

# D&D PATHFINDER®



## EXTINCTION EXCURSE

### PLAYER'S GUIDE

By Ron Lundeen



# PATHFINDER

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# EXTINCTION CURSE

## Extinction Curse Player's Guide

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## Extinction Curse Player's Guide

An evil hungers beneath the earth. This ancient enemy seeks to undo Aroden's work from millennia ago and bring desolation to the Isle of Kortos. The heroes destined to confront this enemy have humble beginnings, working as members of a novice circus troupe on the Isle of Erran, just off the north coast of the Isle of Kortos. These humble heroes are fated for much more than the circus, however, and with skill and luck might save the entire region from the *extinction curse*!

### Coming Together

The Extinction Curse Adventure Path begins near the small town of Abberton on the Isle of Erran. Abberton has little to recommend it to anyone but its insular inhabitants. Its once-thriving farms produce fewer and fewer crops, and its ranchers have smaller herds than in prior generations. The town's sheriff has disappeared, and some of its most prominent citizens are gone—no doubt seeking greener pastures elsewhere, the townspeople mutter. If the people of Abberton are in need of anything, it's a spectacle to distract them from their daily woes—a spectacle like a traveling circus.

The Circus of Wayward Wonders has arrived and can provide just the exhibition the town needs. The newly formed circus is built on the high hopes of its members. Many are former employees of the Celestial Menagerie, a circus in the nearby port city of Escadar. The manager of the Celestial Menagerie, a cruel catfolk named Mistress Dusklight, is abusive to her employees and downright sadistic to the many animals she exhibits. Her shows are always wondrous to behold, and she brings in significant funds operating one of Escadar's most celebrated attractions. But the public face Mistress Dusklight displays to the crowds is a thin veneer over her callous and self-serving nature. Some of Mistress Dusklight's employees—perhaps including the heroes—decided they'd had enough of her tyranny and slipped away to form their own circus. These refugees from the Celestial Menagerie founded the traveling Circus of Wayward Wonders.

After a few seasons to acquire equipment, train, and practice their shows, the Circus of Wayward Wonders is ready for its first big public show, hosted by the town of Abberton.

### Character Tips

Your characters are all members of the Circus of Wayward Wonders. Not every character needs to be a circus performer seeking to dazzle crowds in the big top. After all, even a small traveling circus needs many roustabouts, animal tenders, mechanics, healers, chefs, and others. Nevertheless, each character should

### ADVENTURES IN THE STARSTONE ISLES

In many ways, the Extinction Curse Adventure Path is a counterpoint to the upcoming Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path. Extinction Curse takes place around the Isle of Erran and the Isle of Kortos (and some startlingly far-flung locales), but it doesn't focus on Absalom at all. In fact, heroes in Extinction Curse might never actually set foot in the metropolis, except perhaps for quick vignettes if the heroes need to shop for expensive gear or acquire powerful magic.

The Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path is, in many ways, the opposite: its action takes place within Absalom right from the beginning, and the surrounding settlements don't play much into its unfolding events. The two Adventure Paths also contrast in some key character assumptions: heroes in Extinction Curse are more likely chaotic, while those in Agents of Edgewatch are probably lawful.

The upcoming *Absalom, City of Lost Omens* is useful for learning about the city itself, but the book contains information and adventure hooks for the surrounding area as well, so it makes a good resource for Extinction Curse.

consider the Circus of Wayward Wonders to be home, and the other circus members to be friends or even family. This circus is destined to see greater successes as the Extinction Curse Adventure Path unfolds, and that's primarily because the heroes care about the circus and are personally invested in making sure it succeeds. Many members of the Circus of Wayward Wonders simply don't have anywhere else to go; the thought of settling down seems unbearably stifling to their restless blood, and they can't return to their former employment with the Celestial Menagerie without expecting beatings or worse. It's perfectly fine to have a hero with no close ties to anyone else in the world beyond the other heroes or other members of their circus.

