



PLACES OF MYTH

“For most of my life, I thought the Mwangi Expanse was the most dangerous place on the face of Golarion. So when we ventured into the Valashmai Jungle, my overconfidence nearly led to our deaths. Every plant was a predator, the very air struggled to kill us with disease, the land itself shifted just to spite us, and that’s before we encountered the truly colossal creatures roaming within—insects and apes the size of mountains, battling with one another with no regard for the smaller creatures under their gigantic feet.

“We only survived because of that unreal, mysterious power we found in a ruined temple. It gave us the strength to overcome the treacherous landscape. Despite the power of that isolated place, I’d never go back looking for that temple. My days in the Valashmai are done. No, I’m content to stay here and tend this bar. Young heroes can have their quests of greatness; now I’m just an old man.”

—Tam Deteyo, retired adventurer

Throughout the Pathfinder Campaign Setting, hundreds of locations beckon to ambitious adventurers, whose lust for fame, treasure, and power often leads them into dangers beyond their abilities. Whether those locations take the form of the demon-haunted Worldwound, the Eye of Abendego, the depths of the Darklands, or even other planets and planes, there are some places on Golarion and beyond that low-level characters aren't meant for. With the advent of the mythic rules presented in *Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures*, however, new regions on the map are suddenly unlocked for characters who command mythic power.

Presented herein are six such locations, each containing an overview of the region, a brief history of the location, a regional gazetteer, several suggested mythic trials in or around the area, and a map of the area. The following locations are presented in this section.

Black Desert: This massive vault in the Darklands layer of Orv stretches over 1,000 miles end-to-end. It's populated by undead drow, daemon-spawned urdefhans, and other subterranean horrors.

Mechitar: In the capital city of the undead nation of Geb, the ghost of the nation's founding necromancer still haunts the massive black pyramids of the thriving necrotic paradise.

Pit of Gormuz: This rift in the surface of Golarion dives all the way to the core of the planet, and holds the imprisoned god Rovagug as well as countless horrors that venerate the Rough Beast.

Tusk Mountains: This mountain range in the Realm of the Mammoth Lords is the hunting ground of giants and megafauna, a frigid land that only the hardest of adventurers survive.

Valashmai Jungle: This dense, volcanic jungle in southern Tian Xia puts the threats and obstacles of the Mwangi Expanse to shame, and the mighty kaiju who inhabit it pay no heed to puny creatures in their way.

Yjae: The sole surviving flying city of the lost empire of Shory, the city of Yjae was damaged beyond repair when attempting to cross the Wall of Heaven in Tian Xia. It now wanders the skies high above Shaguang, infested by terrible creatures from a distant demiplane.

Using Places of Myth

The mythic sites in this chapter assume that PCs adventuring within them already have at least one mythic tier. GMs might use these locations as the sites of single adventures or whole mythic campaigns, but should remember that the dangers each presents are far in excess of those normally faced across Golarion. That isn't to say that non-mythic characters can't adventure in these locations, but doing so presents an especially deadly challenge. Below are brief adventure hooks for each of this chapter's locations to provide starting points for crafting related campaigns.

Black Desert

The PCs uncover a cult of Urgathoa in Sothis, and figure out the cult's plans to release a potent Urgathoan evil upon the surface world from the Black Desert below. As the PCs follow the cult into the Darklands, they should advance sufficiently throughout Nar-Voth and Sekamina so that they'll stand a chance against the foes that lurk within the Black Desert.

Mechitar

The Knights of Ozem approach the PCs to journey into Geb and strike a fatal blow to Arazni, the Harlot Queen of Mechitar. Disguised as undead, the PCs must navigate Ossum Harbor to meet fellow conspirators in the catacombs surrounding the River of Rot. From their secret hideout beneath the city, the PCs can put into motion a plan to recover the Blood Stones of Arazni and bring an end to her terrible rule.

