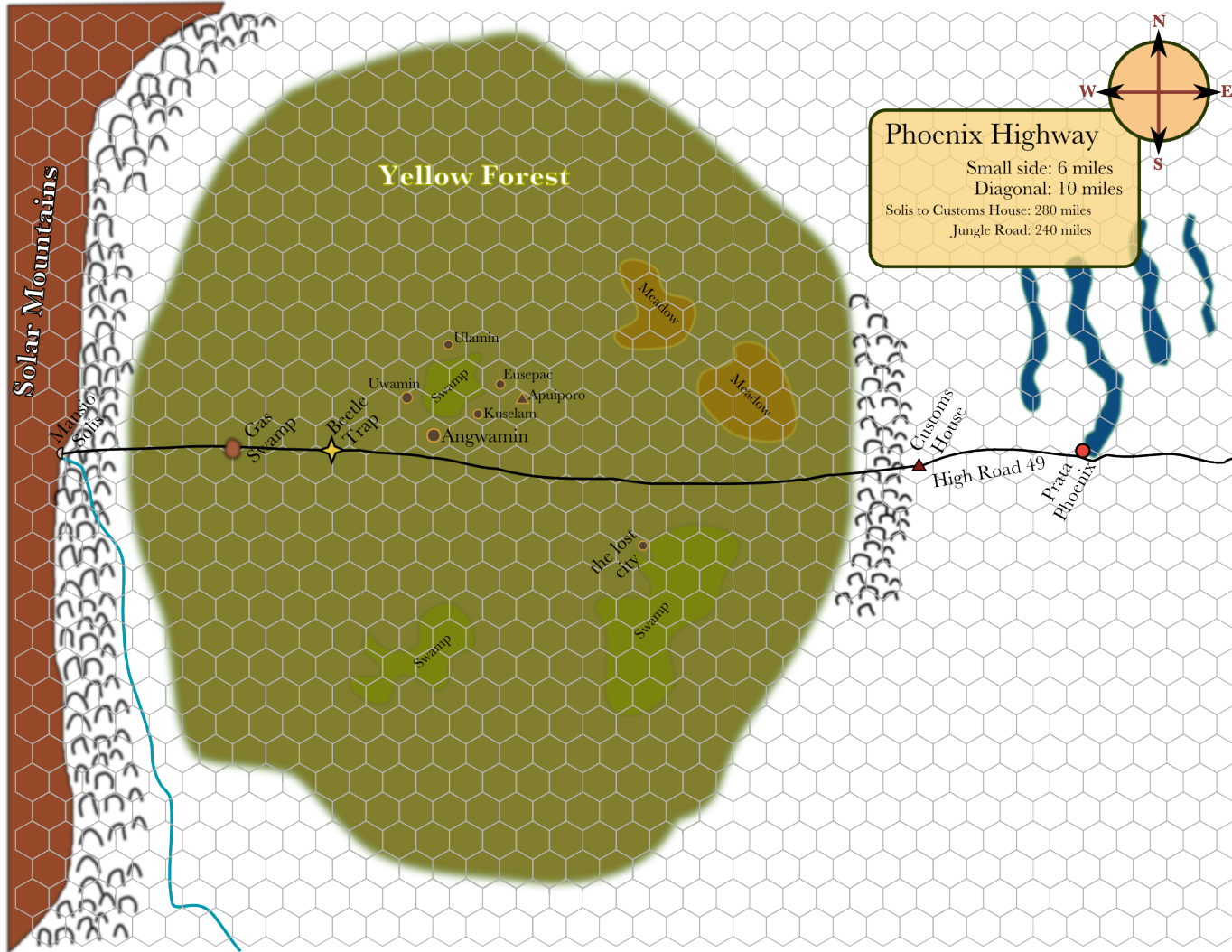
The blues have traveled this road since the road was built, riding thumb and wheel from the backwoods to Chicago and Memphis. The junction of Highway 61 and Highway 49 (7 and 13) in Clarkdale, Mississippi is the crossroads where Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil. It crosses the Mississippi via a steel tied arch bridge. Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan grew up on Highway 61. Martin Luther King, Jr. was murdered here.

The roads are good roads, but cracked. Every once in a while they come across abandoned barricades. Even more rare are small villages, enclaves of sanity in a crumbling empire. None remain on the road. As the move further in they come into cold, ice, and snow. Near to the city is eternal winter. The days are getting longer, but darker. The sun rises lower and lower into the sky; twilight lasts longer and longer.

The railroad also continues, but the tracks are rusted and in many places gone to red dust and disappeared. They won't be continuous again until the other side of the yellow jungle, and even then there are no trains until past the preacher at the gates of hell.

Possible extra adventures this side of the mountain are gargoyle raids and wyvern raids from the Station of the Sun.

Time should slip some as they pass through the tunnel, because they're passing between branches of the world. Most likely when they return from being gone for several weeks (or months) they'll instead have been gone for several years. If they left things unfinished at home, they'll come back to a very changed homeland. But also note that time really is passing; it's just slipping. If four years pass as they go through the tunnel, they are now four years older. Some of them might notice it, some might not; you'll need to keep track of it.



THE STATION OF THE SUN

You stand upon a plateau against a mountain. A cold, reeking wind blows intermittently past. Forward, the mountain rises steeply to the stars. Behind you the matte dark abyss looms as high. The rails are rusted, and on this side there are four of them, two to your left and one to your right. They continue into a multiply-arched tunnel straight into the mountainside.

Beside the rails, two dust-covered dark roads enter the mountain tunnel beneath their own arches. There's a sign next to one of the roads, and you can recognize the bright reflections of a crossroads sign in your (flickering/steady) light. It marks 49. Above that road another, larger sign hangs from the top of the tunnel, but it's faded and you can't read it.

This mountain isn't as tall as the snow-covered passage, but it's a lot steeper. That mountain was a trap. This one is a barrier. Crossing the mountain by climbing it is nearly impossible and very dangerous, and will take a long time. This is a craggy, steep mountain. Its peaks rise far beyond the clouds in the sky. Should they do so, however, and succeed, it will be a glorious journey. The mountain rises another 8,000 or so feet into the clouds. They're already at about 10,000 feet. It is night, and it is always night on this side. For about two hours the skies lighten a little, most of the stars fade, and only four or five are visible, but that's it for daytime. It is always dark. There are stunted bushes on the side of the mountain.

The creatures of the abyss crawl flopping and clawing and buzzing and flapping into the world. Their claw marks can be seen over the edge of the cliff from when they clawed their way out of the chasm, birthing themselves into nightmare beyond the magic lights of the abandoned rusty rails.

The other option is to follow the tunnel. There is no train here, and the tracks are flaked with rust. There are yellow-white bubbles scattered throughout the tunnel that were once lamps, but the tunnel is now pitch-dark as often as it is lit. Creatures scuttle around in the rocks and crevasses. The tracks cross several more limitless chasms throughout its route, and the trestles creak and sway when weight is upon them.

The High Road continues into the mountain, beside the tracks. It is filled with strange carriages driven by dead men. Some are in their carriages, some out of them, but none appear wounded. The sign above the tunnel reads (in the Latin variant of the Road):

MILLIARIA AUGUSTUS MAIANUS
 MANSIO SOLIS: 51 MP
 PRATA PHOENIX: 133 MP
 AD OCTOCENTUM QUINTI NONUM LAPIDEM

This milestone was erected in the reign of Augustus Maianus. The initials “mp” stand for “millem passuum”, literally a thousand paces. It's just a little less than a Highland (English) mile. Mansio Solis is the Station of the Sun. A mansio is a waystation, usually in the wilderness or outlying lands. Phoenix Prata is Phoenix Meadows, or Red Meadows. The bottom line is literally “859th milestone from”. It's a measure of how far they are from the city. The world has changed, however; those numbers are now too small.

Creatures

01-16	Earthquake	16%
17-24	Spiders, giant (d12)	8%
25-32	Bats, giant (d12)	8%
33-39	Toads, killer (d6)	7%
40-45	Leech, giant (1d20)	6%
46-51	Crazy crabs (d40)	6%
52-56	Snakes, large (d4)	5%
57-61	Creeping Slime	5%
62-65	Orcs	4%
66-69	Ogres (d3)	4%
70-72	Trolls (d6)	3%
73-75	Manticore (d4)	3%
76-78	Wyvern (d4)	3%
79-81	Goblins (d12)	3%
82-83	Beaked sweepers (d3)	2%
84-85	Grey-hooked bat (d20)	2%
86-87	Gryphon (d4)	2%
88-89	Kamekkipialo (d12)	2%
90-91	Carrion worms (d8)	2%
92-93	Fire spider (d10)	2%
94	Mushroom walker (d10)	1%
95	Wraiths (d3)	1%
96	Spinnerett (d8)	1%
97	Tentamort (d3)	1%
98	Snake, giant (1)	1%
99	Ketelekrae (d4)	1%
00	Headless men (d20)	1%

Creeping Slime

01-48	Green Slime	48%
49-75	Red Slime:	27%
76-93	Steaming Slime:	18%
94-00	Orange Slime:	7%

Earthquakes

01-40	The ground shakes and rolls	40%
41-65	Rocks fall (d12 damage)	25%
66-80	The ground opens (d20 feet)	15%
81-90	Lava seeps upwards	10%
91-00	Steam explosion (d20 damage)	10%

Earthquake victims can make Evasion rolls to avoid damage.

Encounter chances

Goblins are never abyssal. If characters hang out next to the openings between levels, the encounter period is halved to six hours, and the encounter chance is increased by 10%.

Area	Encounter chance	Abyssal?
Glendale side	15% every day	40%
Outside	30% every six hours	80%
Mountainside	30% every twelve hours	60% to 30%
Long tunnel	30% every eight hours	60% to 30%
Station of the Sun	20% every twelve hours	10%

The Long Tunnel

The tunnel is utterly dark. A warm, slightly moist air wafts almost imperceptibly out of it. It is silent.

A slight breeze runs east to west throughout these caverns, but it's only able to be felt at small holes such as the shifts between levels. The tunnel is warm and humid. Throughout the long tunnel, it is an even 72 degrees once they get half a mile in. Once they get ten miles in, the air becomes moist, and brightly-colored fungi and moss grow on the walls, sometimes glowing in the eternal night.

From the opening by the abyss to the Station of the Sun is fifty-seven miles. There are four tracks, and two three-lane paved roads each beneath their own arched ceiling. The ceilings were tiled, and some of the tiles remain. Where the cavern has returned, the floor, walls, and ceilings are a smooth, grayish-brown stone. After about two miles, where the man-made tunnels remain, there are magic lights within the tunnels, curving in the arc of the ceiling and shedding a calm blue glow about every 100 yards. They'll first see the light about a mile into the tunnel. Many of the wonders in the tunnel, such as the lights, will detect for **divine presence**.

The rails are cracked where the ground has shifted in earthquakes. Sometimes, black rock has flowed over the tracks and hardened. Eventually, the tunnel has collapsed; only a slight warm breeze lets them know that there's a way out. What happens in the deep night of the steam-train tunnel? That's up to you. Something personal. Something old. Something dangerous.

Camps

There are alcoves and small side caverns throughout the long tunnel. Most of the alcoves are currently unused but most also show signs of past use. If there are any random encounters, these are fine places to put them.

Firearms

Firearms will work within the area around the old Station of the Sun.

The creatures of the caves

Most things in the caves have no idea there is any other life.

“Why do you live in the caves?”

“Why do we live? What else would we do? Do you expect to kill us with philosophy?”

“But why here in the caves? Why not beyond the caves in the outside?”

“How can we live beyond the world?”

There is no pax urbana within the caves. The lava is tainted by the abyss, and has for the most part destroyed the essence of the road.

The end of the road

About fifty miles in, the flickering lights are off more than they're on, and they eventually die.

The road is cracked and the rails twisted; they disappear beneath a grey rock in many places, and slowly disappear completely. The lights flicker on and off. Eventually, they die. The tunnel remains wide and tall, but it begins to curve more often, and sometimes you see cracks and walls where it looks like half of the tunnel has shifted ten or more yards right or left.

Seven miles later they reach the bridge to the station of the sun.

Finally, you arrive at an area where the tunnel breaks and thins, and then opens into a wide cavern. Twisted rails and cracked road cross a deep chasm. The rails and the road extend over the chasm, but break and twist apart at places midway across. Only one rail looks like it's still going all the way across. What looks like rope ties the broken pieces of the railway's meshwork metal walls together. It looks about as safe as a twine bridge. The road was once held up by great stone pillars, but the pillars are cracked, and some of them have fallen away. The other road does not cross the chasm at all.

The chasm's sheer sides go down hundreds of yards at least. The air at the edge of the chasm is stuffy and hot, and there is a dull orange glow at the bottom.

There are two tunnels on the other side of the chasm, and a pile of pale debris blocking the left tunnel.

The left tunnel is the road; the right tunnel is the rail.

The chasm is fifty yards across and 500 yards deep, and there are three lava rivers at the bottom ten to twenty feet across. Lava will cause 2d6 damage per round if someone is pushed or falls into it.

The remaining rail is probably the safest way to cross, though it doesn't look it. As they approach the places that are tied together with rope (a very nice, strong, bright yellow rope), the whole thing swings widely back and forth. Crossing will require an agility roll at +10.

The roadway won't swing, but it is completely fallen through in places. There are three places that will need to be jumped or somehow crossed at seven yards, twelve yards, and seventeen yards; the open part of the road is two, five, and three yards across respectively.

Across the bridge is the *Station of the Sun*, a long-abandoned waystation on Highway 49. It's a great place for a classic dungeon. We used Karl Merris's *The Fell Pass*, from *The Dragon 32*, modified as noted in my blog. One of our members went through the original Fell Pass, and we went through a modified one long ago. If you have a copy, *Fabrica Solis* can be used as the power level underneath the Station of the Sun.

The Waterfall

On the other end of the Station of the Sun, the tunnel opens behind a waterfall from a river whose course has changed in the last thousand or so years. The water has rusted and torn away both the tracks and the road. It is a sheer five hundred foot drop to the swamps below. Climbing down is a difficult task even here, but the remaining structure of the bridge makes it easier to climb.

The mountain

At 18,000 feet, the mountaintop is visible for 175 miles, well into the jungle. Of course, inside the jungle, nothing outside the jungle is visible unless they climb to the tops of the trees. At 200 feet tall, the mountain is visible from 200 miles away if watching from the tops of the trees.

The scrub pine

The road is not as big on this side. Eight yards wide, it winds down through pine-covered hills for twenty miles until it reaches the plain. The altitude drops from 9,500 feet to normal in that time, for a grade of 9%. Movement along the road here is very easy despite the huge cracks in the road and the debris occasionally strewn along it. The road cuts through hills, with occasional short bridges over ravines, and is mostly intact. The rails run elsewhere and might as well not exist. Movement along the rails is normal, not perfect (double) as on the road.

Higher on the mountain are hill giants (12-16 feet tall) and mountain giants (16-24 feet tall). As they approach the meadow at the end of the foothills, they'll be stalked by a jaguar. See The Yellow Forest, next. Otherwise, encounters occur here at 30% every twelve hours.

01-49	Roll on the Station of the Sun	49%
50-68	Goats (d12)	19%
89-94	Hill giants (d8)	6%
69-73	Jaguar (from another territory)	5%
74-78	Saurians (d12)	5%
79-83	Giant spiders (d8)	5%
84-88	Earthquake (see Station of the Sun table)	5%
95-97	Mountain giants (d3)	3%
98-99	Crazy crabs	2%
00	Rain (1=light, 6=thunderstorm, d6 hours)	1%

The river fed by the waterfall cuts southeast for about 1,700 miles to an ocean seven hundred miles to the south. There is no intelligent habitation to the south, but a hundred miles north there's a small civilization, Kish, that still worships Ishtar and the City. The people of Kish speak a dialect of the Ancient tongue (Latin), and write using a Sumerian-like cuneiform.

In the Yellow Forest, just north of the road, the Saurians of Angwamin live as they have for thousands of years. They speak their own language, but some know "the language of the road", which is to say, a dialect of the Ancient tongue.

If you need any new player characters after the Station of the Sun, these two cultures are a good place to pull them from. Of course, just about anybody could be on the road.

Besides the pines, the forested hills contain the occasional hardy fern, mushrooms (edible and hallucinogenic), lichens, wintergreen shrubs, juniper shrubs, club moss, and blackberry shrubs. The latter flower in the spring and summer, and provide berries in the late summer and autumn.

Firearms do not work in the foothills.

THE YELLOW FOREST

Beyond the foothills of the Station of the Sun, the foliage changes to a small, one-mile-wide plain with wide, curling, fern-like grasses and, closer to the jungle, cattails and ferns. Then, a wall of giant ferns and great cycads, three hundred yards thick. Finally, the massive trees and wet land of the jungle. The jungle is a fetid, yellow, miasmic swamp, stagnant, in no sense a vibrant place. Within the jungle the sky is blocked by a canopy of trees two hundred feet high. Beneath the canopy the atmosphere is stifling, and the air is thick with moisture. Sound travels oddly, almost as if underwater. During the day the jungle is silent, broken occasionally by the great steps of dinosaurs. The night is filled with the calls of strange birds, insects, and the jaguar. Gigantic spiders weave webs that can capture man-sized creatures, and snakes as thick as a man is tall slither leisurely through the brush.



Plants include towering yellowish-green ferns, cycads, and horsetails of all sizes, the tallest of which tower over men. There are broad-leaved bushes, and long vines twisting around the trees. There are no grasses here. In the decaying plants on the ground, fungi grow abundantly. Short trees with tough leaves provide a fern-like appearance. Other short trees have feather-like leaves radiating out from a central trunk. And tall ginkgos with fan-shaped, veined leaves on erratic branches and broad crowns. Over them all, brownish-green mosses grow over stone and trunk. The canopy is covered in moss and flowering plants. The tall conifers have thick, tough, triangular leaves spiraling out around the branches and long trunks.

Within the jungle, a gibbous yellow moon hangs perpetually in the sky, often obscured by ribbons of mist. A smaller moon, pale white, appears on the horizon two days out of every ten and never rises more than a few degrees above it. The jungle usually hides it.

Sound is muted. An everpresent mustiness pervades the thick air, overpowering the expected smells of a forest. You're in an eternal twilight; only rarely does a thin beam of sunlight shine through, and then just for a moment. The muck crunches beneath your feet; the sound is already an echo when it reaches your ears. You hear insects occasionally, and far off, every once in a while, dull thuds.

Encounters

01-28	Animals	28
29-48	Dinosaurs	20%
49-67	Insects	19%
68-81	Saurians (1d20)	14%
82-91	Plants	10%
92-97	Terrain/Weather	6%
98-00	Dinosaur skeleton	3%

Animals

01-22	Jaguar (1d2)	22%
23-39	Horned gophers (1d100)	17%
40-54	Deer, dwarf (1d20)	15%
55-66	Archaeopteryxes (1d20)	12%
67-77	Ground sloths, giant (1d6)	11%
78-87	Capybara, giant (1d12)	10%
88-92	Toads, killer (2d6)	5%
93-96	Leeches, giant (2d10)	4%
97-99	Snakes, large (1d6)	3%
00	Snakes, giant (1d2)	1%

Dinosaurs

01-27	Triceratops (1d8)	27%
28-46	Tyrannosaur (1d2)	19%
47-60	Ankylosauri (1d12)	14%
61-73	Stegosauri (1d10)	13
74-84	Brontosauri (1d6)	11%
85-94	Crocodile, giant (1)	10%
95-00	Pterodactyls (1d4)	6%

Plants

01-24	Venus flytraps, giant (d10)	24%
25-46	Jumping cactus (1d20)	22%
47-65	Hanging vines (1d20)	19%
66-83	Violents (1d12)	18%
84-00	Burrweeds (4d20)	17%

Insects

01-18	Beetles, giant (1d100)	18%
19-33	Moths, giant (1d100)	15%
34-45	Butterflies, giant (1d100)	12%
46-56	Mosquitos, giant (1d100)	11%
57-66	Dragonflies, giant (1d40)	10%
67-75	Wetas, giant (1d20)	9%
76-83	Spiders, large (1d20)	8%
84-89	Spiders, huge (1d10)	6%
90-94	Centipede, giant (1d8)	5%
95-98	Buzzflies (2d20)	4%
99-00	Spiders, giant (1d12)	2%

Terrain and Weather

01-24	Rain	24%
25-46	River	22%
47-65	Open meadow	19%
66-83	Quicksand	18%
84-00	Gas swamp	17%

There is a 30% chance of an encounter every eight hours.

Gas swamp: Fire in a gas swamp is dangerous. Pockets of flammable air bubble up and float several yards before dissipating. Every minute requires a perception roll by anyone carrying a torch or other flame. Failure means they've ignited a gas pocket. Exploding pockets do 2d6 points damage to the flame-bearer. Those within two yards will also take 2d6 damage, though they can make an evasion roll for half. Any within

three yards take d6 points and can make an evasion roll for no damage. Gas swamps are 10-100 (d10 times 10) yards across.