The Extinction Curse Adventure Path has its fair share of traditional adventuring elements: the heroes will navigate deadly dungeons, interact with colorful NPCs in engaging social encounters, acquire legendary treasures, and solve millennia-old mysteries. Yet all of this is framed by the heroes' role within the traveling circus. The heroes won't be in any one place for long, and they're far likelier to make their living in rustic settlements rather than big cities. The chance to perform in Absalom, the City at the Center of the World, is enough to motivate any aspiring performer, but the Extinction Curse Adventure Path instead focuses on many of the communities scattered around



the Isle of Erran and the Isle of Kortos, rather than Absalom itself.

## ALIGNMENT

There isn't any restriction on character alignments in the Extinction Curse Adventure Path. The heroes are more likely to be chaotic than lawful, as the life of an itinerant circus performer tends to draw people who chafe at society's rigid rules. But lawful heroes also have their place, as the circus requires rigorous training and day-to-day dedication. Some circus members are morally flexible or even selfish, although most like helping others and providing an enjoyable spectacle to strangers. The most important elements of the characters' outlook are that they must be willing to work together and be invested in protecting the Circus of Wayward Wonders. Any alignment choice can work with this outlook.

## ANCESTRIES

Circuses draw an exceptionally eclectic array of performers. Further, many circuses employ those who are marginalized or considered unemployable elsewhere. This is particularly true of the Circus of Wayward Wonders, whose members consciously left behind the tyranny of Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie. Any ancestry makes a good fit for the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, even those who aren't generally found in the Inner Sea region.

## CLASSES

Members of any class will have plenty of moments to shine in the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, but keep in mind that at least some of the heroes—and perhaps all of them—make their living by performing exciting or dangerous spectacles in a traveling circus. Bards and rogues fit into this lifestyle, but the showy wonders that alchemists, sorcerers, and wizards provide are truly magical. Barbarians, fighters, and monks display athletic prowess sure to please a crowd. Many circuses include animal acts, and the Circus of Wayward Wonders is no exception; classes such as druids and rangers are therefore a natural fit. Such characters also fit well into one of this Adventure Path's themes: inexorable environmental deterioration. The heroes will learn that Abberton isn't the only community suffering from ecological decline. Considering that the heroes will take on the dangers of being adventurers as well as circus performers, they are likely to need the valuable aid that champions and clerics can provide.

## LANGUAGES

Although Common is likely to be sufficient for most heroes, certain other languages might prove useful

to know. Draconic, Elven, and Undercommon make good language selections, as each has some use during the Adventure Path.

## SKILLS

The heroes will perform best if their party contains a well-rounded selection of skills and feats. Although Performance is a key skill for many entertainers, circus stars can entertain in a variety of ways. Other heroes may instead focus on Acrobatics or Athletics to perform physical stunts, or on social skills such as Deception or Diplomacy to woo crowds. The best Lore skill to acquire is Circus Lore, as this skill covers knowledge about how to run a circus as well as folklore about legendary circus acts. As the heroes will encounter myriad creatures and adventure in a wide variety of terrains, Lore choices for many monster types and terrain types are likely to be useful as well.

## Backgrounds

The following backgrounds are particularly suitable to characters in the Extinction Curse Adventure Path, although heroes can select any background they want—people come to the circus from all walks of life, after all. Among the backgrounds presented in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, the most suitable choices are Acrobat, Animal Whisperer, Charlatan, Entertainer, Fortune Teller, Laborer, Street Urchin, and Tinkerer.

### AERIALIST

### BACKGROUND

Experienced with trapezes, aerial silks, and hoops, your skill is in performing death-defying stunts high above the ground. The Celestial Menagerie skimped on safety devices such as nets and quality ropes, so you also learned to take a fall better than most. After a harrowing near-death experience involving a cracked trapeze bar, you decided to take your expertise elsewhere.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Acrobatics skill and the Rope Lore skill. You gain the Cat Fall skill feat.

### ANIMAL WRANGLER

### BACKGROUND

You have a long history of working with large circus animals for the Celestial Menagerie, such as performing in an animal act, jostling animals back into their cages, or even sweeping dung out of squalid pens. Mistress Dusklight's ongoing mistreatment of her animals compelled you to quit, and you now strive to ensure animals aren't abused.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Wisdom, and one is a free ability boost.