Pit of Gormuz

A cult of Rovagug terrorizes northeastern Taldor, and the PCs arrive in the middle of their rampage. In the process, they discover some disturbing prophecies—apparently from the Rough Beast himself—regarding a great rite to be held at the mouth of the Pit of Gormuz. The adventurers must trek across the unforgiving steppes of Casmaron to the gaping rift before facing the terrors within.

Tusk Mountains

Herds of mythic megafauna have begun attacking the cities of Hillcross and Tolguth in surprisingly coordinated assaults. Investigation reveals that the frost giants of the Tusk Mountains, led by Jarl Gnargorak, are breeding more of the mighty beasts and training them for war. Unless the PCs venture into the forboding mountains and end the jarl's sinister plan in his bastion of Bos-Phargumm, the ravaging megafauna will likely spread into other lands.

Valashmai Jungle

A mighty kaiju has been wreaking havoc across the Mwangi Expanse, and the local tribesfolk have no clue how to end the rampage. Hearing of similar creatures on the far side of the world, in an even more dangerous jungle, the PCs travel to Tian Xia to recover a long-lost Valashmaian relic believed to hold the power to control and contain the colossal beasts.

Yjae

Denizens of Leng have begun trading slaves in the deserts of Shaguang, and the PCs are asked to find the source of this new threat. By the time they track the mysterious merchants to the floating city of Yjae, they should be ready to challenge even the most powerful of the city's evil inhabitants.





Black Desert

“I was honored—eager, even—when Mother’s Maw appeared to me and bade me to descend into Orv for my Reaping. My destination? One of our faith’s most hallowed shrines to the Pallid Princess, located in a desert as black as Urgathoa’s blessed heart. I was to slay as many Darklanders as possible before reaching the clerics of Urgathoa’s Purlieu. But oh, the horrors I encountered in Orv grew unspeakably worse in the Black Desert. Urgathoa does not rule there alone.”

—Elanine Liere, missing high priestess of Urgathoa

BLACK DESERT

Massive Underground Cavern of Undeath

Location Orv, beneath northern Garund

Common Threats Fungus, purple worms, undead drow, urdefhans

Notable Inhabitants Iffdahsil, Larielle Shraen, Nyrinda Shraen, War Chief Ursurf, Zyra Shraen

Prominent Locations Field of Horrors, Shraen, Urgathoa’s Purlieu, Ydersius’s Maw

The Black Desert is undoubtedly one of Orv’s most inhospitable locales. Yet various forms of life and unlife flourish here—many of which are too terrible for any other place to endure their presence. Among this desert’s miles of ebon sands and fields of toxic ghost mold are riotous purple-worm spawning grounds, a roving behemoth that lurks beneath the desert, a cabal of serpentfolk liches, and a small city of undead drow who unabashedly revere Urgathoa. Above it all, leering from a ceiling nearly 3,000 feet in the air, are thousands of blightburn crystals that glow and sparkle in a sick parody of the surface’s stars.

History

Although the Black Desert has been home to vile denizens for untold eons, nearly 4,000 years ago a new force shifted its previously nonexistent politics: the drow of House Shraen. In the early centuries of the drow empire of Sekamina, House Shraen emerged as the only house to eschew demon worship. These drow instead turned wholeheartedly and fanatically to Urgathoa for guidance. In exchange for the power the Pallid Princess granted them, the drow of House Shraen committed increasingly vile atrocities in her name. Not even the evil, sadistic drow could abide House Shraen’s depraved behavior. After the Shraens committed a vile, long-forgotten act involving the bodies of the city’s top nobles, the drow empire united to drive the Shraen from Zirnakaynin.

The members of House Shraen who survived the initial dangers of exile faced a harrowing journey into Orv, where they hoped to finally escape their enemies. By the time the drow reached the Black Desert, however, their ranks included only a small core of the hardest of their number—most of whom had transformed into undead creatures

along the journey. Somehow managing to dodge purple worms and the Black Desert’s other dangers, these refugees found sanctuary in the mysterious ruins of a city built in the ancient Osirian style. The exiled drow named the settlement Shraen, and have been holed up there ever since, revering Urgathoa, fighting among themselves for power, and struggling to survive among the other horrors native to the Vault. Among the Vault’s threats are the militant urdefhans, who have long sought to claim the pyramids of Shraen as their own. So far, despite their best efforts, the clear-skinned bloodsuckers have not managed to oust the drow from their stronghold.