Meadow: The open meadows of the jungle are exposed, hot, and loved by dinosaurs. They are 2d20 times 10 yards wide. The encounter chance in a meadow is 20%; encounters are always a dinosaur. Camping in a meadow, the chance is rolled each hour. So don't do that.

Quicksand: Quicksand embodies the philosophical paradox of life. The worst thing to do is try to get out. A person stuck in quicksand will only sink halfway in (a bit further if weighed down, such as by armor), unless they use the part of their body in the quicksand (usually their feet) to try to get out. Any strenuous effort pulls them further under. There are two ways to get out of deep quicksand (all quicksand in this jungle is deep). If there is a vine or rope to grab onto, the character can make a strength roll at +8 to pull themselves out. Otherwise, the character can move very slowly to "swim" out over a period of two minutes. This requires an agility roll at +8.

Rain: Rain in the jungle is a hot, wet, smelly mess. It filters through the canopy in huge warm drops that sting as they land. Occasionally buckets of water, held aloft by the dense foliage far above, break through and fall in a great gush.

River: The rivers of the jungle are shallow, wide, and warm, choked with water lilies, reeds, and rotting wood. Giant insects such as dragonflies and mosquitos thrive at the edges where the water is still.



Entering the jungle

As you move into the forest, the trees get taller and taller, until the tops are sometimes hidden in the sporadic mist. The air is preternaturally still, almost as if you were underwater. The sun lies lost forever behind a huge canopy of trees two hundred feet high.

The jungle is about 228 miles wide. On the tunnel side is a pine scrub for fifteen miles. On the city side are low hills. The jungle is a new addition to this version of the road. After they pass through the twenty-two miles of low hills to the Customs House, if they turn around and go back they'll find forty miles of low hills and then the pine scrub and the tunnel: the jungle is gone. Anyone or anything traveling with them from the jungle remains with them; if a Saurian player character wants to find their way home, they'll need to search the ever-shifting road for hints of the world of the yellow moons.

By the time they've passed twenty miles into the jungle, the rails have disappeared. Only the road remains, and it is covered in underbrush and dirt. It is visible by the patterns of underbrush that grow over it. Every one to ten miles is a mile marker, but it's usually hidden in the underbrush. The first one says "808 m.p.". Each successive marker reduces that number by 1. On the other side the final marker in the jungle says "760 m.p."

Movement

Movement through the jungle is at twice movement miles per day on the road, except where noted. Movement off the road is at movement miles per day.

The Pax Urbana

The Pax Urbana only applies to violence for the sake of violence, and has no affect on unintelligent creatures. This is part of why the saurians live off of the road. You can't preemptively attack animals, because you're intelligent. But they can attack you for food.

Firearms

Firearms will work in the jungle, but are unreliable: any shots where the gunpowder is kept in the open will fail to ignite on a d100 roll less than ten times the number of days in the jungle. Bullets, where the gunpowder is sealed, will fail to ignite on a roll less than the number of days in the jungle. Failures that are within 10 points of the failure chance are actually hang fires: the bullet will fire in d6 rounds.

Food

The Saurians eat bugs, giant and small. But there are lots of other things in the forest to eat, if they're willing to risk it (which they probably will be by the time they run out of their rations). There are multicolored, oblong squash growing away from the marshes. There are taro roots, though they must be cooked, or soaked overnight, to remove the toxins. (Eating two or more taro roots raw requires a Health roll, or the eater gains 1 injury over the next four hours. They'll be warned by the burning and swelling in their mouth and throat.)

There's the durian fruit, hidden behind a thick, thorn-covered husk. Its taste is divine but it smells like death, and each fruit weighs two to six pounds. The jaca (jackfruit) can be eaten cooked before it is ripe, or eaten raw when it ripens. Jaca trees are covered in hundreds of the fruit, which weigh ten to twenty pounds each. Banana fruit are not the bananas we're familiar with: they have much larger seeds, but are otherwise very edible when ripe. They are often found near large and huge spider nests.

And for meat, there are lots of small deer and giant capybara.

Water is the biggest problem: most of the obvious water in the forest is standing water. It is filled with parasites and bacteria. Any running water and fresh rain water is precious. Other sources of water are the durian fruit. But other plants also contain water; some vines can be cut open; they're hollow and contain little bits of water that will stream out. Standing water outside of a marsh can be filtered by digging a small hole near the body of standing water. The water will slowly filter through the dirt and into the hole; this will filter parasites, but some bacteria will remain, so you'll want to start slowly. After a rainfall, water is cupped in the leaves of the canopy, but that water is 200 feet up. By the time it drops, it's more drinkable than standing water, but it's not as safe as running water.

If characters draw their water on the fly from plants, they'll need to do it often. Their movement will drop by 20%, on the road or off.

Characters who drink the standing water of the jungle must make a Health roll at +2 or gain a parasite as a chronic ailment whose effect is to cause 1 injury point every 72 hours. When and if they throw off the ailment, they'll likely find a long, flatworm-like parasite in their feces.

Weather and sunlight

The temperature in the jungle is a steady 85° to 95° Fahrenheit. At night a mist forms above the ground that obscures vision to less than fifty feet, even for those who can see in the dark. On "cold" days, the mist remains until noon or even later. Light rain barely makes it through the canopy; wild storms and simple heavy rain are about the same under the canopy; even in a meadow, there is rarely a wind of any note below the tops of the big trees.

The canopy is absolute. The jungle is pitch-black at night, and fully shaded during the day.

The Jaguar

Their first encounter will be a jaguar, something normal before dinosaurs and giant bugs. There are no cavemen. The jungle is devoid of any sense of humankind. Unless they're taking special care to mask their scent and noise, they'll be stalked by a jaguar while they're in the low hills and several miles into the jungle. The jaguar is most likely to act in the early morning or in the twilight of the evening.

A large cat, five or six feet long, its fur an orangish yellow in the [pale or sickly yellow] moonlight, mottled black. It snarls and growls, showing you four very large teeth in the forefront of its mouth.

Jaguar (Animal: 4+3; Survival: 27; Move: 18; Attack: claws/bite; Damage: 2d6/2d8; Defense: 5; Special defense: +2 camouflage)

The jaguar enjoys swimming, and may choose to sneak across rivers or small ponds to pounce on a straggler. The jaguar avoids the area near the Station of the Sun, and usually prowls the area from eight miles out of and into the jungle near the road.

The gas swamp

The smell greets you first, like the worst of a bad farmer's cattle herd, rancid and odiferous. The land to either side of the road is marshy; a warm wetness rises from it. It goes on like this for a mile; it's getting progressively more odorous and wetter. More and more of the road on each side disappears into the green, slowly lapping waters. Another mile, and it's become a full swamp. The swamp is covered in a pale, mottled pea-green that ripples occasionally when huge bubbles burst slowly from its surface. What little you can see of the road disappears into the stinking waters.

This gas swamp is a big one. It is 400 yards across, almost a quarter mile. The road is nearly destroyed within the swamp, although it will keep them from sinking if they follow it, and it continues on the other side. Movement within the swamp is at 50% normal. They can go around it if they go off the road, but they'll need to backtrack about two miles.

Giant mosquitos permeate the swamp. Every minute, unless they have some means of warding them off, they'll be attacked by a swarm of giant mosquitos.

2d20 Giant mosquitos (Animal: 1 pt; Number: 2d20; Move: 12; Attack: bite; Damage: 1/2 pt; Defense: 4; Tiny: 2-3 inches)

For swarming purposes, damage progression is 1/2 point, 1 point, 1d2, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10. The swarms will not join together, so normally the damage caused by a swarm will not exceed d8. A particularly industrious party might be able to rile up larger swarms from the swamp.

There will also be one encounter in the swamp (or at its far edge, depending on what the encounter is). Roll normally on the encounter list.

On the other side of the swamp, the road slowly comes back into view, and the ground more solid, over a distance of about two miles.

The Deer and the Archaeopteryxes

One of the first things they see on entering the jungle will be a herd of tiny deer chased by a flock of archaeopteryxes. This will give them a sense of the weirdness of the jungle, and, if they haven't talked with Saurians, a false sense of security that everything's going to be small.

A tiny animal rushes out from behind some fern-bushes, across the road. It looks like a tiny deer. It is followed by a herd of similarly dwarf deer, reddish-brown, and only two feet tall. They run swiftly past you across the road. Several of the deer sport long, two-pronged antlers. The few beams of sunlight shining through the canopy spotlight one or two of the creatures as they race past you.

Suddenly, a flock of birds, the size of large falcons or large owls, swoops in after them. Two birds pick off a straggler among the deer and tear into its hind flesh. The deer stumbles, and falls, and two more birds swarm over it in a frenzy of claws and teeth. The deer's antlers wound one of the birds, but the deer finally succumbs to the avian onslaught.

The deer are not aggressive; they're fleeing the birds. If anyone's in their way they'll move around the obstacle. The birds are aggressive, but most likely the deer will remain their preferred target. If someone vulnerable gets in their way, four to six birds will swarm the obstacle.

17 Dwarf deer (Animal: 1; Move: 12; Attack: antlers; Damage: d3; Defense: 3; Small: 2 feet tall)

11 Archaeopteryx (Animal: 1; Move: 32; Attack: claws/bite; Damage: d3/d2; Defense: 4; Small: 1-2 feet)

The Beetle Trees

There's a 50% chance that the first drop will land on someone.

[You feel a big bump on your head.] A loud, chitinous plop clicks down beside you on the slightly marshy path. Another one, and then another one. Big black bugs, as big as your hand, are landing all around you—and some of them on you.

2d8 giant beetles will drop on them per round in this one hundred yard area.

Giant beetles (Animal: 1; Move: 8; Attack: bite; Damage: d2; Defense: 3; Tiny: 6 inches)

The beetles won't attack unless attacked first, but once attacked all beetles will swarm the attacker(s).

In a classic pincer action, three hundred yards out from the beetles, there are huge webs all across the road, hidden in shadow. In the day, perception rolls to see them are at +16. At night, they're at +4. But anyone running away from the beetles are at penalties as normal for running. Huge spider webs trap their victims until the victim makes a Fortitude roll, at an additional -2 each round beyond the first.

Disturbing the webs will attract 1d10 huge spiders each round that a web is disturbed; the spiders arrive 2 rounds afterwards.

Huge spiders (Animal: 2; Move: 10; Attack: bite; Damage: d3; Defense: 2; Small: 2-3 feet high and wide, Special attack: poison strength 2, d3 injuries)

ANGWAT

Cities of the Angwat

The Saurians do not live on the road. Aggression is a necessity in the jungle: a giant mosquito isn't attacking you when it bites; you are if you try to kill it before it bites. They do use the road for travel, however, and they will conduct negotiations on the road. If they rescued one or more of the captured Saurians, time will have slipped for them just as for the characters. The Saurian will think they've been missing for a few weeks; they'll have been gone for a few years.

City	Meaning	Population
Angwamin	The first city	2,000
Uwamin	The second city	1,000
Eusepac	Where the four roads meet	800
Ulamin	City of snakes	600
Kuselam	Rainfall	400
Apuiporo	The sky temple	50

The buildings of the Angwat look like drip-sand castles, very reminiscent of the temple of Angkor.

The Saurians do not pay much attention to what goes on outside the jungle unless it directly affects them; the wastelands are too dry, cold, and open for civilized habitation. They have no coinage; they trade through barter of goods and services. The only coins they will have are from the City to the east or from the Sumerian-like civilizations to the north, but most of their trade with the outside world is in the form of barter. The silk and dyes of the jungle are much-sought-after.

Most Saurians speak their own language, but the ruling class also speaks Latin, which they call the tongue of the road (because it is).

All of their cities have several parks with mudswamps above slow wells that make them less dangerous than the rest of the standing water in the jungle. They're still not drinkable water, but they are used as spas. The parks are decorated with large, tall, flowering plants.

Angwamin

Their largest city, Angwamin, is just about at the center of the jungle, about four miles north of the road. The path to their city is marked with a conical pillar that looks like multiple rings of stone and beneath the cone, the face of a huge lizard. Angwamin has about 2,000 saurians living in and near it.

Food

The Saurians eat bugs, giant and small. They also eat some squashes, some taro root, durian fruit, jackfruit, and bananas. They do not eat the flesh of animals such as other lizards or mammals.

Angwat dig special wells lined with charcoal and allow the swamp water to seep in, for their water. Creating charcoal is close to the only thing that the Angwat use fire for.

Music

The tablet of music was stolen from them eons past, and lies in the court of the lizard king in the lost city of Luputac. They don't have words for music, but if instruments are mentioned, they will recognize drums and gourd trumpets as the magic of Aatu. Music is the magic that Aate stole from Aatu and hid to create the world.

If the party wants to make music, they'll need to make a willpower roll to do it. The saurians won't know what to make of it. It is the magic of Aatu! If they fail the roll they will be unable to find their rhythm or melody. (Skill in music will be a bonus to the roll.)

The feast

Not a bad idea to have a feast while they're there. The feast can be a feast of the catch, which they should have every couple of months, or a feast of the fruit. The feast of the catch will be the most memorable. The first step of the feast is going out and gathering the catch. They will need many insects: giant beetles, giant moths, and giant weta, for example. And the prize of the feast will be a couple of giant centipedes. All of them will be strung up raw and chittering on silk ropes for eating.

The second step of the feast is to have the feast. It won't be obvious at first, but if they spend all night with the cavorting lizards, they'll notice that the Angwat have no music. The saurians will make noise; they will pound on stones arrhythmically, and everyone will yell to the treetops. They will have mock fights on all fours in the marshes. They will, as they become more intoxicated, start daring each other into climbing the trees and going into the wide open above the canopy. (If the player characters haven't yet seen the two moons, assume that the feast happens when both moons are in the sky.)

The saurians have two intoxicating drugs. Durian fruit is cracked open and allowed to ferment; it is only slightly alcoholic but they'll drink enough over the night to have an effect. Durian fruit on its own has a unique odor; fermented durian fruit is one for the player characters to remember.

There are also hallucinogenic flowers; they do not eat the flowers directly. They feed the flowers to the giant weta for days before the feast, and then eat the intoxicating flesh of the weta. This modifies the effect to be more like a strong marijuana buzz.

Both fermented durian and hallucinogenic weta will affect humans.

Fights

Saurians are wary of non-saurian strangers, unless they're on the road.

Saurians of this jungle usually use hand axes for weapons; some warriors will use swords. Because Saurians are large creatures, their hand axes do d8, and their swords d10.

Clothing and other products

The ropes and the clothing of the Angwat are all made of silk, harvested from special large moths. Player characters from Highland will likely never have seen such fine thread or such strong, light rope.

The dyes of the Angwat are equally amazing. They use insect dyes for bright reds, metallic greens, and shiny obsidian-like blacks. Some items are lacquered with a strong shellac also made from insect resin. Wooden bowls and utensils are lacquered, as are furniture; and the paintings of the Angwat are often lacquered when completed to protect them from the warm moisture of the jungle air. Shellac does not yellow as it ages, and the lacquered art of the Angwat will last for millennia.

The Angwat do not have ores in the jungle, nor do they use fire much, so they acquire all of their metal through trade. Metal swords are much sought-after, and are stored in protective oils for safe-keeping. Metal rusts easily in the jungle; metals that do not require an edge are often thoroughly cleaned, dried, and lacquered.

The most likely items of trade that the player characters have that the Angwat want are metals and jewelry; the Angwat trade amongst themselves in stonework, woodwork, oils, food, and dyes, and various colors of shellac.

Other geographical features and names

English	Angwat
canopy trees	kasiew
causa	saurians, “people”
caurau	humans, “other people”
ghost	buni
grove (holy)	kuon
library	porleñ
map	banu
meadow	putan
moon (yellow)	bulikuñi
moon (small)	bulituli
moons	nuro
mountain	orow (rhymes with “wow”)
outlands (outside the jungle)	iuneket, “open wastes”
sky	poro
sun	warri
swamp	bubiu
temple/tower	apui

They call the Solar Mountains the Solar Mountains; they have no word for it in their own language.

Male name	Female name
Aporo	Epunu
Danum	Owara
Ikasu	Osañ
Tasipo	Warau

The circus

Ubeñu, an old man in one of their marsh parks, can tell them about going to the circus outside of the jungle when he was fifteen or sixteen. He’s 182 years old now, although the Angwat don’t keep track of years as we do, so he’ll only give an “about 180 years”. That’s about 90 years old for a human, since saurians live twice as long as humans.

Angwat religion

In the beginning, the deadly sky enveloped the earth. People crawled with the animals because there was no room between earth and heaven; the sun roamed the land burning whatever it touched. Aahim the swamp, Aatu lord of the dead and keeper of the tablets of knowledge, and Aate the snake argued over how to make the world more livable. Aahim was adamant that nothing be changed. Earth and Sky are the order of the world. Aatu argued that Earth and Sky should be killed, whereupon the three could divvy up what remained among themselves. Aate maintained that they should convince, or failing that, force, Earth and Sky to move apart.

War raged between them. Aatu stood against the swamp; Aahim was defeated and sent away by the pounding of Aatu's gourds. Aate stood against death. He stole Aatu's spell tablets and hid them away in the temple of the sky (Apuiporo), some say, or beneath the lost city of Luputac. Without the power to create his gourds, Aatu was helpless against Aate. Victorious, Aate grew the sharp plants until the sky moved off slightly from the earth, then he grew the great trees to push the sky further and further, making a wall that the sun is forbidden from crossing. Nor have any recovered the tablets of Aatu since.

The central tower of Apuiporo was built by Aate to buttress the canopy and hold the sky aloft. It was at one time the center of their jungle empire. It is no longer the center; Angwamin is. The elite see the temple as part of a made-up religion, a place for liars and charlatans. They worship only their own institutions. Most of the rest of the saurians go along with that viewpoint, though there are a few who hold to the old gods.

“It's alright in the abstract to believe in the divine. But when you start roping down the gods to specific places, that's hubris. To claim that any one place is the source of truth, that's hubris or lying. It's just a tower. We abandoned it long ago when the swamps shifted.”

THE LOST CITY

The Angwat call it Luputac. Humans outside of the jungle call it Thracia (Mahukia also knows this name). Both call it the lost city. It is covered by a warm mist coming off the swamps most of the morning. If you've been aching to use some of your old-school adventures, this is the perfect place to put *The Caverns of Thracia*. It looks like the caverns would be a good adventure for 2nd to 7th level characters. The ancient, abandoned city it lies beneath needs to be near both humans and saurians, so somewhere in the north or east of the jungle.

But the adventure itself can be used virtually unchanged. The ancient script is cuneiform; the trappings are Sumerian. Replace mentions of Athena with Ishtar or Astarte. Zeus becomes Dupater. The god of death (Thanatos) is Tawhiri or Enki, the lord of the abyss. His incarnation will appear draped in seaweed. Those whose souls it snatches will have inexplicably drowned. Apollo becomes Sin, the healer, whose symbol is the moon. The lizard-men become saurians, the gnolls and dog-brothers become mananubi, the servants of Tifá, in other cultures known as the children of Set. The minotaurs remain minotaurs. You'll probably want to assume that these are degenerate forms of those species, and use the hit dice, powers, and hit points in the adventure. The mananubi, for example, won't have their paralysis wail (except for those listed as having magical ability, who will have the wail instead of the listed spells).

The Red Dragon Sword in the Immortal Lizard King's lair is one against Water Dragons.

There is a tablet of Enki hidden in the Lost City, in the Lizard King's lair: Aate's tablet of music. A clue can be found in Apuiporo, if they make a simple Learning roll while spending a day researching in the library books.

Aate stole the tablets of life from Aatu, who hoarded the secrets that causa would not live. The secrets of language and the secret of gardening were returned by Aate to the Temple. But the third secret, the final secret of Aatu, waits in the court of the lizard king, beyond the ebon demon, beyond the shrine of the moon, past the temples of the dead, in a city lost, ancient beyond imagining. Look you beyond, and beware, the hidden crossroads and the guardians of the lizard king's rest.

If this information is gleaned by way of *Divine Guidance*, rewrite it for the prophet's religion. For example, a prophet of Ishtar will be told:

Ishtar stole the tablets of life from Enki, who hoarded the secrets that man would die. The secrets of language and the secret of gardening were stolen from the city, and hidden in the passage of fire. But a third secret, the tablet of music and the arts, waits in the court of the lizard king, beyond the ebon demon, beyond the shrine of the moon, past the temples of the dead, in a city lost, ancient beyond imagining. Look you beyond, and beware, the hidden crossroads and the guardians of the lizard king's rest.

The Court of the Lizard King refers to room 53E in the caverns of Thracia. The Ebon Demon refers to room 53. The shrine of the moon

refers to room 44, and the temples of the dead refer to rooms 9 and 27A/B. The hidden crossroads is room 53A with its four doors to other planes, and the guardians of the lizard king's rest are the undead in room 53D. Whoever wrote the instructions assumed a path of 1, 9A, 6, 8, 42, 43, 44, 53, 53A, 53B, 53C, 53D, 53E. There are other ways of getting there, of course, such as the stairs in room 37, but these should be confusing enough for the players.