# EXTINCTION BY CURSE

You're trained in your choice of the Athletics or Nature skills. You gain a skill feat: Titan Wrestler if you chose Athletics, or Train Animal if you chose Nature. You are also trained in a Lore skill related to a particular kind of common animal (such as Equine Lore, Feline Lore, or Pachyderm Lore).

## **BARKER**

## **BACKGROUND**

You're skilled at shouting to catch and keep the attention of passersby. A few well-timed and forcefully spoken words not only get people to notice you but also engage them to respond to you. You may have previously worked as a crier or in a more formal barker capacity with Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie. Either way, your ability to bully a crowd is impressive.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Constitution or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Intimidation skill and the Crowd Lore skill. You gain the Group Coercion skill feat.

## **BLOW-IN**

## **BACKGROUND**

You never expected to join a circus, but you were looking for a good place to lie low for reasons of your own. The Circus of Wayward Wonders came together with several different workers and performers a few months ago. Many came from a circus in Escadar called the Celestial Menagerie, but not all of them. It was easy to slip in among the roustabouts. Although you'd planned to move on quickly, the circus folk have adopted you as one of their own, and they don't ask questions about your past.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in your choice of the Deception or Thievery skills. You gain a skill feat: Lengthy Diversion if you chose Deception, or Subtle Theft if you chose Thievery. You are also trained in the Underworld Lore skill.

## **BUTCHER**

## **BACKGROUND**

You've spent uncounted hours walking up and down crowded and noisy circus stands, inventing innovative means to sell refreshments, food, and novelties at inflated prices. (You might know very little about slaughtering animals; "butcher" is a circus slang term for a vendor.) The Celestial Menagerie constantly pushed you to figure out how to sell increasingly shoddy toys to children and how to conceal the taste of spoiled treats that should have been discarded days earlier. You peddled disappointment and hated it, so you left to seek a new line of work—although you're not yet willing to leave the circus life altogether.

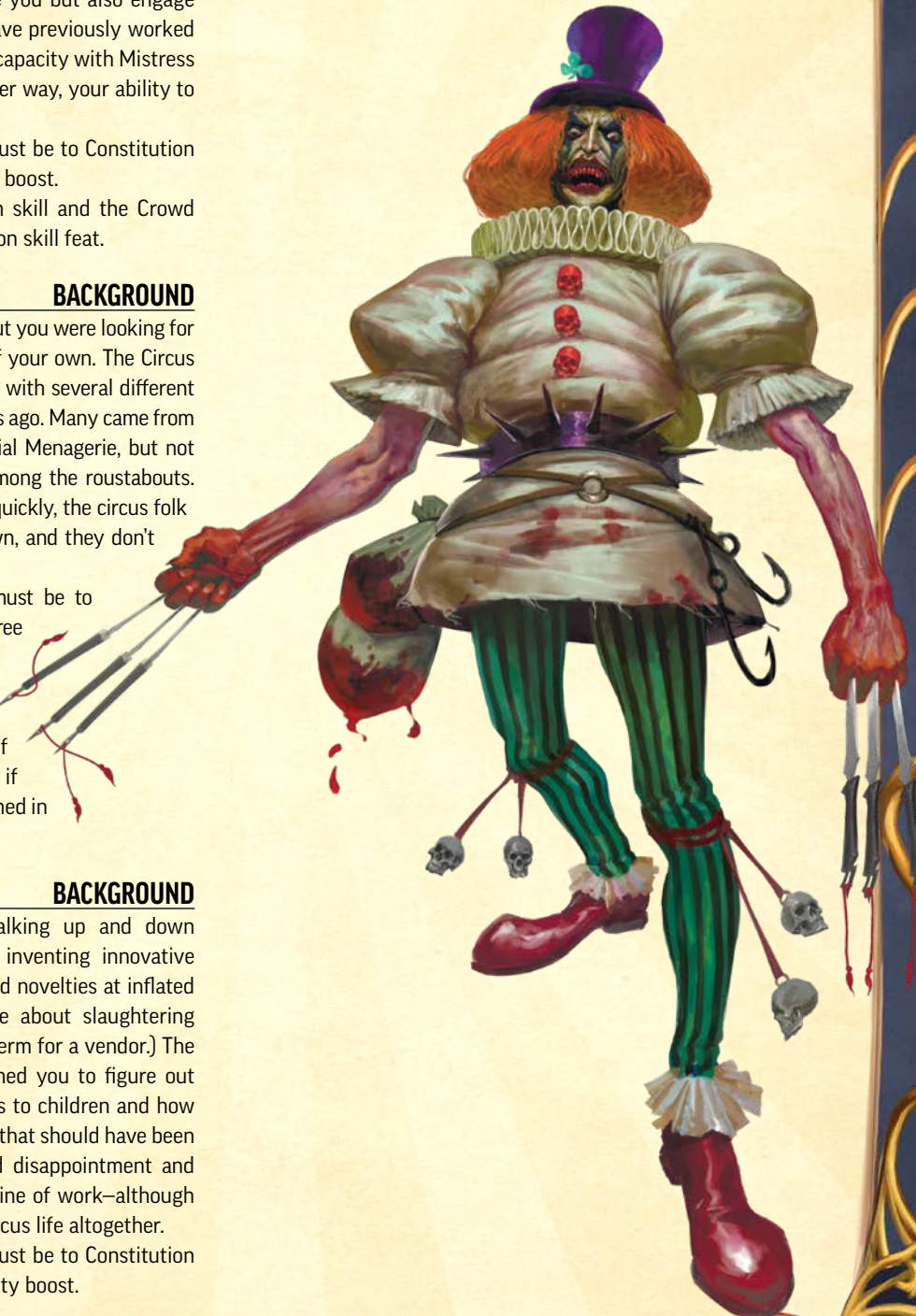
Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Constitution or Intelligence, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Society skill and the Mercantile Lore skill. You gain the Read Lips skill feat.