Players are usually perfectly able to confuse instructions like this on their own, but if you really want to throw a wrench in their plans, there's a one-way connection somewhere in the temple to the teleportation pad in "room" 54 on level 3 of Thracia's underground world. If they choose to re-use the teleportation pad, they'll end up very close to where they want to be—but probably won't recognize it. If they don't use the teleportation pad, they'll need to make their way upwards through the ruins of the lost city.

The lizard king is a 12th level highly intelligent undead with special magic; he's not going to be an easy kill and will be nearly impossible for lower-level characters to handle.

The saurians know that there are lizard-men living in the lost city, but they won't mention it. They are an embarrassment, a degenerate race. When asked who lives in the lost city, the answer will be "degenerates". "Degenerate sons of men and the servants of Aatu."

The lost city is like the lost city of the Land of the Lost. The myths of the garden underneath the city resemble the myths of Eden and other pre-civilization utopias. And indeed, the Lost City is the land of inspiration and art, because of the tablet that resides there.

The dragons' tail

The temples of the ancient world were all connected in a web of portals, and there is a passage from Apuiporo to the Lost City. The shrine in Luputac is the grove of the two moons, Kuanuro, on level 3. If someone follows the dragon's tail and makes a perception roll, they will find a winding stairway that circles to the top of the tower. About eighty feet up, the stairs end at a great metal plate inset into the wall, still a dull sheen on it, like a silvery lead. Tapping on the door produces a pleasing tone that slowly fades away. If looked at by someone who can see divine power, a riddle on the plate says:

Only a glutton may pass this way: who would eat rapaciously, never satisfied, yet refuses any offer of drink, for drinking will sicken them unto death.

Without answering the riddle, there is nothing behind the door but stone. It's not even really a door. The riddle (but not the answer) is also in the library; researching it is a learning roll at a penalty of 2, and will take one day to perform.

The answer to the riddle is fire. "Fan of flame" or a strong normal fire will cause the metal to melt upwards temporarily. Beyond the metal are more stairs, leading far higher than the tower itself, until it opens onto stairs that hang sixty feet over the canopy, ending in a marble platform, 20 feet wide, hanging a hundred feet above the canopy; looking backwards, the tower is a natural stone spire poking jaggedly above the trees. At this point, they truly are above the jungle: if they fall, they fall for a hundred feet onto the canopy, and potentially another 200 feet below the canopy. When they first arrive, and every five minutes afterwards, there is a 20% chance of an encounter:

01-50 Butterflies, giant (1d100)	50%
51-75 Archaeopteryx (1d20)	25%
76-95 Pterodactyl (1d4)	20%
96-00 Buzzflies (2d20)	5%

There is a shattered obelisk on the platform, once marked with the sign of the road. If anyone stands on the platform for more than one minute, they will disappear, and reappear on another marble platform in a grove: if using Thracia, it opens on the teleport pad at area 54. There is a control panel (obelisk) next to the pad, but the top is smashed; now-worthless crystal pebbles lie scattered around it.

Because the teleport pad's controls are broken, anyone who steps onto the marble cannot return. If everyone steps off of the marble and then step back onto it, they will be teleported to the ruined temple of Sin (Apollo in the original, room 44) as normal. Remember that area 54 is normally guarded by mananubi. Check to see if the guards are surprised by an attack from the pad, and they'll probably think the characters came from area 45; and (if they survive) will mention to the minotaur guard in the temple that they might want to send someone to the other side to make sure the other side remains guarded.

Encounters

In the ruins of the lost city and nearby the ruins, encounters will be a mix of Forest and Lost City. Within the ruins, the chance of an encounter is 50% every hour.

01-40 Guardian of the city	40%
41-65 Forest encounter	25%
66-90 Lost City encounter	25%
91-00 Hive encounter	10%

If the guardian is killed or chased away, encounters remain at 50% every hour: denizens of the forest and the lost city will be free to roam the ruins again. Use the table for within a mile of the lost city.

Outside of the Lost City, but within one mile of it, the chance of an encounter is 20% every hour.

01-50 Forest encounter	50%
51-90 Lost City encounter	40%
91-00 Hive encounter	10%

Outside of the Lost City, but within ten miles of it, the chance of encounter is as normal for the forest, but some encounters may be with Lost City denizens:

01-75 Forest encounter	75%
76-95 Lost City encounter	20%
96-00 Hive encounter	5%

If you use The Caverns of Thracia for the Lost City, Lost City encounters use the level 1 encounter chart from Thracia (this includes a small chance of Level 2 or Palace encounters).

Guardian of the city

A very territorial tyrannosaur has taken up residence within the lost city, and considers the entire area its domain.

Tyrannosaur: Animal; Level 15+3; Survival: 94; Defense: 6; Intelligence: animal; Charisma: animal; Movement: 24; Attacks: jaws/claws; Damage: 3d10/d12; Size: huge (49 feet).

The tyrannosaur's sense of smell gives it a bonus of 4 on perception rolls, and opponents a penalty of 4 on sneaking. On a called shot with its claws, the tyrannosaur will grab a victim into its mouth, doing 2d12 damage each round thereafter. (Victims are allowed an Evasion roll to avoid capture.)

Other adventures

If you're going to run Lamentations of the Flame Princess's Hammers of the God in the Æthiopian mountains, this is a good place to put the map to the entrance. The lost city is as old as the old miner's ancient temple, and few of the denizens would have any desire to travel where the map leads.

MAD SCIENTIST IN THE TEMPLE

“Every day the world groaned to turn and we were making our appalling studies of the night.”

A Saurian scientist living in an old Angwat temple (Apuiporo, the temple of the sky), constructing strange experiments late into the night. The temple is filled with artifacts of the ancient Saurian culture. It’s also a giant library, filled with books, audio, and video from all the cultures of the inner road. There’s always something bubbling and sparking in the laboratories of Apuiporo.

Most people see Mahukia as a charlatan. The kind of saurian who knows the language of the road is more likely to view him favorably—but only as a kook. His “translations” can’t be right.

Inspiration

1. Bob Dylan: Desolation Row (Highway 61 Revisited)

Mahukia

If *Back to the Future’s* Doc Brown were a bipedal lizard, he’d be Mahukia. He is the saurian voice of Isaiah, crying in the jungle. Most saurians see him as a charlatan speaking lies and nonsense. Those books could mean anything; he just makes up what he wants. If the townsfolk don’t warn the characters about his mendacity, the gardeners will (assuming they have anyone with them who understands saurian). Mahukia himself speaks the language of the road (Latin) as well as the Angwat tongue and several others.

The mad scientist is a second level classical sorcerer (using the “classical sorcerer” specialty). He sees what he does not as sorcery, however, but as natural science. Because of this difference in perspective, he’s been able to develop non-standard spells; because of his inability to see beyond science, however, he will never exceed the ability to understand second level spells. Despite that, he’s doing a fine job of stealing fire from the gods for mortalkind to use. Now if he could just convince mortalkind to use it...

The temple is a place of power because of the tablets beneath it. He uses this to perform “experiments” that are in fact rituals. That’s how he makes paper books immune to mildew and age, by making his preservation spell permanent through ritual.

First level spells: *discorrosion*, farseeing, understand languages.

Second level spells: last sight, *preservation*

He views these spells through scientific and mathematical logic. *Understand languages*, for example, involves statistical analysis of the text and correlation with other parts of the text to decipher meaning. It is, however, definitely magic; detect magic will show it as magical.

Discorrosion

Discorrosion removes corrosion from metals and plastics, restoring them to working order if corrosion was the only problem.

<p>Range: touch Level: one Formula: gestures, ingredients Ingredients: paste of rendered fat, cycad leaf, and swamp gas Duration: permanent Casting Time: 2 minutes Area of Effect: one item up to half level feet diameter Reaction: none Schools: Transmutation</p>
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Preservation

Preservation keeps paper from mildewing, crumbling, and aging for the duration of the spell. (Because he is in a place of power, Mahukia uses ritual to make the spell permanent when he can spare a sacrifice—of course, he doesn't call it that. It's all perfectly logical.)

<p>Range: touch Level: two Formula: gestures, ingredients Ingredients: paste of venus flytrap secretion, beetle carapace, and weta poison Duration: level weeks Casting Time: 5 minutes Area of Effect: a distinct room or space up to one plus level yards on a side. Reaction: none Schools: Transmutation</p>

Because Mahukia is limited to areas of up to three yards on a side, all of the paper books in the tower are in cramped rooms.



The walls, gardens, and courtyards

Each section of Apuiporo is about six feet higher than its enclosing section. The outer garden is six feet above the surrounding ground. The inner courtyard is six feet above the garden. The central tower's floor is six feet above the courtyard.

The walls are each 24 feet tall (thus, from the inside they appear 18 feet tall). The central tower is a hundred feet tall (thus, rising 118 feet above the jungle floor). The other towers are 42 feet tall (rising 48 feet, 54 feet, and 60 feet above the jungle floor).

Approaching Apuiporo

Through the ever-present faint sticky mist of the forest, you see a strange tower. Looking almost like natural cavern rocks jutting from the ground, the wide stone structure rises organically out of the earth. Tooth-filled lizard-faces leer from the four sides of each tower that juts above the crumbling stone walls. Behind the towers are more towers.

A single ray of sunshine penetrates the canopy for a moment, shining in a window in a central tower, then disappears.

Wide, arched entranceways gape above you beneath the tower that rises directly above the wall here. Brownish-green mold and vines drape the stone. Windows of all sizes and apparently random distribution are scattered across the wall.

The outer wall and garden

Three wide steps lead up six feet to the archway. You pass into a warm, shaded tunnel. Columned halls lead off right and left, splotted by diffuse light coming in through the holes of the crumbling walls. The air smells ancient and wet.

The hall leads forty feet and opens into a stagnant garden. Within the walls, an algae-covered pool sends a wet heat towards you. The pool is a wide V; you are nestled within the crook of the V. Tough ferns cover the ground near the pool. On each end, a vine-draped pergola stands empty and contemplates its impending unity with the earth.

Sixty feet ahead of you, another wall encloses the 100-foot-tall central tower. Bare columns rise beyond the wall, each column taller than its predecessor. To your right and left, you see two arched hallways leading into the inner wall.

Two saurians, in what would probably be brightly-colored smocks if any direct light penetrated the canopy, are working in the garden. The larger one says something to the smaller one; you can't hear what it is, but you hear the response. "Yes, master," the smaller saurian slurs loudly, and backs up, turning around—and trips over a rake as he does so. The larger saurian, were it human, you would swear it rolls its eyes.

The plants they're tending are like nothing you've seen, even in this strange forest. As the gardener moves in with his spade, the vines twist away from him. Weird yellow trumpet-like flowers bob up and down.

The outer wall is hollow; the inside is an arched hallway that completely circles the garden. There are many places where the wall has broken through to the outside or inside.

The garden is filled with strange experiments; the presence of the tablet of gardening beneath the temple ensures great insights into breeding and cross-breeding. The plants respond to stimuli; they can't move their roots, but they can move their stems and flowers. Some of the trumpet-like flowers toot. (Unless the tablet of the muses is restored, however, they will not do so musically.) They even talk, though it's random nonsense. "They wake us in the middle of the night with their muttering," says Mahukia. "They're silly," says Akudaum. "I like listening to them."

The inner wall and the court of the snake

Three wide steps lead up six feet into the archway. The hall leads twenty feet into a column-choked courtyard. The floor is stone, but scribbled with dark, jagged cracks. Huge pieces of broken stone lie scattered between the mold-covered columns. What light penetrates the canopy drifts furtively among the square, often tilted stone columns rising all around you.

Perhaps thirty feet of courtyard separates this small tower from the great central tower. To your right and left, you see archways leading into the ancient structure.

Images are carved into the columns, symbols that may be language, and drawings depicting trees, lizards, and great snakes.

As you move among the columns, you realize that there's a dragon writhing among them—a dragon engraved upon the columns in a way that causes it to move as your perspective changes.

There was once a dome covering this interior area. The interior itself was a maze. The dome has fallen in, and much of the stone removed for use elsewhere. What remains lies amid the still-standing columns that once held the dome up.

The columns are from four feet to six feet apart, carved with the ancient language of the Angwat, using cuneiform that is related to the cuneiform of the city. The drawings and writings tell the story of the jungle gods who raised the sky from the ground on columns of wood and finally built the temple to hold up the canopy of the sky.

A great snake winds its way through the forest, a long, thin, dragon with wings and a great head. The dragon writhes as they move among the columns; the flame billows from its gaping mouth. It's all pure optical illusion. But they can follow the whorls of the flame, and if they do they will find themselves in an other-dimensional tabernacle where the tablets of Enki are stored. If they follow the tail, they'll find a secret stairs to the web of temples. See *Covenant of the Snake* later and *The Lost City* earlier.

Staying at the temple

If they present themselves reasonably well, Mahukia will offer to let them stay at the temple. He will direct Akadaum to show them to suitable apartments. Akadaum will put them on the south side of the temple, so that they'll be less likely to hear what's happening on the north side. He'll also put them about forty feet off the ground, but if they request something else they can have anywhere from twenty to sixty feet off the ground.

If they want more space than one room provides, he will offer them two or three rooms connected by a balcony.

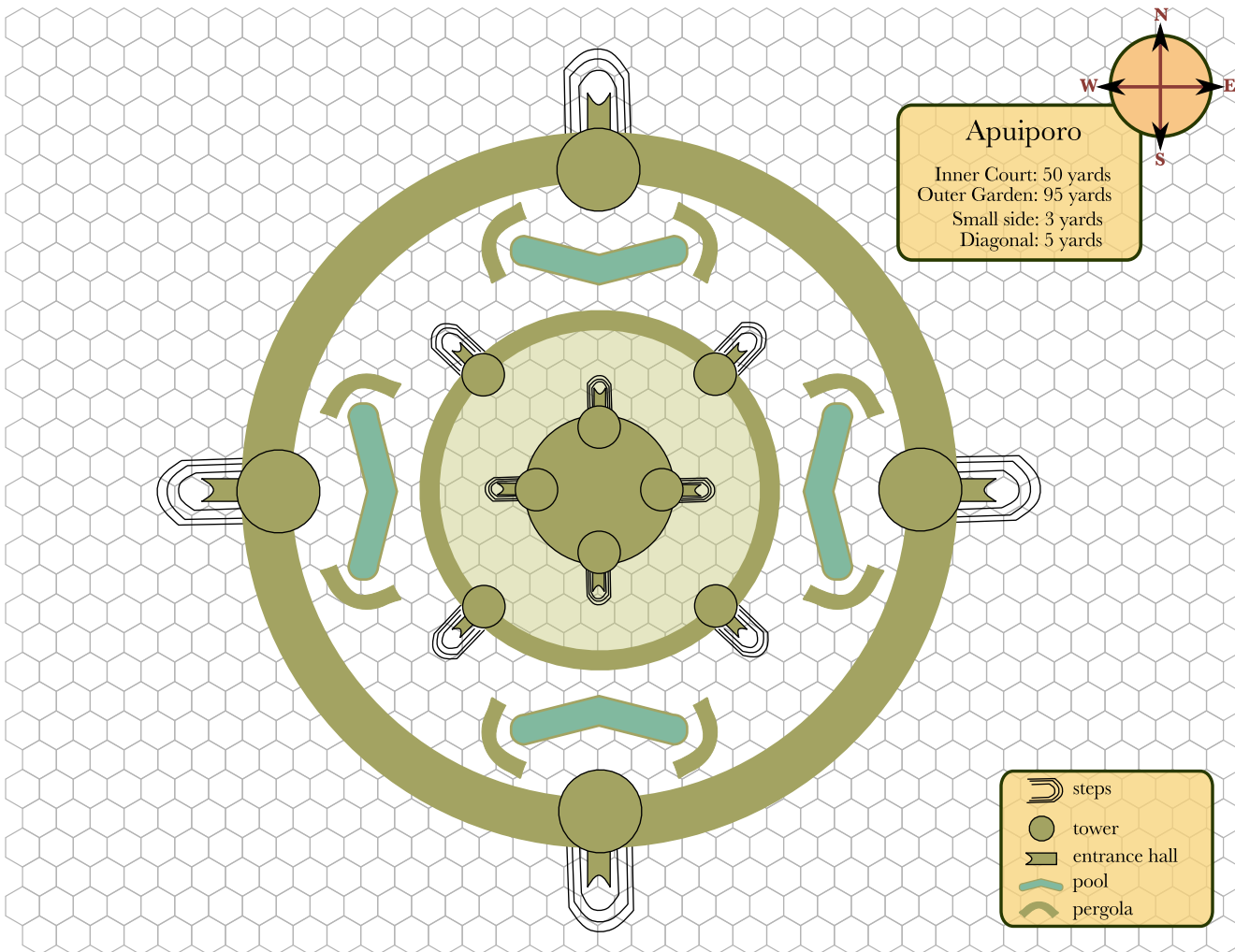
Saurians do not themselves sleep on beds. However, they do—or did, once—have non-saurian visitors. The rooms Akadaum will offer have dinosaur-bone beds with dinosaur-leather “mattresses” and silk sheets.

The tower

The corridors of the tower are tiny—three to four feet wide—running up and down throughout the tower, opening onto precipitous balconies, high rooms, and wet, slime-covered dungeons. The lizards, large as they are, seem to pass relatively easily, almost slithering up and down the stairs. Two lizards may not pass, but must use different stairs; since there are so many, this isn't usually a problem. If it is, then Akadaum gives way to Mahukia.

There are statues of lizards everywhere. There are no altars in the temple: the Angwat use basins; a small handful of statues do have basins in the floor in front of them.

The top of the tower is an empty room between the four large tyrannosaur faces; they can look out over the jungle, and are still eighty feet below the canopy. Archaeopteryx have nested here, and have left bird droppings everywhere.



The inventions of Mahukia

Gardening and language are the specialties of the temple. The botanical gardens of Mahukia are one of the seven wonders of the worlds.

Botanical gardens

Flowers that hide when anyone draws near. Trees that bend to provide easier access to fruit. Vines that act as barrier curtains. Flowers that talk nonsense and toot atonally.

Library of stories

Mahukia's assistants all become great writers if they don't become great botanists. They gain a facility with words and wordplay that is unmatched. Their books line the reading room off of the dining hall.

Mahukia's feast

As any other saurian, Mahukia eats insects. But he also eats singular fruits and gourds prepared by his assistant.

The Library of Apuiporo

The library is a mojo resource of 150 for transmutation magic (they call it alchemy), stone engineering, and the natural science of chemistry. It's a mojo resource of 40 for magic, engineering, history, and natural science in general. One of the tablets stored beneath the temple is the tablet of languages; anyone within the temple can learn to read any language easily. The library is an unlimited mojo resource of 60 for learning languages. Note that the Angwat don't speak much of magic; all magic was stolen when the world was formed.

The library is also an Ordered place of power, level 2.

The books in his library span all of the cultures of the inner road, which include several technological levels. Most of the books are in the Angwat tongue and are written in their variation of early pictographic cuneiform. Many of the books are in Latin using Sumerian cuneiform script. Several use the cuneiform script to transcribe local (to the book's writer) languages. There are Elvish books in both cuneiform and in Elvish script. There are spiral books in Kilirel. Books in Polynesian using cuneiform and using special Polynesian memory-glyphs. Books in Celtic using runic script. Mayan scrolls in Mayan glyphs. Books in Camprye using both cuneiform and the bastardized Elvish of the underground. There are no books in English.

Most of the books are made using leafpaper that is immune to mildew and that lasts nearly forever. Some books are made of paper, and for these he has a special formula and ritual to make them permanently immune to mildew and age. He also has a few sunstones: books that can only be read in a beam of sunlight. He has a special room for reading these books, with a window that occasionally sees a beam of light come through the trees.

Suntomes (wapor): Suntomes are ereaders. They usually contain hundreds of books. Their batteries are long dead; on finding a new suntome, Mahukia has a special ritual for carefully removing the corroded battery, special fluids for cleaning the corrosion. The suntomes are then left for seven days in a cool, dry, place beneath a golden pyramid. At the end of the ritual, the book is brought into the sunlight; if it works it goes into the library. If it doesn't work, it goes into his laboratory for experimentation.

Suntomes do not work in magical light. They require real sunlight (including divine sunlight). Their solar panels last for five thousand years. Each book is 1,000 plus d10,000 years old. (“Wapor draw their wisdom from the sun.”)

Moontomes (ulior) are like suntomes, but they do not require light. They have special inexhaustible “batteries” that will last twenty thousand years. Each book is 1,000 plus d8,000 years old. (“Ulior do not require sunlight. We believe they draw wisdom from bulankai, the little moon. The moons can penetrate the trees because they are more accustomed to working in the dark.”)

Ghostbooks (bunor) are suntomes or moontomes that vocalize their contents. Most of them speak in a raspy, barely audible, and incomprehensible voice due to degeneration of the speakers. Mahukia has a spell, restore voice, that temporarily makes the voices clear enough to understand.

As the beam of sunlight plays across the tome, strange squiggles worm their way across the cover, twisting and wriggling, and finally forming static shapes. Mahukia slides a finger across the cover and the figures rearrange themselves into new figures. He slides his finger vertically on the cover and the figures move up and down.