## **CIRCUS BORN**

## **BACKGROUND**

The itinerant life of a traveling circus performer is nothing new to you; you were born and raised in the circus. You've seen more acts than you can count and grew up hearing the tall tales of circus performers while gathered around their campfires. You've experienced the thrill of captivating





a crowd ever since you were young. You may have tried a few times to settle down, but the lure of the open road and the glamor of the big top always called you back.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Intelligence or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Performance skill and the Circus Lore skill. You gain the Experienced Professional skill feat.

### **CLOWN**

### **BACKGROUND**

Although you've spent time in greasepaint and colorful clothing to amuse crowds, your skills with buffoonery and physical comedy are exceptional whether or not you're in costume. In the employ of Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie, you spent too many routines distracting an audience from an ill-timed accident or evidence of abused animals or performers. You've had enough of that, and the Celestial Menagerie isn't your home any longer.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Charisma, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Performance skill and the Clown Lore skill. You gain the Virtuoso Performer (comedy) skill feat.

### **MYSTIC SEER**

### **BACKGROUND**

You delight crowds by reading minds, telling futures, and contacting spirits. Although much of your work is misdirection and showmanship, your cons have inadvertently awakened a genuine awareness of magic in your mind. This new sense is both thrilling and frightening, and you hope that you can hone it further in the Circus of Wayward Wonders.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Intelligence or Wisdom, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Arcana skill and the Scam Lore skill. You gain the Arcane Sense skill feat.

### **RIGGER**

### **BACKGROUND**

You've worked as a roustabout to erect tents and set up rigging for acrobatic performances; you've sometimes even aided aerialists and acrobats in their death-defying training. Even though your work is often done before the crowds arrive, you know your skills contribute to the success and safety of the circus. Mistress Dusklight treats her roustabouts as little more than slaves, and you've resolved to join a company where your expertise is appreciated.

Choose two ability boosts. One must be to Strength or Dexterity, and one is a free ability boost.

You're trained in the Athletics skill and the Circus Lore skill. You gain the Combat Climber skill feat.

## **Circus Tricks**

Every performer in a circus knows at least one crowd-pleasing act. Called "tricks" in circus parlance, these are routines performed in one of the three rings in the big top. As many as three tricks can take place at the

same time, though each performer focuses on performing their individual trick as successfully as possible. Tricks come in a nearly limitless variety. Audiences come to circuses expecting standard tricks like taming big cats, bareback horseback riding, walking a tightrope, juggling fire, or exhibiting colorful illusions, but they are impressed by novel tricks as easily as old standbys.

The GM has rules for creating tricks and putting them together into a circus performance, presented in the "Life in the Circus" article in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #151: The Show Must Go On*. If your character wants to participate in a circus, you'll need to create a signature trick for your character to perform (tricks created and performed by the heroes are called "signature tricks"). Not every hero in the Extinction Curse Adventure Path needs to have a trick; characters who are riggers or roustabouts probably don't perform. However, at least some heroes should create a signature trick, and there's nothing wrong with every hero having one.

Several NPCs have exciting and innovative tricks of their own, and discovering more performers to expand the Circus of Wayward Wonders—and to give your characters new options to rebuild or expand their own tricks—is part of later adventures in the Extinction Curse Adventure Path.

## **Gazetteer**

The Circus of Wayward Wonders is currently performing on the Isle of Erran. Most members of the circus hope to earn enough prestige and coin to bring their circus to the Isle of Kortos instead, as the larger island has more settlements and a greater opportunity for fame. Absalom sits on the south coast of the Isle of Kortos, and many in the circus hope to one day perform in Absalom at the highly anticipated Radiant Festival. Key settlements and landmarks on the Isle of Erran and the Isle of Kortos are as follows.