Mapbooks (banor) can be either suntomes or moontomes, but most of them are printed.

Library books

Te Pukapuka o Tane (The Tome of Tane): Written in Polynesian on leafpaper, in glyphs resembling the rongorongo texts, this book is an in-depth discussion of the philosophy of the priests of Tane, “the fisherman and master of clay”. It describes life as a series of islands which must be navigated to and from. It contrasts Tane with Tawhiri and the untamed ocean.

The Blanket of Ife Nlah: This ghostbook suntome describes the flooding of the first city, Ife. The people of Ife accepted the beautiful watersnakes to live among them; the watersnakes poisoned the watchmen on the levees, and the city was overrun by a great wave of water. Ife is now Ife Nlah, the city underneath the ocean.

The Throne of Seeing (banbanu): Anyone sitting in this ornate silvery, glassy, crystal chair and placing their palms on the armrests will immediately see a map of the world that they can manipulate by thought alone. The initial vision will be of the Solar Mountains and Prata Phoenix. Between the two there is no jungle, just twenty miles of road. A series of pulsating rings points out where the viewer currently is; it places them near the road between the mountains and Prata Phoenix, about ten miles away from the city.

They can pan north, south, east, and west, as well as out. West is the great cities beyond the Solar Mountains; East is the great tree and the City itself, shining, about 830 miles to the east. North are more cities and dry places on rivers. South are great ports on the ocean. Huge ships ply the seas. Zooming out, the lands seem infinite; the world is flat, and the roads and cities spiral out of the crossroads like the stars in the sky.

Zoom out again, and the world is a tree. The City and the crossroads leading out of it, out to Nequinium on the ocean are the roots leading to the trunk. The ocean winds its way up the trunk and the spiraling cities and roads are the barks leading up; entire worlds live on the leaves of the tree oblivious to their neighbors. The tree is infinite; it rises into the clouds; and the peoples that walk upon it are legion.

The Angwat don't use chairs; their name for the throne is "big map".

Anyone who sees the tree will dream of the tree that night. The tree will call out to them; it is not time for autumn.

Covenant of the Snake

Two of the tablets of Enki are lost in the library: the tablet of the garden and the tablet of language (the original language, which infuses all languages). This temple is a place of power because those tablets have been here for thousands of years, and anyone within the temple can read any language because of it. The tablet of musical arts is in the lost city. Aatu's drum spells and trumpet spells were stolen by Aate to make the world. They were supposed to be returned to Apuiporo, but instead they were stolen by the Immortal Lizard King and kept in the Lost City. This is why there is no music in the jungle. If the tablet of languages is stolen, their language will fragment into dialects, and nearby Kish will no longer speak the language of the City.

The tablets are stored in a simple, inscribed chest marked with the cuneiform for something or other. Within the chest is also an account of the tablets' discovery, which will include clues as to their original hiding place in the city. It wasn't originally a hiding place, but neglect has turned it into one, as the people of the city lost their pride of skill and knowledge. The chest is bulk 40, and has slots for three tablets.

“The carven flame becomes real flame, roiling over thin stairs down a passage you did not see before.”

Following the dragon to the flame is a very easy (+4) perception roll. Once someone is at the flame, they are twisted from normal reality; they cannot hear their companions who are not with them, nor can their companions see or hear them. The only way to reach or exit this area is to follow the flame. If they wish to keep going, they must pass through the fire. Passing through it means passing through the flame. It's a divine flame that requires faith to pass through; no physical or magical protection can stop it. A willpower roll is required if they want to believe that faith can pass them through unscathed. Otherwise, they take 4d8 points damage from the fire, with 4 of those points being injuries. If they don't believe, then no willpower roll is necessary; they will take the damage. Testing it first means they don't believe; at best they'll be allowed an evasion roll to avoid damage during their test.



Mahukia and the bugs

If you're going to use the Coriandrome and the Autumnal Swarm, Mahukia knows something about the swarm. One of his books, in a variation of Celtic, includes some text about the insects:

“Who are the insects? October people, I'd guess. Off one of the side roads there was a man who saw the flea circus, must have seen it, for he wrote the truest words about it I've ever read. I have it here somewhere. Ah, yes:

Where do they come from? The dust. Where do they go? The grave. Night sand flows in their veins; the worm ticks in their heads; the blind burrower sees with their eyes, and they speak the tongue of flies. They are the abyss between the stars. They sift the divine storm for souls, eat flesh of reason, fill tombs with sinners. In gusts they beetle-scurry, frenzy forth, creep, thread, filter, motion, make all moons sullen, and cloud all clear-run waters. The spider-web hears them, trembles—breaks. Such are the October people.

They set their clocks by death-watch beetles and thrive the centuries. These creatures want the flaming gas off souls who can't sleep nights, that fever by day from old crimes. They build death-camps for our dreams.

(That's a riff off of Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.)

Mahukia and the stones

“The tablets are stone according to the people of the road. They scattered to all the swamps of the great jungle. Prophets ascended stormy mountains to bring back the writings of the gods; heroes stole the secrets of the tablets and brought back fire. Kings drew the art of war from tablets of stone.”

Akudaum

If you're using Joe Lakono or some other villainous NPC who can change shapes, that person can be here. Mahukia often takes on assistants from the local villages. Mahukia's apprentice is often an intelligent bumbler. It's not a prestigious position. Among the assistant's responsibilities are working with the ten to twenty saurian gardeners who come from the nearby villages to work in the temple gardens.

Akudaum came to Mahukia “about seven months ago, yes, just seven months ago with the little moon” from outside the cities. This means, however, months in Angwat time, which are about ten days long. Joe came here about seventy days ago. He pretends to not speak the language of the road well: Mahukia has been teaching him since he arrived.

Akudaum is his Igor. He's a bit bumbling, but he can follow instructions very well and takes well to languages. He can already read the language of the City and the language of the Elves, as well as their own language, and he's learning to speak them as well. He also has an

uncanny ability to know when a lightning bolt will strike during a storm. That's a very important ability for the sidekick of a mad scientist.

Joe is very much at home in this semi-Austronesian culture. He has used the **Mask of Hina** to take on the form of Akudaum, an eight-foot-tall Angwat Saurian. To throw off suspicion, he acts the part of a slight bumbler. He's slightly more competent than Lenny in *Of Mice and Men*, but that's the idea he's trying to project. Basically, he's a cross between the Igor and Lenny stereotypes ("yes, master... uh... which way did he go?"). Make the impression as light or as over the top as fits the game session.

He collects giant butterflies, but, he says, he can't stand killing them, so he keeps them alive in a room off of his balcony room, some of them in cages. He feeds them daily. If any of the characters hurt (or eat) one of his butterflies, he won't do anything about it except shuffle a bit with his head down and say "I don't like you". Unless the character that does that is acting evil he will also suspect they're morally unaligned, which would make them susceptible to *Divine Service*.

Why is he here?

Joe is looking for the tablets of civilization so that he can return them to Tawake-awahim, the incarnation of Tawhiri in the City. This library probably doesn't have them, but he needs to be sure; it's ancient enough, and close enough to the city, that it might be the hiding place of the tablets. He's looking in every high tower for secret passages (of which there are many) and hidden collections. He is not (yet) aware of the extra-dimensional dragon room reachable through the court of the snake. He is also not aware of the possibility of the Lost City having a tablet.

Protection

If he suspects someone will try to determine his moral code, Joe will use **Moral Veneer** to mask it. Moral veneer lasts up to 10 hours, since he's tenth level, although he's more likely to use a fifth-level or sixth-level spirit to manifest it. He'll use it during their initial meeting and during their first meal together.

If he needs to protect himself, good bets are manifesting **stillness** and **darkness** around any sorcerers or other prophets he's aware of. He never stays to fight; he will use **invisibility to good** as soon as he can step out of sight. **Obscuring mist** can obscure his retreat.

He may also use **spiritual hold** (2+half level targets in level yards) or **command**—against fifth-level or lower targets with wisdom and charisma below 13, there is no defense against it. **Foul air** is useful against level targets, though it doesn't immobilize them. **Icy prison** can be used against anyone who needs to be immobilized, as it will also likely distract any friends who want to save the victim from suffocation.

If he has time to set up a trap, he can use **divine service** against anyone he knows not to have a moral code.

Remember that **darkness** does not affect the underground vision of the saurians.

Akudaum's room

He lives in a room on the north side of the temple's main tower, with an open balcony. He has very few belongings. He keeps the Mask of Hina in his room, but if he's suspicious of any visitors (such as the player characters) he may start carrying it with him. He doesn't want to carry it, though, because it's suspicious: it's a human mask that reflects Joe's culture.

He has borrowed several books about City culture, especially about the temple at the aureum, the golden pillar at the center of the world. There are also several books about stolen knowledge (Prometheus, Ishtar, Pandora, Eve), tablets of knowledge (Enki, Moses, Tu), and stones of power (Arthur-like stories of stones and stone tablets granting great warrior prowess). Anyone who can read Polynesian (similar to the rongorongo texts) will be able to tell from Akudaum's notes that he is trying to find the tablets of Tu (death) to return them to Tawhiri (water) where they belong. The tablets have caused mankind nothing but trouble. Knowledge is evil. Tawhiri's representative in the city is Tawake-awahim.

Some of the spirit foci an intruder might find in Akudaum's quarters include masks and hair for moral veneer, sea water (holy water), hemp rope, yew bark, olive branch, gold coins, tokens from the Paradise Lounge, incense, amethyst dust, writing paper, pens, and ink, platinum bracer, diamond dust, and carven torcs (fantastic servant).

He has placed a **Cyclone Sigil** on his room at level 9. The cyclone will cause 9 points of damage to the victim, and if the victim fails a Fortitude roll, will lift them into the air 30 feet, 10 feet beyond the edge of the tower. The balcony itself is 40 feet up, so they'll fall seventy feet (this means 4d6 damage, of which 4 are injuries, and it will take 4 seconds to fall; the latter doesn't matter, it's just cool). The cyclone sigils are visible to any who can see divine power. Anyone within one yard of the victim must make an Evasion or Fortitude roll or also be taken up by the cyclone.

He also has attached a first level **Death Spirit** to the room. When anyone enters the room and he isn't there, it will manifest darkness at the center of the room, with a 16 yard radius. The darkness will last 1 hour and 20 minutes. Because this uses spirit attachment, Joe will know when the spirit triggers, and he will be able to hear everything that's going on in the area for 10 minutes. He can technically also see, but it'll be dark; if he's in human form he won't be able to see, but if he's in saurian form he'll have underground vision.

If he's been packing for a trip, an astute character might notice that he was packing lightly, but packing both saurian and human food.

Attack of the Butterfly Warriors

"At midnight, all the agents and the superhuman crew come out and round up everyone that knows more than they do."

Inspiration

1. Akira Kurosawa: The Seven Samurai.

Joe will summon the Butterfly Warriors before leaving. Before attacking, they will circle "like moths circling a flame". Joe lit the flame with a ritual on his balcony. The Cyclone Sigil will remain on the room, and possibly the Death Spirit (darkness), depending on whether or not Joe needs it.

The ritual has a difficulty of 2: there is a penalty of two to the rolls to prepare and perform it. It uses specially-chosen giant butterflies as a sacrifice, laid out in a spiral on the ground, still alive. The candle is in the center of the spiral in a tin holder. He used *ritualize* to gain a bonus of 5 to the Reason roll to prepare the ritual. This means **he has to roll 14 or less to successfully prepare the ritual** (+2 for the place of power, +5 for ritualize, -2 for difficulty; failure means a penalty to the performance roll); **he has to roll 17 or less to successfully perform it** (+2 for the place of power, -2 for difficulty). If he can come up with 8 chanting cultists, he can get a +3 to that latter roll. Perhaps suggesting a celebration of some kind? Or he might attempt to use the garden tablet to turn the talking flowers into chanters. That's a charisma roll at a penalty of 4, and +4 for having the tablet. He'll need 15 or less, and a bit of the tail of a dragon, wyvern, or other dragon-kin is needed to make it work. Joe has a bit of wyvern tail, which might be found if the characters search.

To the best of his ability, he will attempt to focus the butterfly warriors attentions on one or two of the player characters.

If the ritual is destroyed (the candle extinguished and the butterflies dispersed), the butterfly warriors will no longer be ritually called to Apuiporo, but they won't disperse immediately. If they have any idea that some of the tablets of Enki are here, they will fight to the death to retrieve them. Otherwise, they'll cause trouble for as long as they think it's worthwhile. **The Autumnal Swarm and Joe Lakono are allies of convenience.** Both want to unravel the world; the difference is their reasons for it. If the swarm discovers that Joe has the tablets, they'll happily double-cross him to get the tablets for themselves.

5 Butterfly warriors: Very Rare (Swarm Business); Fantastic; Ordered Evil; Level 7+1; Survival: 33, 49, 54, 26, 46; Defense: 8; Organization: hive/task-oriented; Intelligence: average; Charisma: average; Movement: 20/12; Attacks: scimitar and sting; Damage: d8+2, d10 or d12; special attacks: stasis; special defenses: immunity to sleep and telepathy, flicker; magic resistance: 2; size: medium, large.

On a called sting attack, victims make an Evasion roll or go into a stasis for a number of rounds equal to half the damage done. A victim of stasis is invulnerable for the duration of stasis; they're literally out of time, able to do nothing and be affected by nothing. They are visible to others, but have no recollection themselves of anything between going into and coming out of stasis.

These butterfly warriors have the forms of lizards (33, 26, d12), humans (49, 46, d10), and mananubi (54, d10).

Timeline

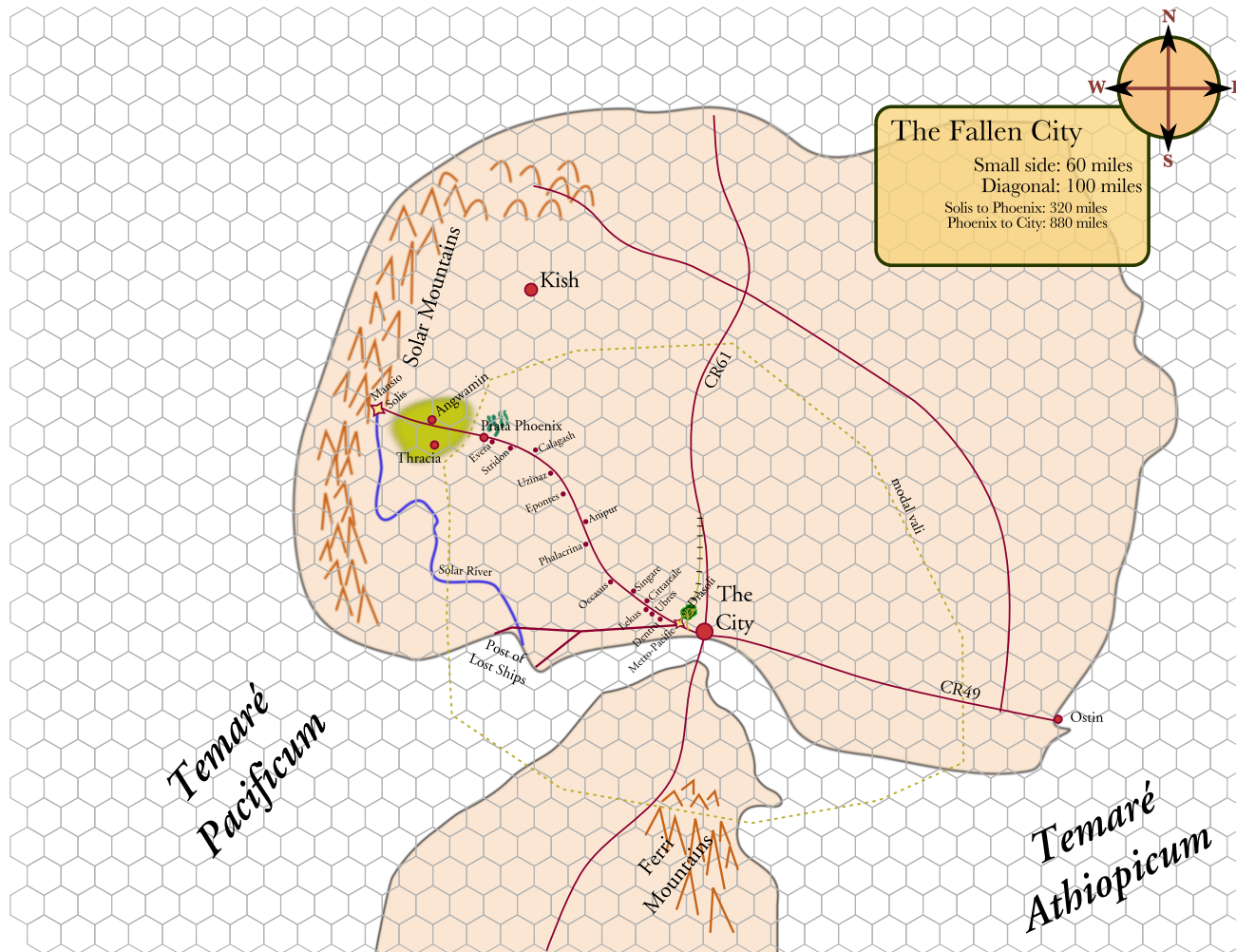
1. Joe will send his two saurian minions with the tablets about 1 AM, as soon as he has the flowers chanting for him. The flowers will momentarily chant loudly; then Joe will quiet them until he starts the ritual. But he wants to give the tablets a head start, so he has to activate the flowers early. Hearing the momentary loudness from the other side of the tower is a perception roll at +2 (however, remember that if they're sleeping, they also have a penalty).
2. From earlier that evening to 3 AM he will prepare the ritual: he will set up the candles and lay out the spiral of live butterflies on wooden pins.
3. From 3 AM to 4 AM he will perform the ritual to call the butterfly warriors. If he has something important from one or more of the player characters, he will include this in the ritual so that the warriors will target the characters. If he is using chanters, whether flowers or saurians, the noise will be on the north side because Joe has set up the ritual in his apartment in the tower. Hearing them is a standard perception roll (probably at a penalty due to sleeping).
4. At 4 AM, when the ritual is complete, he will leave. He will catch up with the saurians carrying the tablets east at about 10 AM. They will continue on to the customs house and towards the city.
5. The five butterfly warriors arrive from the swarm world at 6:30 AM.
6. Joe will try to keep a high level weather spirit available. If He thinks he's being followed and has the time, he can stop to call up a couple of miles worth of fog.

Mahukia is already in the garden; he may be attacked. Otherwise (or in addition) if the characters accepted a room with a balcony, some of the warriors will alight on the balcony; others will circle the tower in reserve until fighting starts. Once fighting starts, all warriors will take part. But they will want to avoid being all in the same place until that time, so as to avoid any mass attacks.

They are warriors, and can use combat bonus pools just as warriors can. They will also use group effort if it will give them an advantage.

If they can capture their targets, they will return with them to their hive far south of the jungle in the port of lost ships. The hive contains twenty-eight Autumnal Swarm and seven butterfly warriors (including the five summoned warriors). A swarm hive is an Escher honeycomb.

EAST OF THE JUNGLE



Towns along the way

There are no large cities between the Customs House and the City. But there are a handful of villages living along the Road. Here are some sample names to choose from as needed.

Town	Signage miles to city	Miles to city	Miles from Prata Phoenix
Evera	734	860	20
Stridon	631	800	80
Calagash	551	720	160
Uzinaz	496	660	220
Epontes	431	580	300
Anipur	344	480	400
Phalacrina	297	420	460
Occasus (Westfall)	173	280	600
Singare	91	210	670
Cittareale	49	170	710
Lekus	35	160	720
Ubres	25	140	740
Dentru	5	110	770

These are vaguely Roman, and vaguely Sumerian. There may be the occasional name that doesn't match, settled by travelers from some other culture that got lost on the Road. Population is 2d100. Much of this travel can be handled through a simple description of the dusty, unused road, and a litany of the tiny towns, once they heal up from the jungle, punctuated by the occasional random encounter.

Encounters

Encounters occur on a 30% chance every three days. The road east of the customs house is not heavily traveled. The land is mostly sparse fields of wild grass interspersed with low mesas and hills and the occasional small copse of cypress, fig, or yew trees.

01-35 Terrain/Weather	35%
36-60 Traveler	25%
61-75 City	15%
76-85 Animals	10%
86-95 Ruin	10%
96-00 Bug	5%

Terrain/Weather

01-38 Sandstorm (d4 hours)	38%
39-66 Thunderstorm (d6 hours)	28%
67-86 Dry thunderstorm (d8 hours)	20%
87-94 Saltmarsh (d4 miles wide)	8%
95-98 No sun (d4 days)	4%
99-00 Broken bridge (d1000 yards long, d1000 yards deep, d100% gap)	2%

Traveler

01-30 From local village	30%
56-85 Kish	30%
31-55 Sidewinder traveler	25%
86-95 Angwat	10%
96-00 Mansio Solis	5%

Travelers come in groups of d20.

City

01-40 Mananubi (d20)	40%
41-70 Dragon messenger	30%
71-90 City traveler	20%
91-98 Mirage of the city (d100 miles)	8%
99-00 One of the twins	2%

Animals

Gazelles are 2-3 feet tall and run up to 40 miles per hour. Eland are 5 to 6 feet tall and can jump 8 feet from a standstill.

01-22 Eland (d12)	22%
23-42 Gazelle (d100)	20%
43-58 Springhare (d100)	16%
59-72 Jackals (d12)	14%
73-80 Locusts (small swarm)	8%
81-87 Jaguar (d2)	7%
88-92 Yellow Forest	5%
93-97 Sidewinder animal	5%
98-00 Locusts (large swarm)	3%

Ruin

Use the *Traveler* table for the kind of ruin.

01-35 Caravan (d100 people)	35%
36-65 Ghost of the <i>Isanta Express</i>	30%
66-80 House (d20 people)	15%
81-90 Village	10%
91-95 Town	5%
96-99 City	4%
00 Great city	1%

Autumnal Swarm

01-25 Swarm hosts (d20)	25%
48-72 Circus followers (d6)	25%
26-47 Circus performer (d6)	22%
73-92 Swarm pupae (d4, see traveler)	20%
93-00 Butterfly warriors (d12)	8%

Sidewinder cultures

Sidewinder cultures on the road are all from iconic cities. Any of these will be a variant of the city and culture from our world.

01-10 Babylon (Sumerian)	10%
11-19 Cartoril (Elven high city)	9%
20-27 Ninevah (Arab)	8%
28-35 Memphis (Egyptian)	8%
36-44 Alexandria (Egyptian/Greek, mingling of scholars)	9%
45-52 Athens (Greek, philosopher-state)	8%
53-59 Rome (military empire)	7%
60-68 Byzantium (dying flourish)	9%
69-73 Florence (Italian, renaissance of civilization)	5%
74-77 Beijing (Chinese, decadent empire)	4%
78-81 Tokyo (Japanese, god-emperor)	4%
82-85 London (English, naval empire)	4%
86-88 Berlin (German, cabaret decadence)	3%
89-93 New York (American, mercantile power)	5%
94-00 San Francisco (American, counter culture)	7%

Sample Names

The names from the Glendale Train side of the abyss all work fine here. There will also be names from Kish and from the side roads here.

		Male name	Female name	Family name
City	1	Aranthur	Arathia	Apucu
	2	Aule	Corona	Calisna
	3	Laris	Larthi	Hathli
	4	Nerie	Panatia	Hermenas
	5	Plecu	Pinaria	Larania
	6	Sethre	Semni	Papni
	7	Venel	Tita	Satlana
	8	Teitu	Vela	Visnai
Kish	1	Abuwaqar	Ahunasha	Anaharani
	2	Anepada	Ashkilgir	Ekurgal
	3	Belshunu	Beletum	Erelatari
	4	Damqishu	Daqartum	Iliddinam
	5	Ekur	Enatum	Ilumkabta
	6	Etum	Eshargamat	Kiengirdal
	7	Gazualum	Iltani	Lulualbanti
	8	Ilakabu	Ishtessa	Maresetim
	9	Kugal	Kammani	Mudamiqum
	10	Lushalim	Liwiresagil	Ninmunuzi
	11	Mezizi	Munartum	Samasreum
	12	Nabilil	Nakurtum	Samastilasu
	13	Pirhum	Nuraum	Silizi
	14	Rabishu	Shiptu	Sinasarid
	15	Sidu	Shubad	Sinremeni
	16	Shulgi	Sinada	Tinasabi
	17	Tubit	Sumira	Urmami
	18	Ugish	Umirat	Urnungal
Celtic	1	Bradán	Boudefa	Cathasach
	2	Drustan	Feidlimid	Logare
	3	Haerviu	Luigsech	Ninilan
Egyptian	1	Ako	Amonit	Ibenre
	2	Djal	Kebi	Kubai
	3	Odji	Paniwi	Mkhaiep
	4	Rasui	Shanefer	Sutanu

The Customs House

After the jungle are low hills. The moon returns to normal, a single moon taking 28 days to cycle through its phases. Beyond the hills, a lone prefect collects customs for a kingdom long dead. Inspired by *A Few for the Road*, by Michael Curtis, in *Fight On!* issue 5.

The Westgate Customs House is about a hundred miles from Prata Phoenix. A single cheerful man, Coron Ardelis, watches the gates. He takes the toll from travelers and waits for his relief. He knows it will come: his father told him it would, and his father before him. “The city always survives.”

The toll is one dupondius per person, with a 1.5% tax on all goods and slaves. He has a library of books detailing the worth of various goods that might be brought in to the central city, and he will happily discuss news and the minutia of taxes while he looks up anything he doesn't know. He has a dip pen, and an inkwell out back (the red inkwell ran dry, but the black inkwell still produces ink for his inkpot).

Let's see. Caravan passage, individual passage, ambulatory group, ah yes, here we go. Ambulatory group. Okay:

What are your names?

Where were you born?

Where are you traveling from?

What is your business in the realm of the twin city and tree?

What have you to declare?

How many have you killed? Just so far. One? Two? Three to five? Six to nine? Ten or more?

Which of you can write? Sign here. Your own script is fine. And here's your proof of entry, I'll need each of you to sign or at least place a mark on it.

He will provide a receipt for their taxes, which can be used to avoid paying taxes on the same goods a second time. If they refuse to pay, he will, in order and insofar as it makes sense, first offer them alternatives and then take down their descriptions for later use.

They can withhold information, but lying on the form requires a willpower roll at a penalty of 4; on a failure, they tell the truth.

Ask them for their paperwork. If they can prove that the goods do not need to pass customs (for example, because customs have already been paid or that they were declared on exit from the central city), they don't have to pay.

Ask them if they have a needs-based exception. If they say yes, he will bring out a series of forms and affidavits that they will need to fill out and sign.

Take their names and descriptions for the tax enforcers. There hasn't actually been any enforcement for his entire lifetime, but he has the records ready for when they arrive, and will warn them that the centurions will learn of their crime. He has never seen a centurion and knows them only through the legends told of the city by his grandparents.

The Pax Urbana

The Pax Urbana is stronger here. Willpower rolls from here on out are at a penalty of 4.

Quaestors of the city

If they pay their toll and customs, he will give them a receipt. He will then ask (if it hasn't already come up) if they are heading for the city. If so, he will ask to deputize them as quaestors, financial supervisors. As quaestors, they will be entrusted to take their taxes to the city and deposit them with the aurarium—he'll return their taxes to them in a bag stamped with the seal of the city.

Oath of the City

I, ____ of ____ of the [far] gates of the Road do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that I will serve the Pillar and the Tree in the office of Quaestor of the City, with integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding the roots of fairness and according equal respect to all travelers; and that I will to the best of my power cause the peace to be kept and preserved and duly maintain the taxes of the city; and that while I continue to hold the said office I will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to the tablets of the twins.

Dinner with Coron

He has a wife (Turia), and two children (twins Davin and Tatiana, both 7). If the characters are polite, and mention a need for rest, he'll invite them for dinner. They have a harpsicord; it's slightly out of tune.

The circus came through a several years ago. It took hours to go through their paperwork, but it all checked out; they paid no taxes. Everything they brought with them was accounted for.

If they are chasing someone, such as Joe Lakono, he has also come through recently. Nice guy, talked too much. His real name will, of course, be on the public record, assuming he failed his lying roll.

Remember that people generally stay on the road, so as to take advantage of the Pax Urbana. The Pax Urbana is stronger at the customs house area. The willpower roll to start an aggressive action is at a further penalty of two. The prefect is well aware of this, and will refuse to leave the area of the road's influence, which extends throughout the customs house.

Who else has passed this way?

What they signed for and how much they paid is private information; who they are and where they came from is public record.

Teferi Dambo	Aprilis 19, 10981
Tamas Yanko	Iunius 18, 10983
Lyuba Lalow	Iunius 18, 10983
Tawno Lalow	Iunius 19, 10983
Gyorgi Simz	Iunius 20, 10983
Manuwa	Quintilus 2, 10983 to Quintilus 19, 10983
Tuliniraw	Quintilus 2, 10983 to Quintilus 19, 10983
Owadaranu	Quintilus 2, 10983
Brochus Aelius	Sextilus 12, 10984
Macer Aelius	Sextilus 12, 10984
Albus Antonius	Sextilus 12, 10984
Galeo Memmius	Sextilus 12, 10984
Seamus Clanricarde	Martius 21, 10986
Rigan Clenriquen	Martius 21, 10986
Shalmansar	Iunius 5, 10986
Buwiro	Aprilis 7, 10987
Akuba	Aprilis 7, 10987
Kibo-nuro	Aprilis 7, 10987
Leñuba	Aprilis 7, 10987
Strado Fabius	Maius 2, 10989
Corvin Gellius	Maius 2, 10989
Dani Ezil	October 7, 10989
Lako-no-cjaw-tawhiri	October 2, 10991

The dates are in Coron's handwriting. The current year is 10991. The people of the road use a calendar of ten months, though the months have begun to get out of whack. Martius (for Mars), Aprilis (for the forgotten god), Maius (for Maia), Iunius (for Juno), and then the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth months: Quintilus, Sextilus, September, October, November, and December. Ten months of thirty or thirty-one days each, and a winter of sixty-one days in between December and Martius.

About five years ago, a Seamus Clanricarde came through, with a cart and a stone pillar (the latter information is private, however). An old man. He had a young woman with him, Rigan. They argued a lot.

Joe Lakono, with a capybara draft animal and a chest of tablets (the latter information is private). Joe's real name is Lako-no-cjaw-tawhiri.

78—The Phoenix Highway

How far is Prata Phoenix?

“Officially, it’s ten miles up the road. Off the record, it’ll take you about two days of travel on the road to reach the gates.”

The mile marker here is “759 m.p.”

Prata Phoenix

The great city that the engineer spoke of is dead at the edge of the jungle. The tracks are rusted and torn, but the road goes on.

Peco said that his grandfather had driven the Phoenix Meadows line, but Phoenix Meadows has been abandoned for a thousand years or more.

Cross-continental transportation services.

The phrase means “Red Meadows” in the Ancient tongue.

Prata Phoenix is forty-five miles from the Customs House. And just across the lake, circus lights and music drifting in on the mist.

If you’re looking for a more extensive adventure, and you didn’t use it in the jungle, Prata Phoenix could be on top of the Caverns of Thracia.

The city is otherwise abandoned. There are farmers nearby, in the red fields surrounding the city, but no one lives in it. Only a few mananubi skulk in the shadows, at night.

It is 880 miles from Prata Phoenix to the City. The signs, however, say 749 m.p.

CLANRICARDE'S GRAVE

"I felt like lying by the side of the trail and remembering it all. I felt like sleeping and dreaming in the grass."

The road is marked with signs and sigils; the tributaries of the road are the veins of life.

Inspiration

1. The Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem: The West's Awake (The First Hurrah!)

I created this scene because one of the characters in our group—Alvin—had in an earlier adventure, been searching for his grandfather—Seamus Clanricarde—and the Stone of Clanricarde, but that adventure ended when our guest adventure guide started a new job and didn't have the time to continue. I wanted to tie up this story. They heard about Clanricarde's grave from an Irish band at the Moulin Rouge in Vegas during *Helter Skelter*. At the time I had no idea how it would turn out, because I hadn't yet created the tablets.

If you choose to use this, you'll need to tie it to your player characters in some way. The grave doesn't have to be a player character grave, but it should be a close relative or friend. Somehow, you've got to connect a player character to a grave. All the names must change, and the stories as well.

The temptation of Ardrahan

A sign points to a side road. It reads "Ardrahan" (north) and "Occasus" (south). Ardrahan means "The High Fort", and it leads to a great tree and a castle of ghosts. Seamus Clanricarde came here via the paths of the Weaving Wood, and he wrote the words "Ardrahan" as a riddle to his grandson. He died on the Phoenix Highway to safeguard the tablet of war—the stone of Clanricarde. If they keep the tablet, in Highland it is an obelisk.

The stone of Clanricarde

One mile north of the road, on a small hill, behind the grass-covered stone walls is a small cemetery with only two graves. They are in the shade of three trees. It has their name on it:

"O TYRANT, TO THESE WARRIORS GLORIOUS, SURRENDER"
SEAMUS OF HIGHLAND ALVIN OF HIGHLAND
CLANRICARDE
ALL MEN CARRY THEIR DOOM
"THE WEST'S ASLEEP"

The skeleton in the coffin under Seamus Clanricarde's grave is Alvin's grandfather. The tombstone is a riddle. Not much a riddle, and so it's

weak, but it's enough to keep the tablet quiet for a little while. The “answer” to the riddle is to open the coffin of the person who is still alive. The coffin of Alvin contains the stone of Clanricarde, the tablet of war, in the form of an obelisk. What do we know about the stone of Clanricarde?

Fingol, after prodding Alvin Clanricarde about his name, told us of the Stone of Clanricarde, a tale very much like our snipe-hunts. Don Kith prophesized that the stone would vanish, to reappear when needed. The stone vanished from Dungarvin, and will be found between the plough of Benbulben and the triple wells of Bridget (healing wells).

The plough of Benbulben is a day's travel west of the eastern mountains. To find it, go to Sneem, then follow the road north to Dungarvin. From Dungarvin there is a road that leads east around the Burren to Benbulben just above the Unicorn Pass.

Which means that “between the plough of Benbulben and the Springs of Bridget” is the same as saying “in the Celtic lands”. Probably in the Burren; remember that all of the ancient temples were connected and there is a temple underground in the Burren.

To whoever digs up my grandson's grave:

I apologize. I know it wasn't much of a riddle, but I didn't have the resources for anything more elaborate.

A long time ago there was a war, and no one knew why. A hooded figure led the night trolls against the human cities of the north, and the north was losing. Had lost, despite heroic efforts by leaders such the Abbot of the Illustrators and Colonel Courlander and their alliances among the Celts and the Long Lakes. They succeeded in this battle or that against overwhelming odds, but the odds never lessened, while their own numbers did.

Will Deerborn, myself, and two friends of mine from the Celtic lands searched for why. Why was the hooded one here? With Will's scrying and Don Kith's lore, we discovered the dark one's goal: the stone I call the stone of Clanricarde, for it has crossed my family's path before. Lost for centuries, but the invader wanted it. We resolved to find it first.

We found the stone in the temple in the center of the croomfrith; myself, and the big Celt, and Don, and old Will, and the armies of the hooded one were close behind. We had no knowledge of the Road then, so we took the stone to the most desolate place we could find, and the ancient temple there. And we cast enchantments upon it—old Will and Don—that it disappear from scrying, and placed it behind a riddle, that it would assist in its own seclusion. And when war indeed receded, we erased it from our minds; but old Will was young Will then, and forgetfulness did not last the full length of my years.

If you're familiar with the events of Highland (and you probably are if you knew to dig here, though it is of course possible that you simply enjoy digging up graves) you may be wondering how I was old enough to be in that war. Perhaps the war is slipping backwards; or perhaps my own life is elongated from contact with the stone; or perhaps the stone induces delusion to get its way. I don't know. But there was war, and we hid the stone, and there was no more war.

More recently (and how recently I, of course, can no longer tell you) I discovered that the hooded one discovered our ruse, and was returned to our land to find the stone. Thus I went to its hiding place, and carved my name, and took the stone back to the croomfrith. And was set on the path to the City by the Tree, it knowing, I ken, that I would not make the City.

The seer also told me this, though I understood it not: whenever you read this, there is war now in Highland. Our land is caught between the broken shell and hidden passage, between despair and darkness. Restore the Stone to the City, and there will still be war, but you shall also find assistance, from unlikely sources.

If I speak in riddles, forgive me; you are hearing prophecy second-hand and muddled by time. As for me, let me sleep here, by the side of the Road, and rest in the shade of the Tree.

SEAMUSK

They will later meet the younger Seamus, after they leave the road, as a Robin Hood-type in a Highland under the thumb of Eliazu.

Nearby town

The folk of Ocassus helped him dig the grave; he placed the stone in Alvin's tomb on his own, but when he died they placed him in his own tomb. He was 83 years old when he arrived. He lived in Ocassus for eight years.

“He was pretty good shape for his age, but he was old. Had trouble walking, especially after the first couple of years.”

“He was always making up stories about this grandson of his—I don't remember the name, but I'd guess it was the man he buried when he arrived. Crazy adventures, like finding lost castles and saving damsels in high mountains from evil spiders. He was very proud of him.”

“His woman left him right off, to join the circus when it came through. Yeah, that was nine years ago.”

“Buried him last year.”

THE ETERNAL CITY

"Sometimes I'm walkin' on the ground and I see right through the ground. And there is no world."

What is the city like? Defended by fading magics? People no longer defend themselves? Inhabited by ghosts of ancient cities? Not a true city itself. The center of worlds. Places are facets of multiple worlds. The dawn comes through the mist, but never arrives, in the crossroads around the Eternal City.

The tree, the crossroads, the city, and the swords are the axis of worlds. The tree and crossroads are one; the city and sword are one.

The people of the city are an ur-race of Elvish humans. They are nice people. They just don't want to know what's going on. They'll be very friendly, and are proud of their city's tradition and history.

Years are measured *anno urbis conditae*, from the founding of the city.

INSPIRATION

1. Revelation 21 and 22 from the King James Bible
2. The Night Land by William Hope Hodgson



THE ROOTS OF THE TREE

The roots of the tree are the road. The roots blend into the paths that join the road. The roots also blend into the River that goes to the City. Past Dentru, the roots of the tree begin to be visible alongside the road. First normal-sized, then larger and larger, until they're as tall as a man. The tree becomes visible thirty miles out of Dentru. The tree is 76 miles out of Dentru, and 24 miles from the city. There is a new wailing in the night, a keening, animal-like, but sad. (The mananubi.)

As the roots climb, the sun drops in the sky, and the cold turns wet. The sun rises lower and lower in the sky as they approach the gates of the city, barely rising above the southern horizon and barely setting below it. Fine snow flurries across the road and fields. By the time they reach the city the high noon sun is a low pinprick on the horizon, the world a perpetual twilight, slightly lighter in the day, darker at night.

The City lies at the crossroads of City Road 49 and City Road 61. As they move towards the city, they will find people who speak Elvish, and for whom the city is “the City”. And in the next town, people who speak Latin and for whom the city is just the City.

The tree is on a grassy hill. Every once in a while things fall from the tree: things from other worlds. If left alone, beetlepede spies will carry them away to a caravan, to take them to the circus. There is a 40% chance per day that something will fall from the tree. It could be anything from a book to a bicycle. The tree is a +4 Place of Power, Chaos.

The tree can be climbed—its branches and leaves are analogous to the roads and the doors. The tree looks like it is 400 feet tall. It doesn't seem to end if you're actually climbing up it, however.

The Autumnal Swarm have infected the tree but have not yet broken through.

A priest of Quirinus and Drasoli

If they have yet to meet a priest of Quirinus, this is the place to do it. Perhaps even a ghost of a priest of Quirinus.

The Isanta Express

1. Inspiration: Merle Haggard's *Silver Ghost*.

The Isanta Express is stuck half in a dead zone on the other side of the Solar Mountains, but her ghost still flies out of the ruins of the City, and Noble Philomenes is still her engineer. She looks just like Metroliner Hermes, sleek and silver and grey, and her whistle is a high and mournful sound.

If they spend the night by the roots of the tree, then on the first night they will see the Isanta Express go by, east to west.

THE LORE OF THE CITY

Each season, the great tree Drasoli bears fruit. Before there was light, blind Aira ripened in the spring and fell upon the grass-covered plain. She immediately began spinning the threads of life. In the summer, the tree bore Edekli, who measured the threads that Aira spun, and in the autumn the tree bore Marta, who cuts the threads that Aira measures.

And so they spun in darkness.

In the spring, Dupater dropped ripe from the tree. He climbed the mountain and sent the lightning and rain to the plains. Lightning pierced the darkness, but the darkness held. In summer, the tree bore Marsu, who brought with her corn for the fields and seeds for orchards of fruit, but the seeds did not grow, only weeds. In the autumn, the tree bore Quirinus. With his flame he battled the darkness through the long winter until the fire of his sword rose triumphant into the sky.

And in that new-warm spring man and woman fell from the tree. The twins Meshiaské and Mesiemblé ripened in the new dawn, warmed by the sun's light and cooled by the dew on the grass. They built a house for themselves and for their children with the leaves of Drasoli.

The twins were showered with gifts. Dupater introduced them to the gods. Marsu taught them to sow and reap. And Quirinus showed them the metals hidden in the earth, and the arts to use them. For there were monsters outside the plains, jackal-headed scavengers of the abyss, and every man must stand against the darkness with his neighbor. Quirinus taught them this.

The twins founded the City; the City grew. Deep in the abyss beyond Quirinus's light the serpent Tifá grew envious of the silver city's riches.

Twice the dragon attacked the City; twice the twins and the warriors of Quirinus forced Tifá back into the unlighted waters.