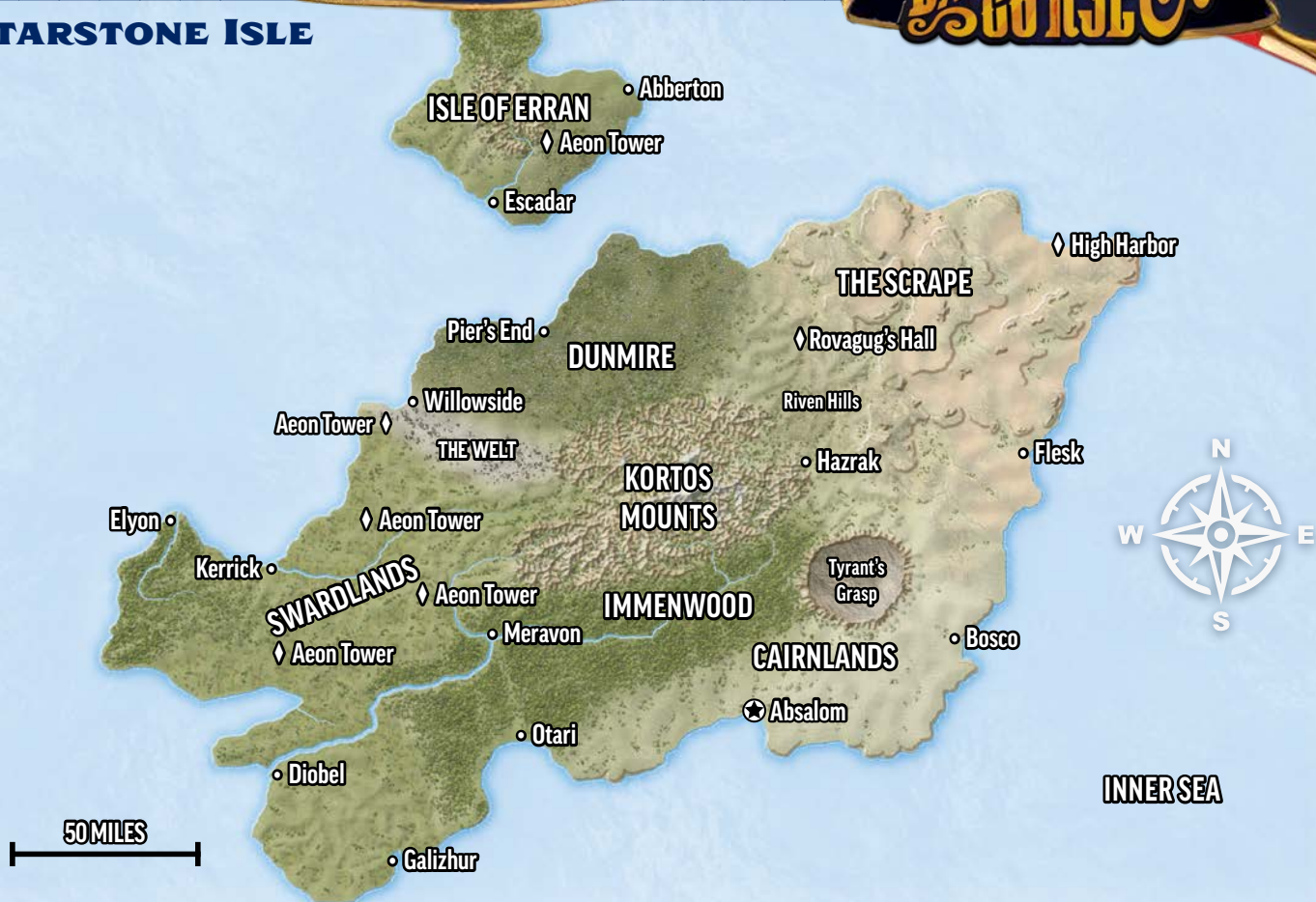
### **AEON TOWERS**

Five mudbrick towers stand on the Starstone Isles: four on the western half of the Isle of Kortos and one on the Isle of Erran. Common wisdom holds that Aroden constructed the towers to bear the *aeon orbs*, beacons of light that orbit the top of each tower just as an *aeon stone* orbits around its owner's head. Aroden didn't create the *aeon orbs*—he stole them from a vast vault in the Darklands shortly after raising the Starstone Isles from the sea five millennia ago. The *aeon orbs* have imbued the land with incredible bounty for thousands of years, though rumors say their power has been slowly fading since Aroden's death a century ago. The towers are all situated far from modern settlements, so the wonders and dangers they contain are mysteries ripe for investigation.



# EXTINCTION CURSE

## STARSTONE ISLE



### ISLE OF ERRAN

The following settlements on the Isle of Erran will be of interest during the Extinction Curse Adventure Path.

**Abberton:** This small, declining community of farmers, ranchers, and crafters values its independence from Escadar on the other side of the island. Although a hermitage to Gozreh has stood outside of town for generations, most of Abberton's residents attend the church of Abadar in town. Townspeople debate whether their community got its name as a shortening of "Abadartown" or from the name of the founding family—the Abbers—whose descendant, Jae Abber, serves as mayor today.

**Escadar:** The largest city on the Isle of Erran and the second-largest city in the Starstone Isles, Escadar primarily functions as the headquarters of Absalom's navy. A lively, bustling town of sailors, soldiers, and smugglers, Escadar holds many secrets of its own beneath its cobbled streets. The city is administered from Conclave Square, a collection of closely constructed buildings where Aroden's priests once handled the island's civic matters. Mistress Dusklight's Celestial Menagerie is currently one of Escadar's premiere entertainment attractions.

### ISLE OF KORTOS

The following settlements on the Isle of Kortos will be of interest during the Extinction Curse Adventure Path.

**Absalom:** The City at the Center of the World is one of the largest metropolises on Golarion. Its ancient streets and lofty buildings teem with people from all over the world.

**Kerrick:** This farming community, which is located on Kortos's northwest coast, is the key economic center of the breadbasket known as the Swardlands. The Swardlands contains many small communities, such as the logging town of Turpin Rowe, the farm town of Matten Cleave, and the village of Ferny with its peaceful, doglike shoony people. Yet the people of Kerrick tie them all together, working hard to broker and distribute the crops that come in from across the region.

**Willowside:** In recent years, this old, reclusive town on the north coast of the Isle of Kortos has suffered greatly as a desolation called the Welt has spread from the swamps of the Dunmire to encompass the town. Food is scarce in Willowside, and newcomers report having disturbing dreams, but the people of the town are honest and friendly.



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