Then Tifá took the form of a beautiful woman with long brown hair, and in this form she walked ashore. She went into the deserts beyond the fields we know, into the land of the scavengers. The jackals welcomed her. She led them against the City. And with her sorceries the City was besieged, using wisdom the jackals had never shown before.

Tifá took her new beguiling form into the City. She spoke in alleys, and in alcoves, and in the backs of temples. Distrust she sowed, and fear. For was not the City besieged, that had never been besieged? And the sorceries of Tifá worked from within the City. And the jackals clamored for a sacrifice.

The twins refused; none of the City need fear betrayal to the outer darkness, said Meshiaské and Mesiemblé. But the people whispered, and said, would it not be expedient? One life that the City might shine? Very well, said the twins. If there must be a sacrifice, we shall go.

Meshiaské and Mesiemblé were taken to the tree, and evil was planted forever at the crossroads. But the City endures, and its people endure, and there have been other kings and queens. And all roads begin at the millarium aureum, the golden pillar at the center of the silver city.

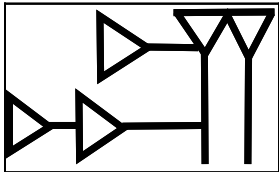
For their reward, Tifá returned in the city's need, and offered her servants as servants to the city.

THE REALMS OF THE CITY

See the map for more information.

Avielen	Flier (Avielinen Airstream)
Cataractapluvia	Rainbow falls
Hermes	Flame (Metroliner Hermes)
Isanta	Main, First (the Isanta Express was the main line)
Mansio Solis	Station of the Sun
Modal Vali	Musical wall
Nemus argentum	Silvertree
Portis	Port
Portis Mormos	Port of fate
Prata Carbonis	Coal Field
Prata Phoenix	Red Meadows
Prata Viridi	Green Field
Temaré Aethiopicum	Burning face of the sea
Temaré Pacificum	Peaceful sea
Valdevos River	Great canyon river

THE VOICE OF THE CITY



The language of the city is Latin; the script is Sumerian-like cuneiform, lots of little tees horizontally and vertically, each meaning a specific word.

THE MANANUBI

<p>Rare: Deserts Class: Divine Moral Code: Chaotic Evil Activity Cycle: Nocturnal Diet: Carnivorous Number: 2d10 Level: 5+1 Intelligence: Average Charisma: Average Movement: 15 Attacks: claws or by weapon Damage: 2d4 or +1 Defense: +5 Special Attacks: desert wail Special Defenses: iron or +1 weapon required to hit Size: Medium (6-8 feet)</p>
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The servants of Tifá skulk the alleys of the city and patrol the night outside the city walls. They still serve, and they rule their masters with whispers, threats, and lies. These jackal-headed scavengers of the abyss are thin and lean, with a soft covering of brown fur over their lanky human-like bodies. They carry bronze swords or spears, and can only be hit by iron weapons or +1 weapons. The mananubi look like the traditional Egyptian paintings of Anubis. They act as much like dogs and jackals as like humans. They are cunning scavengers and quick to exploit weakness.

The desert wail of two or more mananubi is a plaintive, echoing cry that calls up memories of the dead. It may only be performed in deserts or in the open under the night sky. Victims who are not yet hostile or aware of the mananubi can be numbed by this cry as they remember lost loved ones and fear the future. On a failed Willpower roll, victims will be unresponsive for 2d10 minutes—treated as unaware. Any damage will bring them out of the trance at the beginning of the next round. Extremely loud screaming or noise will give them one Perception roll to come out of the trance early; because of this, mananubi rarely kill entranced victims who are part of a group. The willpower roll is at a penalty of 1 if four mananubi wail, and 3 if eight mananubi wail.

Mananubi have an acute sense of smell and hearing. Their smell is as good as their hearing, and they can smell things happening just as we can hear them happening. They gain a Perception bonus of four for hearing and smelling things.

THE GOLEMS OF ENKI

Crystal dragons are the servants of the abyssal gods. They live in water and on coastlines. All crystal dragons can teleport by folding into strange angles and unfolding elsewhere. It takes one round to teleport, and the dragon can teleport up to 100 yards per level. They can attack on the same round they teleport, either before or after teleporting, but not both.

Crystal dragons regenerate crushing damage: their crystals easily reform. **They heal five points every round while alive.** When dead, they heal one point per hour until at their normal maximum. They are **immune to cold and electricity; heat damage only heals by one point every week.** As constructs rather than creatures, golems **do not count as a creature for spells** (such as mage bolt).

Crystal dragons are smaller than normal dragons, standing only ten feet, with a similar wingspan. They do not have a human form.

When sunlight, magical light, or other strong light is shining on them, **they can blind their opponents:** everyone must make an evasion roll to avoid a d6-round penalty of four to any action, including attack.

Salt Dragons

Salt dragons are formed out of the drying of ancient beaches. They can spew a briny sodium that burns for d6 rounds, and 2d6 damage per round, if the target fails an evasion roll. Water makes it burn faster: each round of pouring water on it causes it to burn for 4d6 damage but reduces the duration by one round. The brine forms a beam thirty yards long and eight yards wide at its end.

The gaze of a salt dragon encrusts its target in salt. If the target fails an evasion roll, they are encrusted and cannot move, and take 1d8 points damage per round for as long as they are encrusted. If they die, they become a pillar of salt.

Salt Dragons leave a trail of crusty brine behind them that leaches color from the ground.

The salt dragon guarding the city has 37 survival points.

<p>Rare: Ancient cities on the sea Class: Divine Moral Code: Evil Activity Cycle: Nocturnal Diet: Carnivorous Number: 1 or as summoned Level: 8 Intelligence: Average Charisma: Average Movement: 20 Attacks: claws/bite Damage: 2d6/2d6 Defense: +9 Breath: sodium three times per day Eyes: salt prison once per day Size: Huge (10 feet)</p>
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Amethyst Dragons

Amethyst dragons are formed out of underwater volcanos. They are immune to heat as well as the other immunities of crystal dragons.

Their breath dispels magic and suppresses magical items. It affects a cloud ten yards in diameter up to forty yards away. Sorcerers casting or maintaining spells within the cloud must make a Reason roll at a penalty of 8 or their spells are dispelled. Those caught in the cloud must make an evasion roll or anything magical they carry is inert for 2d6 rounds. Magical items get a further bonus of twice their defense bonus and/or attack bonus. Artifacts are unaffected.

The gaze of an amethyst dragon captures any large or smaller victim in a geode. If the target fails their evasion roll they are captured in a large geode, violet and shiny—and sharp—inside, and gray and crusted outside. The geode is stone, a foot thick. It contains enough air for one person for one hour. After the air is used up the character will suffocate as normal. Magical effects are suppressed by four levels within the geode and acting upon it.

<p>Rare: Ancient cities on the sea Class: Divine Moral Code: Evil Activity Cycle: Diurnal Diet: Carnivorous Number: 1 or as summoned Level: 8 Intelligence: Average Charisma: Average Movement: 20 Attacks: claws/bite Damage: 2d6/2d6 Defense: +9 Breath: dispels magic Eyes: geode prison once per day Size: Huge (10 feet)</p>
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The amethyst dragon guarding the city has 56 survival points.

THE RUINED CITY

When they arrive at the crossroads, the city is not there. Just endless desert, an ancient road, crumbled gates, and a half-sunk, shattered visage in stone. Everything is covered with a thin sheet of ice and snow. Just beneath the sand, if they go digging, are scores of mananubi skeletons.

Inside the ruins of the city, the divine prohibition against violence is no longer in effect. If the characters have been followed by hostile forces, this is where they will be attacked again.

Encounters within the ruins

The encounter chance is 30% every three hours; if summoning the city, roll every five minutes.

01-35	Weather	35%
36-55	Mananubi (2d6)	20%
56-67	Salt dragon	12%
68-79	Amethyst dragon	12%
80-90	Sidewinder	11%
91-00	Autumnal swarm	10%

For sidewinders and the autumnal swarm, use the Phoenix Highway encounter table.

Weather

01-30	Sandstorm (d4 hours)	30%
31-50	Snowstorm (d6 hours)	20%
51-70	Windstorm (d4 hours)	20%
71-90	Locusts (large swarm)	20%
91-95	Ghosts of a sidewinder city	5%
96-99	No sun (d4 hours)	4%
00	Ghost of the Isanta Express	1%

If the weather roll was made because they are performing a ritual, transform hours into minutes. For ghosts, use the sidewinder Phoenix Highway table. Ghosts are insubstantial cities, hazy, the wind blowing them like mist.

The river

The river starts at a well trickling out of the center of the city, where the Aureum would be. The trickle is covered over with snow, however, and will need to be searched for or stumbled over. Next to the ancient well, a shattered visage lies, half-sunk in earth, whose frown, and wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command lie hidden under snow and ice.

A place of power and the Pax Urbana

The ruined city is a +2 Place of Power, Order.

Getting into the City

There are two ways of getting into the City: summoning it, or finding a still-existent pathway into it.

Summoning the City

If they summon the City while standing within the gates of the ruined city, they must make an evasion roll or take 2d6 damage.

The Sword of Thracia can summon the City if held by someone with official power (such as a Quaestor...). If they don't know this, the tablet of war has the story.

A ritual using any of the tablets can also summon it. The more tablets they have, the less they will need to sacrifice and the more quickly they can perform the ritual. If they have more than one tablet, the ritual can require less sacrifice by placing a tablet at each of the four crumbled gates to the ruined city. Of course, until they summon the City, this also means that each tablet is easier to steal. And the tablets want to be stolen... The ritual will take a ninety-five minutes, minus ten minutes for every tablet they display. If they summon the City while standing outside the gates, they will see it appear safely. If they don't already know a ritual to summon the city, the tablet of the arts and the tablet of faith have that information.

Tablets	Sacrifices	Time
1	4 live sacrifices	1 hour 25 minutes
2	1 life sacrifice	1 hour 15 minutes
3	1 artifact sacrifice	1 hour 5 minutes
4	1 important sacrifice	55 minutes
5	1 internal, mental sacrifice	45 minutes
6	1 body sacrifice (hand, foot, etc.)	35 minutes
7	1 promise of the future	25 minutes
8	1 power sacrifice (holy symbol, staff of power)	15 minutes
9	no sacrifice necessary	5 minutes

A life sacrifice is the sacrifice of an intelligent creature. A mental sacrifice is the loss of some memory or mental capability.

The temples of the old world

All of the ancient temples were connected. The Temple of Apuiporo, or the Temple of Ishtar in the Lost City of Thracia, both have teleport pads. The pads are currently locked to go to specific places, their control panels broken. However, there may be teleport pads with intact control panels in other ancient temples. And if a character has faith, they can work the teleport pads without needing the control panels: the control panels were later additions to the temple pathways: all it takes is faith and a firm purpose for the faithful to travel from

temple to temple via the pads. Faith and a firm purpose can be simulated with a Wisdom roll by the person attempting to control the teleport (prophets need not make a Wisdom roll). The tablet of faith can tell them this, as can Divine Guidance.

Faith, it is said, can move mountains, but few have the faith to admit it. When faced with the power of faith they put strictures on it, they bind it in logic and buttons and levers. And then when the buttons are destroyed they think they have destroyed faith—they have only lost their own. Faith abides, and all of the temples of the old world were connected. They always were, they always will be.

The controls were built when the people lost faith. Rather than restore their faith in their gods, the clergy created a much more egalitarian solution to traveling between cities that made faith unnecessary.

Pathways to the City

It is also possible to enter the City by way of the tree, since the tree leads to all places. They will need someone skilled at navigating the tree, or someone (such as a Prophet) who can talk to the tree by way of something like Divine Guidance or Speak with Plants. The tablet of gardens can also provide a pathway from the tree to the City.

Every major metropolis has pathways leading to the City: Rome, New York, Hamokera, Metropolis at the height of their power and into their decline. There is only ever one major metropolis; in the worlds of Metropolis, New York is a secondary city like Gotham or London.

Within the ruined city, they will not meet any citizens of the City. On the Road, however, they might. Anyone who is native to the City will see the City, and can reenter it. They will be confused by and probably wary of anyone who claims to see just ruins. But a native might be able to be convinced to hold their hands and walk into the City.

Someone who is not native to the City, but who is already in it and walks out of it, can re-enter the City as a native for up to Wisdom hours.

Print the legend

If the characters arrive in the City via the Road, they will be preceded by their legends, as barbarian sages and kings, and this will increase their standing in the city, especially among the working class, such as it still exists within the City. While the legends will be exaggerated, they will be exaggerated only by a little, and the legends will be enough to easily identify the characters.

In the characters' favor, the legends are only circulated secretly among the workers of the City, the middle class; legends of the outside world have been forbidden by the Regents, and all those who work with the Regents abide by those edicts, though they ignore so many others. Thus, only those who are inclined to assist the characters will initially recognize them by their legends.

If they took a faster route they likely precede their legends.

THE FIRST CITY

The City is all cities. Here wander the ghosts of the greatest cities of the worlds at their heyday: Ancient Rome, New York City, Hamokera, Cartoril, Nineva, and Babylon. The Great Pyramid of the last mighty redoubt of man in the Night Land. Through its alleys one may leave to any great city in the world. But once you leave, it is exceedingly difficult to find your way back.

"Here, there are two cities, or rather, an infinity of them. Here you may find every great city of the worlds, and see the people of those cities as ghosts in the corner of your eyes."

"...that great city, descending out of heaven, her light was like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It had a wall great and high, and four gates, and the wall of the city had four foundations. The wall of the city was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall were garnished with bright stones. The first foundation was sapphire; the second, emerald; the third, onyx; and on the fourth an amethyst. And the four gates were four pearls: every gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

"The city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it. There is no night there; and they need no candle. The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it."

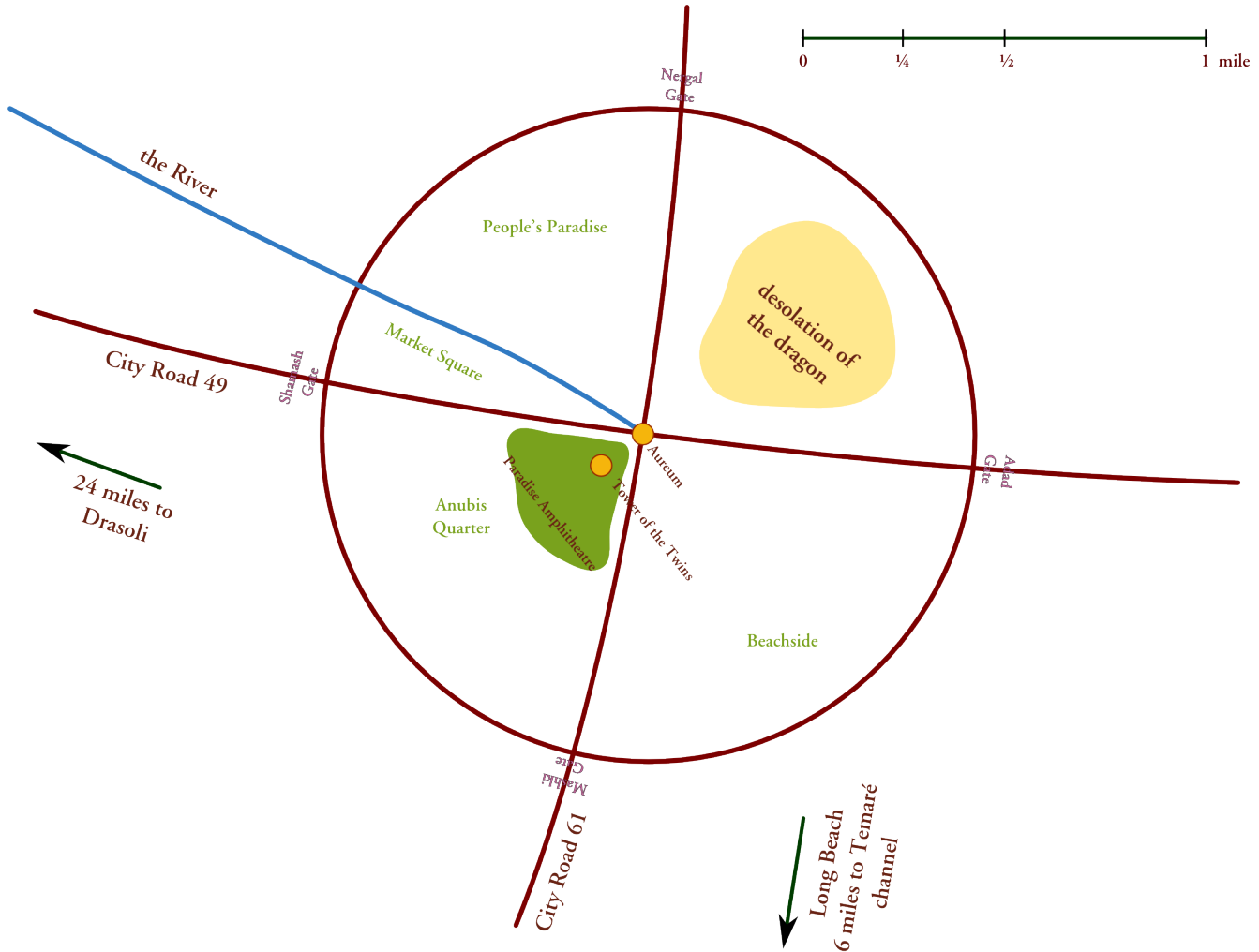
"There is a pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the city. Over the streets of the city, and on the other end of the river, is the tree of life, which bares the nine fruits, and yields her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations."

The walls

The walls are festooned with flowering vines, "like a bride adorned for her husband".

"You come to our city with dust caked upon your boots and a mind filled with purpose. Let us wash the road from your feet, and draw down your moon-bright goal."

Map of the city



Quarters of the City

The city is 1.6 miles in diameter, and so about two square miles. Originally composed of four quarters, the temple quarter has been destroyed and crusted in salt and brine. The Anubis Quarter is where the mananubi and the Twins live. It was once the arts quarter. Beachside was once an area of commerce and technological development, and filled with craftsmen, and remains the source of what remains of the city's wealth. Those caught within this quarter are imprisoned unless they can pay a fine; the mananubi only enter this area when they wish to imprison someone or collect more fines.

Most people live within the People's Paradise, which is thus crowded, with narrow alleys—the old glass buildings remain, but between them structures of wood and stone fill in the gaps. Market Square is where all public trading occurs. It is filled from six to seven and empty otherwise. There are no public stalls: all trading happens within the tents and after much verbal dancing to ensure that neither side will turn the other in.

A place of power and the Pax Urbana

The city is a +4 Place of Power, Order. The Pax Urbana applies throughout the City, and Willpower rolls to violate it are at a penalty of 4.

Buildings of the City

The city is filled with magic glass that flickers and flows around you; no doors are necessary in buildings made of this glass: you just walk through the glass.

Encounters

Within the City, they will meet many people. Roll for two encounters every day and one encounter every night. Encounters occur on a 40% chance. After a week in the city, encounter chances switch to per week. After a month, they switch to per month. Hopefully they don't stay longer than a year. Some important encounters are:

01-25 Mananubi (d6)	25%
26-45 machine shrine	20%
46-59 resistance messenger (d4)	14%
60-69 Amethyst dragon	10%
70-79 Salt dragon	10%
80-87 Resistance priest	8%
88-92 Traveler (see sidewinder table on the Phoenix Highway)	5%
93-96 Tawake-awahim	4%
97-00 Here-atahura	4%

Here are some sample names you can use for people in the City:

	Male name	Female name	Family name
1	Aranthur	Arathia	Apucu
2	Arnza	Arria	Arathenas
3	Aule	Corona	Calisna
4	Cuinte	Culni	Cecni
5	Kavie	Fastia	Fanacnei
6	Larce	Larcia	Latithe
7	Laris	Larthi	Hathli
8	Metie	Messia	Muthikus
9	Nerie	Panatia	Hermenas
10	Numesie	Perca	Nesithva
11	Pesna	Pevtha	Pumppli
12	Plecu	Pinaria	Larania
13	Sethre	Semni	Papni
14	Spurie	Seianthi	Saties
15	Teitu	Vela	Tarna
16	Thefarie	Thiphilia	Teithurna
17	Thucer	Thanusa	Uchsie
18	Velthur	Velthuria	Velcha
19	Venel	Tita	Satlana
20	Vulca	Vivinna	Visnai

Back alleys

You can shift from city to city by following the back roads and alleys. Look for small signs at first—an icon of Ishtar in the dust, a minaret in the haze in the distance, a shadow in the corner of your eyes—and follow it; if you find further signs, follow them; if you are on the right path the signs will grow, and you will come out of the alleys in a new city.

If relying on dice, this is a difficult perception roll.

Finding your way back is a lot harder, but the same process: you must look for signs of the city; this is more and more difficult the longer you wait. Each extra day means a penalty of 1 to your perception roll.

The River

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the City."

The river exits the Millarium Aureum and goes to Drasoli. It is, however, currently dry. When the tablets are restored, water will start flowing from the Aureum to the Tree. The more tablets, the more water. The people of the city pretend that the water is still running; they will be angry if water actually does begin to run again, unless the characters convince them of the water's benefits. "Something is polluting our water."

Millarium Aureum

A golden pillar that marks the center of the city, and, thus, the center of all the roads of the world. This is where the tablets must be laid out, in the open, facing the full circle of the world. They must have at least three of the tablets for the tablets to be protected; it takes three points to make a circle. There are nine tiny alcoves about five feet up encircling the golden pillar.

There is but one tree, one art, one road to travel.

There are nine fruit of the tree.

A gate for every road.

The aureus is of two parts. Inside at the street level is an ancient, stone dome. The tower is gold, and built around the aureus.

The Hall of Mirrors

On the seventh floor of the Millarium Aureum, within a lily-covered pool, is the circle of conflict, the hall of mirrors. Within the circle are seven mirrors around the center, which reflect the most perfect swords: Excalibur (Light from the Stone), Elessar Elessan (The Starlight Sword), Narsil (flame of light, later Andúril, flame of the west), and Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi (The Storm Clouds of Heaven) among others. All are swords of rulership wielded by earthly races: they are the engines of civilization. Excalibur (separated from its scabbard of healing), Elessar Elessan (broken in battle), Narsil (broken in battle) are all “twins”, swords shattered into more than one part.

Only warriors may enter the circle of conflict—and only they can see it. Others see a wide circular garden, with benches and vine-covered columns. Four thin bridges lead to the center.

If they bring a great sword that they wish to rid themselves of, such as *Elessar Elessan*, there will be an empty place for it. (There can also be an empty place to encourage them to search for the missing sword.)

The Circle of Conflict in the Station of the Sun was a debased interpretation of the true Circle. Strength and Peace are necessary for each other. Here, the warrior must face their demons, must know the riddle of the sword: that without war, there is no peace, only slavery and oppression. That without peace as its objective, war is brutal and endless without victory. The men who inhabit such a world are but animals, faithless, lost. The riddle is inscribed on a wooden trunk in the center of the circle.

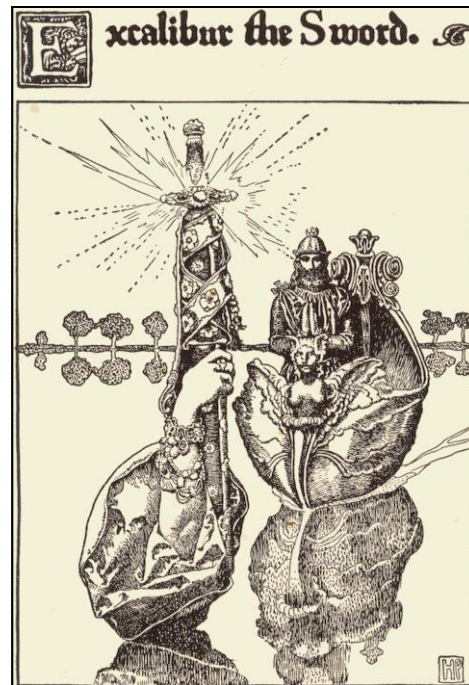
For what do you fight?

If you do not fight, what will you have?

The answers are “peace” and “war”, respectively, although any answer that fits the riddle is valid, at least for the second question—slavery, blood, oppression, for example, are good answers. If these two questions are answered correctly, the trunk unlocks. One of the swords appears within it, but it may not be removed without answering the final riddle, spoken as the character perceives the sword.

Warrior, in all your travels, who has been your most dangerous foe?

The answer is “myself” or “I have”. If answered correctly, the warrior may take the sword from the trunk. If answered incorrectly, the sword disappears. In either case, if the sword they wish to be rid of is placed in or on the trunk, it will disappear and appear in the mirrors. The sword they take will remain in the mirrors even if they successfully take it. It will be theirs for as long as they need it and no longer.



Here-atahura lives here, on the central dais, but **as a non-warrior, it cannot enter the circle**. Here-atahura will be here 90% of the time unless already defeated, driven away, or otherwise occupied. If Here-atahura is known to be elsewhere (such as giving the daily address) then it won't be here; immediately before or after the speech there's only a 40% chance it will be here. You can otherwise adjust the chance as needed.

If not here when they reach the seventh floor and if Here-atahura is still within the City, the dragon will arrive d6 minutes after a warrior enters the circle. While the dragon cannot enter the circle it does know if the circle is occupied. It will attempt to expel or kill anyone who is otherwise on the seventh floor and will wait to attack and steal the sword of anyone leaving the circle. When a sword is removed from the circle, this disrupts the Pax Urbana for d20 minutes; Here-atahura and Tawake-awahim know that they will have a window of opportunity to make start any attacks they wish immediately after a sword leaves the circle.

The Blasted Temples

The temples of the city have been destroyed by wind, ice, and desiccation: by the cursed breaths of the regents of Tifá. But the priests of Ishtar remain in the catacombs beneath the rubble, as the only opposition to the twins.

The rubble is filled with desiccated wood, salt-encrusted stone, and rust-infused dust.

The catacombs also have access to what remains of the old library, which was also part of the temple quarter.

The Mananubi slaves

Between the hours of 6 and 8, only mananubi servants walk the streets, performing their service for rich and poor alike. Between 8 and 9:30, there may be some humans on the streets if they have early appointments or such, but they'll be embarrassed by needing to keep a schedule. It's so servant-like. But the Crystal Express Metrorail has long since stopped running, they can't even use the tunnels as shortcuts—the mananubi say that there are monsters in the subterranean way and so only mananubi are allowed into the Crystal tunnels.

No human in the City works. They all rely on the mananubi, who are shared equally. No human has the rights to the service of any one mananubi, they take what they can get.

Mananubi bring food into the city; they prepare food and bring it to each household; they clean the streets and the houses (there are garbage dumps in the devastated temple square).

Officially, all food and goods come from the mananubi. However, much of the food and goods come first from the craftsmen and workers who surrender it to the mananubi if they are caught Beachside.

The Gods of the City

In the City, they no longer look to the ruins of their old gods. They worship the erratic machines of their past as gods. They hold ceremonies at the base of the great crystal spire—and the priests perform their rites while rising to the top as the crystals light.

They make pilgrimages to the garden of delights, the place where all dreams come true, if only for a few moments.

They lay offerings for the rolling eyes and abacus snakes that swarm in and out of the city's center, the great central abacus that monitors and cleans the sewers and aqueducts.

They kneel before the newspaper stand, that shows the city's past (no one now reports on news for the city) in words and pictures, and if they are wealthy enough to own one of the artifacts of the city, they make alcoves with candles and wreaths to store their newsroll. Many hang old newsrolls on their walls, but these icons rarely work. They occasionally flare into light with hazy images of the City of the past; the household usually finds a reason to be outside when this happens. It's frightening.

Even the giant newsrolls at the Aureum and around the City squares break in and out while the Twins congratulate the City on its good fortune and how well it's doing.

They pray before the great globe of storms, that sometimes in the lightning shows scenes from far away, and sometimes shows an ancient lady cackling in a tent.

If asked about some technology or mechanical thing in the city, the denizens will say that the servants know how those work; though if examined closely it will be obvious that the technology is poorly understood, and much of it failing.

THE REGENTS OF TIFÁ

“You who choose to lead, must follow... but if you fall, you fall alone.”

The regents of Tifá are a firestorm dragon and a mist dragon, two powerful lesser dragons. The people of the city try very hard to believe that the twins have returned in Tawake-awahim and Here-atahura. They live in the tower of the twins opposite the Aureum.

“Stranger, look with your heart, not with your eyes,” they’ll say, “and your eyes will see. They are indistinguishable.”

“The real truth lies not in what your eyes see but what your mind believes.”

“Don’t allow mundane experience to override the conviction of thousands of people.”

However, they must be twins for their rulership to be legitimate. The people will say they are twins; they will look askance and shun anyone who questions it, even asking “fraternal?” If pressed, they might admit some excuse, such as that one is slightly injured (they won’t commit to which one) or some other excuse.

Enki and Tawhiri are one. Tifá is chaos and dissension. Ebeorie is her servant. She is the dragon sent by Enki when Ishtar stole the tablets of civilization from the primordial world and brought them to the world of mortals. Ishtar escaped and the tablets founded the city, but now the dragons have returned to the city to take the tablets back from mankind.

And the player characters are bringing the tablets to the city.

Tawake-awahim and Here-atahura are servants of Tawhiri/Enki, and the regents of the Greater Dragon Tifá. They are scheming little bastards; loyal to their patron and their god but no one else. As regents of the City, they are not restricted by the Pax Urbana and may attack or be attacked without reaction rolls.

The Regents of Tifa also have spells and spirits, so set those up as well! Tawake-awahim, the Firestorm Dragon, is a 6th level prophet of Enki/Tawhiri. Here-atahura, the Mist Dragon, is a 6th level sorcerer specializing in Charm spells.

Tawake-awahim, the Firestorm Dragon (8th level dragon, 6th level prophet)**Class:** Dragon**Moral Code:** Ordered Evil**Activity Cycle:** Afternoon/Evening**Diet:** Omnivorous**Level:** Dragon 8, Prophet 6**Intelligence:** 12**Wisdom:** 17**Charisma:** 18**Dragon Movement:** 12 walking/24 flying**Special Movement:** 18 man/24 slithering**Attacks:** Claws, Bite**Survival:** 67**Damage:** 2d6/2d4**Defense:** +7**Breath:** Dessication (5d6 damage), three times per day, eight yard diameter cloud up to sixty yards away; an evasion roll is allowed for half damage**Eyes:** Irresistibility, once per day, lasts one hour. Victims are allowed a Perception roll to avoid the effects; everyone who meets them must make a Willpower roll or drop all current actions to fawn on the irresistible character.**Special Attack:** Snake poison, strength 4, d2 injuries**Forms:** Short black man with frizzy hair or a hundred poisonous snakes**Size:** Huge (5-7 yards) tall

The Ordered Evil offspring of Storm (Ordered Good) and Fire (Chaotic Evil), Tawake Awahim is lightning and fire, desire and charm. The firestorm dragon hearkens back to the boiling soup of creation. Awahim takes the form of a short black man with frizzy hair, or of a hundred poisonous snakes. It breathes desiccation and its gaze causes irresistibility. A victim caught in its gaze will be irresistibly attractive to everyone around them. Those who succumb to its breath dry into mummies, fragile things, easily blown on the wind. On a called attack by the dragon with its breath, it can turn any liquid to powder, and any wood or plant to an ancient fragile thing.

The firestorm dragon is very fast; as a man it can act twice per round. As snakes, it gains +5 to attack and has 5 attacks per round. It always uses called shots, as the snakes do no damage on their own but only as poison.

Awahim commands *Joe Lakono's* loyalty as incarnation of *Tawhiri*. It's specialties are *Exemplar of Ordered Evil*, *Spirit Attachment*, and *Spirit Drain*.

Exemplar of Ordered Evil: Awahim can make a Willpower roll to detect Chaos and/or Good up to twenty yards away. It is surrounded by a protection from good for one foot, which blocks contact by enchanted, conjured, or summoned creatures of any (or no) moral code. Good opponents are at a penalty of two to attacks, and its reactions against Good attacks are at a bonus of 2.

Spirit Attachment means that it can leave spirit manifestations around to trigger on certain actions.

Spirit Drain means it needs only one spirit of each type and can drain them as necessary for lower-level uses.

Awahim uses the spirit types Prophet, Death, Fire, Order, War, Water, and Weather and has 24 calling points. It usually has the following spirits, with some common manifestations for each:

Water 6	Cyclone Sigil (6), Watery Rebuke (5), Fog (4), Stillness (3), Warp (3), Sink (2), Foul Air (2), Dry Water (2), Obscuring Mist (2)
War 6	Summit (6), Branch of Truce (5), Despondency (5), Detect Enemies (4), Elemental Weapon (4), Divine Esteem (3), Divine Prowess (3), Fear (1), Divine Disfavor (1)
Order 6	Divine Contract (6), Branch of Truce (5), Invisibility to Chaos or Good (4), Command (2), Protection From Morality (1)
Death 6	Spiritual Torpor (6), Deathmask (5), Deadly Injury (5), Spiritual Hold (4), Stillness (3), Foul Air (2), Infestation (2), Darkness (1), Death and dust (1), Foxfire (1), Putrefy Food (1), Nauseate (1), Vermin Call (1)

Here-atahura, the Mist Dragon (8th level dragon, 6th level charm sorcerer)**Class:** Dragon**Moral Code:** Chaotic Evil**Activity Cycle:** Dawn, Twilight**Diet:** Omnivorous**Level:** Dragon 8, Sorcerer 6**Intelligence:** 17**Wisdom:** 12**Charisma:** 15**Dragon Movement:** 12 walking/24 flying**Special Movement:** 12 walking/20 mist**Attacks:** Claws, Bite**Survival:** 62**Damage:** 2d6/2d4**Defense:** +7**Breath:** Icy wind (4d6 damage), three times per day, in a beam thirty yards long, one yard at its base and eight yards at its end. It also causes a penalty of 4 to all actions next round due to the cold. An evasion roll is allowed to avoid the penalty and half the damage.**Eyes:** Haughtiness, once per day, lasts for one hour. A willpower roll avoids the effects.**Forms:** Young wastrel or a fast-flowing mist**Size:** Huge (5-7 yards) tall

The Chaotic Evil offspring of Water (Ordered Evil) and Forest (Chaotic Good), the mist dragon hearkens back to the amorality of the primordial. Atahura takes the form of a young wastrel of either gender, or of a fast-flowing mist. It breathes an icy wind and its gaze causes haughtiness and insensitivity. Those caught by the gaze of the dragon will ignore friends and enemies both as beneath them.

Atahura lives in a lily-covered pool atop the temple of the dragon, surrounding the Hall of Mirrors.

Atahura has the specialties Seat of Power, Staff of Power, and Sidespell. Its **Seat of Power** overlooks the lily-covered pool and the city. Its **Staff of Power** raises the level of all spells cast through it by one level, so that they are cast at the seventh level of effect.

Sidespell allows Atahura to store spells in its staff of power. Normally, Atahura will have one mage bolt and one silence stored in it. They will be cast at the seventh level of effect when used, and will have a casting time of one.

Atahura has the following spells available in its spellbook. The ones it normally memorizes are in bold. Atahura has 24 spell slots.

<p>First Level: Aura of Confidence/Desperation, Charisma, Farseeing, Indestructible Object, Inscription, Light/Darkness, Mage Bolt x 2, Sense Magical Aura, Suggestion, Understand/Confuse Languages</p> <p>Second Level: Crawl, Dead Night, Delay Passage, Fan of Frost, Illusory Self, Minor Phantasm, Sensory Assurance, Shadows, Sleep</p> <p>Third Level: Aura of Innocence/Guilt, Dark Bubble, Hide Item, Immovable Object, Intelligence/Stupidity, Mutual Understanding/Confusion, Secret Conference, Silence, Unravel Bonds</p> <p>Fourth Level: Agility/Clumsiness, Find Item, Invisibility, Personal Alteration, Wave Action, Web</p> <p>Fifth Level: Aura of Nobility/Depravity, Dispel Magic, Endurance/Sickly</p> <p>Sixth Level: Cold Flame, Find Magic</p>
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A speech for the Twins

The dragons cannot remove the tablets. If they touch the tablets, their true form will be revealed. But they can ask the people of the city to remove them.

My friends, we are not smooth-tongued, we are not deviants of the type who go from town to town seeking only to enrich themselves. We have no time for that. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that the helpers toil through the night and the early watch of the sun. Think about this for a moment. Do you know what would happen if we failed in our duty, if the helpers slept? War would come back! Yes, War would surely come back. War and thievery and corruption. None of us wish to see this.

If War comes back, if thievery returns, if corruption fills your city's halls, everyone's share will be diminished, and there will be hard work for all. I cannot speak for these outsiders, but nobody among us wants that, least of all us who care for you.

Be certain of this: the tablets are hidden in the tower, where they must remain hidden for the City to remain strong. These things brought by these corrupt outsiders are pale imitations of your true tablets. Take them and toss them into the trash; take them and send them to the depths of the ocean. Do what you wish with them, but do not sully your city by keeping them.

The decision is yours.

GOING HOME

Inspiration

1. Centre of Eternity, from *Bark at the Moon* (Ozzy Osbourne)

The dreams of the city

One way for the characters to return home is to use the dreams of the city to find one of the city's analogues, such as Byzantium, or Rome, or New York. But characters from Highland don't have a dream city to return to—Crosspoint is their biggest city and it isn't an Eternal analogue. They would have to go to Cartoril and sail west through the great storms.

The tree

Characters can climb the tree, following the branches of the tree as if it were a river. It reaches Highland in the center of the Weaving Wood. (A good place for Michael Malone's *Wandering Trees* from *Dragon* 57.)

All of the ancient temples were connected, and there is a temple underground in the Burren.

HIGHWAY SIXTY ONE

"I'm tired of searching for the answers, always out there on the run. I'm going back to where my heart is, down Highway 61."—John Anderson

Highway 61 continues past the city across a twenty-mile-long bridge over the channel between the Tamaré Pacificum and Tamaré Athiopicum. It continues past the Ferri Mountains and into the heart of Æthiopia.

THE ANCIENT TEMPLE OF THE DWARVES

The mountains of Æthiopia are a great place to put an adventure like *Hammers of the God* from Lamentations of the Flame Princess. If you use that particular adventure, I'd recommend adding some Mananubi corpses to the human corpses in the last battle. The dragon's servants whispered jealousies into the willing ears of the denizens of the city, and accompanied the war party.

You'll probably want to tailor the banes to whatever thing the player characters are carrying to the city. They're at the end of the adventure; now's probably not the time to add a completely new quest object. Something that they're looking for should be in the temple. In this case, a good choice would be one of the tablets of Enki.

King Jeremiah is, instead, the Regent of the City.

The fire seeds were stolen from the Autumnal Swarm—or possibly from the dragon Tifá.

The lessons of the Dwarves are:

1. To make weapons thinking never to use them is hubris. Weapons will be used; treat them, and make them, with respect for their purpose.
2. To give rather than to teach is selfishness—and teaches selfishness among both those who receive and those who see gifts given.
3. Rewarding corruption leads to greater corruption.

Another great adventure for Highway 61, also from LotFP, is *The Monolith from Beyond Space and Time*. (It might also make a great random encounter anywhere on Highway 49). Anything to do with worms inside the Monolith becomes the Autumnal Swarm. Also, besides all of its other issues, the Monolith is another chance to give up the quest and leave the Road.

THE PORT OF LOST SHIPS

A long, sandy beach, gulls, cold, on the west of the road. The water is brackish, salty, and undrinkable. The sun perpetually sets over the water and the port of lost ships. Everywhere, abandoned ships, lost ships from all eras of history, crashed and draped with seaweed in an ancient wharf. Every ship lost in the Bermuda Triangle is here, ships lost in wars and in storms and in the desolate wastes of the sea.

*Dark the sea was: but I saw him,
One great head with goggle eyes,
Like a diabolic cherub
Flying in those fallen skies.*

*I have heard the hoarse deniers,
I have known the wordy wars;
I have seen a man, by shouting,
Seek to orphan all the stars.*

*I have seen a fool half-fashioned
Borrow from the heavens a tongue,
So to curse them more at leisure—
—And I trod him not as dung.*

*For I saw that finny goblin
Hidden in the abyss untrod;
And I knew there can be laughter
On the secret face of God.*

*Blow the trumpets, crown the sages,
Bring the age by reason fed!
(He that sitteth in the heavens,
'He shall laugh'—the prophet said.)*

—Gilbert Chesterton's The Fish

RESOURCES

1. The **Glendale Train map** is an Inkscape svg file. I've included two PDFs, one with a grid and one without.
2. The **Yellow Forest map** is an Inkscape svg file. I've included a PDF as well.
3. The **map of the Temple of Apuiporo** is an Inkscape svg file. I've included a PDF.
4. The **Realms of the City** and The **Fallen City** are Inkscape svg files. I've included a PDF with and without a grid of the Realms.
5. The cover image is a **locomotive roundhouse** in Chicago, from the Chicago & Northwestern Railway. The **passenger train** that heads up the Glendale Train section is a photo of an 1890s coal-fired steam engine from the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railway. Both images are public domain. The actual Metroliner Hermes looks more like the streamlined Challenger 4-6-4 on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Challenger_\(passenger_train\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Challenger_(passenger_train)) but I haven't been able to find any public domain images of it.
6. The multi-colored **crossroads symbol** on the back cover is a Persistence of Vision rendering. I've included a PNG of it.
7. The **Station of the Sun road sign** is an Inkscape svg file; I've included a PNG of it.
8. The **proud jaguar on the rocks** is a public domain image.
9. The **fern-filled jungle** is an Inkscape tracing of a public domain image of the Sierra Madre jungle on Wikimedia Commons, by Perojevic.
10. The GIMP-modified image of **Angkor Thom's Bayon temple** is modified from a public domain image of Justin Watt's on Wikimedia Commons.
11. **Excalibur the Sword** is a public domain Howard Pyle drawing from 1902.
12. The **cuneiform** of Anu is a public domain svg from Geoff Richards off of Wikimedia Commons. The Inanna and Deep water cuneiforms are traced from the UTF-8 cuneiform block.
13. The **eight-pointed Ishtar star** is a public domain svg from Raphael 75 on Wikimedia Commons.
14. The gates of Eden and the flood waters used for the Gates of Hell and the Eternal City are Thomas Cole paintings from Wikimedia Commons.
15. **Joe Lakono's character sheet** is a Scribus document; I've also provided the PDF for him both at 9th and 10th level. The **Mask of Hina** is also a Scribus document. It uses a photo of a Maori carved house post returned to the public domain by Kahuroa on Wikimedia Commons. I've added a border in GIMP, and provided the GIMP document as well.

You can download Scribus, Persistence of Vision, Inkscape, and GIMP for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE ROAD

Most cultures have myths of the passing of knowledge from the gods (or animals) to men, through trees or trickery. Any prophets in the party must have their mythology tied in some way to the road. Someone has taken knowledge, and someone else is waiting to take it back.

Arthur the king

This is a story of the tablets, too. Arthur's stone was a tablet of Enki. The sword Arthur drew from the stone was the art of war.

There are tales of a king in the library, named Artur or Artorius. In some of the stories, King Arthur's stone was a tablet. When Arthur pulled the sword from the stone, he was drawing the art of war from the ancient tablets.

Enki

Enki is known as the confuser of languages.

Once upon a time there was no snake, there was no scorpion,
There was no hyena, there was no lion,
There was no wild dog, no wolf,
There was no fear, no terror,
Man had no rival.

In those days, the lands of Kish and Thracia,
Harmony-tongued Sumer, the great city of the road,
Quirinus, the land having all that is appropriate,
The land Martu, resting in security,
The stones incircling, the people in unison
To Enlil in one tongue spoke.

Then Enki, the lord of abundance whose commands are trustworthy,
The lord of wisdom, who understands the land,
The leader of the gods,
Endowed with wisdom, the lord of Ishtar
Changed the speech in their mouths, brought contention into it,

Into the speech of man that had been one,
fragmented the stone into nine,
the road into roads unnumbered,
The speech of the cities into vagabond wanderings.

This is from the Sumerian epic, Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta.

Ishtar

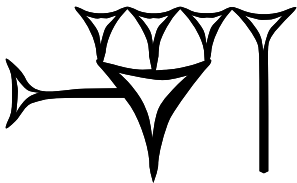
She stirs confusion against those who disobey her, spreading carnage and floods. She appears clothed in terrifying radiance. She welcomes conflict and hates waiting. When war looms she walks to meet it, confident, untiring, strapping on her sandals to leave the palace. “If there must be trouble, bring it now, that my children may have peace.”

She walks among the downtrodden when the day’s work is done, wearing the garments of the poor. When the servants let the flocks loose, and when cattle and sheep are returned to cow-pen and sheepfold, then the lady Ishtar, like the nameless poor, wears only a single garment. The pearls of a prostitute are around her neck, and she is likely to snatch a man from the tavern for a single memorable night.

In Sumeria she is Inanna; the Greeks name her Astarte. She is the goddess of fertility, love, war, and sex. She rides the storm and rises as Venus at dawn. She is one of three sky gods: Ishtar (Heaven, knowledge), Shamash (Sun, healer), and Sin (Moon, visions, kingship), born of four primordial gods: Anu (Sky, Stars, Demons), Enlil (Wind), Ki (Earth), and Enki (Waters, Abyss, Crafts).

Her temple is called “house of heaven”. The greatest was in Kish, first city after the flood she loosed upon the earth. Nineveh worships her still. Her feast day is the day of the sacred marriage, held at the spring Equinox, and it marks the new year. She is the lady of the sky, daughter of Sin (the moon, who rides a winged bull) and consort to Anu (the sky).

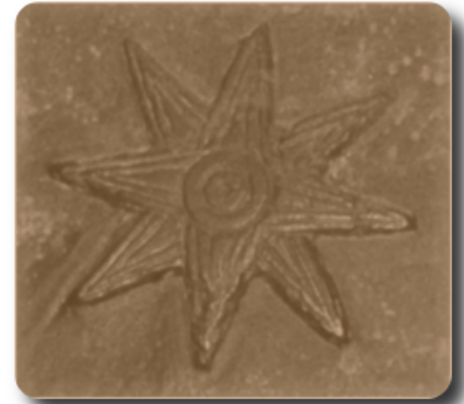
She is the prometheus, the lore-bringer. She tricked Enki into giving her the tablets of civilization, the knowledge of truth, weaving, prostitution, and all crafts and sciences. She plied him with strong beer and left in her sailboat at night while he slept. When he sobered, he sent the regents of Tifá after her boat as it sailed the great ocean; but she escaped the dragons and brought the stone tablets of civilization to the shores of man. Enki’s dragons yet follow down the waters of the abyss. When they reach the city they will retake the tablets.



Her symbol is an eight-pointed star, or a lion; she is often shown standing on the backs of two lions. Her cuneiform ideogram is a hook-shaped twisted knot of reeds, representing the doorpost to the house of plenty (the storehouse).

She opens doors. She travels to the underworld through many gates; for every gate she exchanges a piece of her clothing. When she returns she retakes her clothing, and must send someone to take her place in the underground. She sends her lover, such as her first love, Tammuz.

The tower of Babylon was built to store the tablets that Ishtar stole from Enki. The tablet of language and the tablet of faith were stolen as they were carried to the top of the finished tower to be hidden away for safekeeping that the city might remain strong.



Moses

The tablets of the law are, obviously, a story of Enki. Moses climbed Mount Sinai during a great storm to return with the tablets of the law.

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the Lord. Under his feet was a pavement of sapphire sparkling like the heavens. God lay out a feast for the elders, but Moses was not to eat of food nor drink the water of the mountain.

The Lord said to Moses, “Come to Me on the mountain, and I will give you tablets of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them to Israel.”

Moses and Joshua went up the mountain. A storm covered it, and the glory of the Lord flashed on Mount Sinai. For six days the storm covered the mountain, and Moses waited for the commands of the Lord.

On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from the cloud. Moses entered into the cloud, and was hidden from the world for forty days and forty nights.

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall not murder. You shall not deal falsely with your neighbor. You shall not covet thy neighbor’s house. You shall bow to none but the God of the Burning Tree, God of the High Mountain, and God of the vast waters. You shall observe the festival of the first fruits of the tree.”

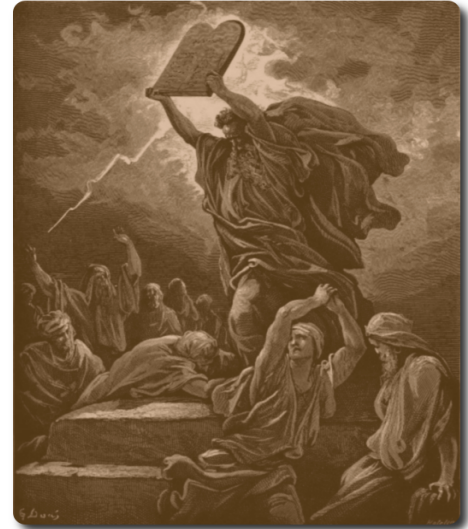
The glory of the Lord looked as a devouring fire atop the mountain. When the Lord finished speaking to Moses, he gave him the two tablets of the law; inscribed front and back by the finger of God.

Moses turned and went down the mountain, carrying the tablets of law before him. As they neared the elders, Joshua cried, “there is the sound of war within the camp!”

Moses replied, “this is not the sound of victory; it is not the sound of defeat. It is singing that I hear. The Lord has told me of this, and He is mighty angry. But I have spake to the Lord and begged his mercy upon the elders of Israel.”

They approached the camp and saw a golden calf, and the elders of Israel dancing around it. His anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf and burned it in the fire; he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and he made the Israelites to drink of their iniquity.

The Lord then said to Moses, “carve for me two stone tablets like the ones I gave to you, and I will write on them the words of the law, which you shattered.”



So Moses carved two stone tablets and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning. The Lord came down in his cloud and proclaimed his Name. “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin; yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punished the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

Moses walked with the Lord forty days and nights without bread or water. And the Lord inscribed again upon the tablets the word of the law. When Moses came down from the mountain his face was radiant with the light of God, and he veiled his face from the people until he saw the Lord again.

The Israelites made an ark of makaci wood to house the tablets, according to God’s instructions, overlaid with gold inside and out, and upon it a crown of gold, with four golden rings in the corners and again on the sides. Into the rings were staves of makaci wood, covered in gold. The testimony of God was laid therein. Upon the ark they lay a mercy seat of golden cherubim for the Lord to speak. Before it they placed a table of makaci wood, golden laid and crowned, and with four rings of gold in the corners, and golden staves of makaci wood with which to bear the table. Upon the table were dishes of gold, and candlesticks of a trunk and six branches, and flowers, and seven lamps upon the candlestick of seven lamps. And the ark was placed behind ten curtains of linen, blue, purple, and scarlet.

Oghma

The center of the world is the Great Ash, Cran-Bethadh. Its roots run through all things. When you call forth spirits you are calling on the tree to make itself known to you. All creatures and all things walk its roots and branches.

The Druids venerate Earth, Tree, and Mountain, but the god of the Druids is wisdom. He delivered the knowledge of life and language to the Celts and entrusted it to the Druids for safekeeping. Oghma and two brothers overthrew the Fomorians, their fathers, who lived across the sea. But he is also the fruit of the World Ash Crann Bethadh. To gain the knowledge that man needed to survive, Oghma traveled to the Crann Bethadh at the crossroads of the world, climbed into the tree, and hung there for nine months, and each month the tree showed him one of the paths of the road. When he descended from the tree, he returned to the Celts with language and craft.

His symbol is the Celtic cross that marks the four corners of the world.

The Fomorians yet wait across the sea, biding their time until they can retake the knowledge that is rightfully theirs.

Tane and Maui

When formless Atea divided into Heaven and Earth, the two gods mated, and stayed together for the sake of the children. The children weren’t too happy about this: there wasn’t even enough room between Earth and Sky to walk upright. The offspring of Atea held council and discussed three options. Tawhiri wanted things to stay the same. Tu wanted to kill their parents. Tane’s solution was to push their parents apart. He did so without the consent of his brothers, and a long war raged afterward. Tawhiri and Tangaroa sent great winds from across the sea, and great waves across the lands. Tu stood against Tawhiri, using secret spells, and stole all of Tane’s birds and all of

Tangaroa's fish. Tu sent Tawhiri back to the ocean, and Tane finally vanquished Tu. When he did, he took Tu's spells and made them his own; and these spells taught men to fish, and to weave, and to build.

During the war, earth was broken into several pieces, and these islands were spread far apart. But with Tane's new knowledge, people were able to navigate from island to island, and were able to catch fish for food and grow taro to eat.

But still earth and sky long to be together, Tawhiri waits out in the ocean to return with the storm, Tangaroa waits with him, and eats the canoes of Tane's fishermen with his tentacles, and Tu plots to regain his mako'i spell tablets.

The tablets of Tu are written on mako'i wood from the sacred grove on the great island. They are hidden in Tane's secret tiki house on a great island of plentiful fruit and trees.

The great tree is Puko, the talking tree.

Possible answers to Divine Guidance

In response to questions about where the gods come from:

“You travel the road with many faiths; some adherents less curious than thee. But you will best have that answered by a friend of the animals, whose worship is the tree.”

“There is no god but hangs from the tree.”

ARTIFACTS OF THE ROAD

The sword of Thracia

This sword can be placed in an encounters on the road to the City. I put it in the temple of the lizard-king in the *Caverns of Thracia*.

The sword is called *Sarshuharu Shulimkagul*, the Sword of the King of the Four Gates. It was a gift of Quirinus, God of Summer Flame. With this sword the King of Thracia burst the gates of the City against the dragons of Tifā after Thracia answered the City's cry for help. "Ati me peta babka", he cried, "Gatekeeper, open your gates", as he and his army road onto the plains of the city. And because he was an official of the City, a servant of the Pillar and the Tree, the gates were opened.

Gatekeeper, open your gates!
 If you open not the gate to let me enter,
 I will break the gate, I will wrench the lock,
 I will smash the gateposts, I will force the gates.
 I will bring up the hosts of the pillar and the tree,
 and the dead will outnumber the living.
 Gatekeeper, open your gates!

The dragon tails on the hilt are gold. It is a +2 sword; +4 vs. evil dragons. In the hands of someone with official power granted by the City or the empire of the City, it can cause the City to appear at the Crossroads by calling "Ati me peta babka" three times within six minutes. This will also awaken the guardian of the gates: the first time it is said, something shines in the center of the ruined city: a salt dragon forming. The second time it is said, the salt dragon unfolds and refolds directly in front of the speaker and attacks (most likely spewing briny sodium), before they can speak it a third time. On the third time, the city appears.

When within the City, it has an additional +1 to attack (but not to damage, though warriors can of course divert it to their combat pool), for every tablet that is displayed at the Aureum.

This is a sword. Everything else you've ever used has been a meat-cleaver.

The Tablets of Enki

Know then that all those exercises that men call arts, and all wisdom and all knowledge, are but humble branches of that worthy study that is justly named the Art.

There are nine tablets. Tablets in the city influence all of the worlds of the tree. The domains of tablets that are not in the city are fragmented. Thus, no one today speaks the language of the city; all languages have fragmented. And everyone worships echoes of the original gods. The tablet of animals is gone, and so there are monsters and the Autumnal Swarm. Off of the road, the tablet influences the area around the tablet. The stone of Arthur was one of the tablets of Enki, and it granted him the art of war and a desire for civilization. The tablet of war was once in Highland; this is why war was used even to solve scholarly disputes.

The language of the tablets is a proto-language, the language of the city, a written and a spoken language. It is not Latin, but it once was. They appear to be the reader's native tongue unless carefully examined, but this first language everyone can read if they can read at all.

The tablets are not magical; they are divine artifacts. Possession of a tablet grants great skill in the areas that the tablet covers. The tablets have a tendency to disappear once found.

The tablets have a bulk of 40. They're about 31 inches by 20 inches by 1 inch and made of stone, clay, or petrified wood. Their form can change depending on the culture in which they reside, but once on the Road they are tablets of stone.

Anyone reading a relevant tablet gains a bonus of 4 to any rolls covering the tablet's field of knowledge. For studying, a tablet is a never-depleting mojo resource for study in its field of knowledge. Wisdom is required to effectively use the tablets, though anyone can use them to some extent: the tablet is treated as a mojo resource of ten times the reader's wisdom.

However, the concentrated wisdom found in a tablet is dangerous. Anyone successfully using a tablet on a roll or to gain a field, field bonus, or skill must make a Willpower roll (or their archetypal reaction roll if the tablet and the field pertain directly to their archetype). On a failed reaction, they gain d3 injuries if they were making an individual roll or d6 injuries if they were gaining a field bonus, field, or skill.

Within a place of power, such as the ancient temple of Apuiporo, the tablets grant special facility within the place of power. It is easy to learn languages at Apuiporo because the tablet resides there, even though no one knows about it.

Places that have tablets become places of power, with a level equal to the number of tablets there.

Tablet	Teaches	Location	If this tablet is in the city, what happens?
war	warrior arts, justice	Tomb of Clanricarde	The cities of the road are secure against the dark, if they choose to defend themselves. Justice prevails for those who choose it. Otherwise, justice is a twisted draught given by the strong, the wise, or the unknown.
crafts	woodwork, pottery, weaving	unknown	Craftsmanship advances to its apex, and the tools of the craftsman spread through the road. Otherwise, the crafts must be rediscovered from generation to generation, from village to village, and many crafts are lost for centuries, practiced only sporadically by great men.
fire	mining, smelting, metalwork	Lost Dwarven mine	Technology advances in conjunction with magic or the divine. Otherwise, there is no technology. Man's day is spent fighting nature for each drop of water and each loaf of bread.
language	languages, speaking, communication	Library at Apuiporo	Everyone speaks a common language. Trade flourishes. Otherwise, a multitude of languages flourish, and misunderstanding reigns.
gardens	farming, botany, gardening	Library at Apuiporo	A “garden of Eden”. Trees awaken, and the great tree speaks everywhere. Otherwise, the roots of the tree are hidden, and plants are twisted.
animals	herding, breeding, biology	Cartoril	Monsters scatter and eventually fade. Otherwise, twisted animals roam the worlds.
music	inspiration and the arts: magic	Luputac, the lost city	Art is magic; all magic is art; dreams are real; muses are free. Otherwise, magic is the domain of evil men in distant towers.
law	government, civilization	Elven underground	Democracy flourishes across the worlds. Otherwise, men are ruled and rulers, slaves and slave-owners, and the people demand kings.
faith	lore of the gods and worship of the divine	Circus	Everyone worships common gods, with one Lord, one Tree, as the font of all. Gods live among us in the manner of Olympus and the antediluvian world. Otherwise, the gods are fractured mirrors of the original gods scattered throughout the lands.

Various mirrors of the original gods have their stories of the tablets. Here is the story of Ishtar:

When Ishtar left Enki, drunken and spent in his castle beneath the waves, she loaded to her vessel the nine stones of enlightenment. These stones she brought to shore and displayed in the market of the City, and the City flourished in their light.

From the tablet of war the people of the City learned to defend themselves against the servants of Tifá. From the tablet of crafts they learned all manner of woodworking, pottery, and weaving. From the tablet of fire they learned to smelt metals from the mountains, and to work that metal into tools for the advancement of war and craft. From the tablet of words they learned the one tongue of the road, and traded their crafts through the cities of the road.

From the tablet of gardens they learned to grow food and flower for the nourishment of body and soul. From the tablet of animals they learned the hunt and the herd. From the tablet of music they learned all arts to move mind and mountain. From the tablet of law they learned the government of themselves.

From the tablet of faith they learned the lore of the gods and the wisdom of a servant's heart.

Ishtar left the tablets in the City's care with this command: the tablets must be displayed to the tree; thus their light illuminates the city. Hoard them, and they will be stolen. Hide their light, and they will be lost.

If a prophet if Ishtar is quested to find one or more of the stones, Ishtar—or her consort Tammuz who is fated to die—may talk to them during a *Divine Guidance*. Remember that if the prophet is straying from the path Ishtar set for them, Ishtar can choose to give them spirits other than the spirits they ask for—such as replacing one with a *Prophet* spirit capable of manifesting *Divine Guidance*.

They chose to live in ignorance and poverty of mind, rather than let others live in the light of knowledge and wealth ungranted. So they hid the tablets in the tower. But anything hidden will be stolen, and so the tablets scattered to the vaults of the unlawful. What the city did was put the tablets beyond the reach of all but thieves and burglars; so it is that thieves and burglars only may benefit from them.

The problem is that there was not and could not be a tablet against envy. The nature of mankind is the freedom to choose good or evil. You remember the tower of Babylon? Tell me the Tower of Babylon.

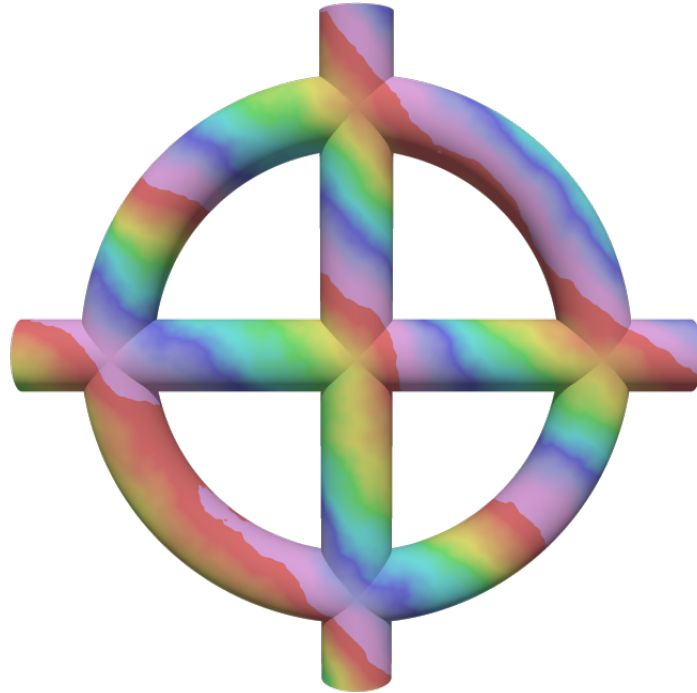
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Here's the part they neglected to tell you in the temples of Kish: they didn't put the tablets in the tower to glorify the gods. They put the tablets in the tower because they were envious that other peoples of the road knew the blessings of the tablets without submitting to the authority of the City.

THE CROSSROADS

It begins with a grass-covered path flanked by flowering trees. The red road is cracked and dusty. Where grand carriages once drove between towering cities, strange creatures scurry from shadow to shadow in the hot sun. The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, corruption beckons, and death waits in the sere ground.

But why think about that when all the golden land's ahead of you and all kinds of unforeseen events wait lurking to surprise you and make you glad you're alive to see?



THE ROAD IS LIFE