Since long before the drow arrived in the isolated Vault, the Black Desert’s established ecosystem thrived despite the fact that its environs are poisonous. This ecology includes massive purple worm spawning grounds, which some say have existed since Golarion’s own primordial beginnings. The mythic beast called Iffdahsil has long inhabited these grounds. It now ripples beneath the sands, feeding on any vulnerable creatures that venture too close, including even the mightiest purple worms.

Other horrific features that predate the drow’s arrival in the Black Desert include a crumbling shrine to Ydersius, ancient patron of the serpentfolk. It’s said that, far before the deity’s fall at the hands of an Azlanti hero, a contingent of the Sundered God’s faithful colonized the Black Desert. All that remains of this failed effort rises out of the sand in the haphazard form of a temple shaped like Ydersius’s serpentine head. Within this temple’s winding underground corridors dwell serpentfolk liches, who long ago succumbed to the foul, necromantic energies that permeate the Black Desert.

Yet another example of this locale’s strange powers is the Field of Horrors. This ghost mold field of unknown age is thought to have developed sometime before the drow arrived. It first began to expand when an unfortunate party of dwarven prospectors errantly stumbled here instead of reaching the legendary Vault they sought, known as the Crystal Womb. In the centuries since, the field has swollen in size due to its malevolent ghosts’ ability to lure new dwarves into the plants’ clutches. For some inexplicable reason, the ghost mold in this area does not feed on the

ghosts it creates, as is typical. Instead, they seem to linger, growing in malevolence and power almost daily—just like most other denizens of this harsh and foul place. For more information on ghost mold, see page 13 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Into the Darklands*.

Region Gazetteer

In addition to the threats and hazards presented in the specific locations mentioned below, two hazards ubiquitous throughout the Vault pose a significant threat to living creatures who encounter them.

Many low points in the desert are home to enormous pools of quickdeath gas (*Into the Darklands* 11), including the entire area surrounding Shraen. Noticing an area contaminated with quickdeath requires succeeding at a DC 25 Survival check. A creature breathing quickdeath must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 20 + 1 per previous check) each round or immediately begin suffocating. Creatures exposed to quickdeath—whether breathing it or not—must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save once per minute of exposure or take 1 point of Wisdom damage. Quickdeath is a CR 6 hazard.

In addition to the quickdeath pools in the Vault's lowest levels, the Black Desert's 3,000-foot-high ceiling is covered with radioactive blightburn crystals. The green-glowing crystals burn anyone who touches them, dealing 2d6 points of fire damage per round of contact, and their radiation causes blightburn sickness. The substance also limits teleportation. To successfully cast a teleportation spell in a cavern with blightburn in its walls or to successfully cast a teleportation spell to travel to such a location, the spellcaster must succeed at a DC 30 caster level check. Blightburn is a CR 7 hazard.

BLIGHTBURN SICKNESS

Type disease, contact (see text); **Save** Fortitude DC 22; **Frequency** 1/day; **Effect** 1d6 Con damage and 1d6 Cha damage; contact is automatic when a creature comes within a 60-foot radius, and can be blocked only by lead sheeting, 1 foot of stone, or a force effect; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

Cradle of Purple Worms: Some scholars believe that Golarion's very first purple worms writhed and mated in these ancient spawning grounds. Today, the cradle is home to approximately 50 purple worms and dozens of egg chambers, proving that the beasts are immune to the desert's poisonous environs. The drow of House Shraen have captured and domesticated some of these purple worms, but most are incredibly wild and aggressive—as the nearby urdefhans can attest.

Field of Horrors: What began as a small, relatively innocuous patch of ghost mold (*Into the Darklands* 13) quickly grew into a field that now spans thousands of square feet.

The impetus for this growth was, as legend holds, a doomed party of dwarven prospectors who ventured into the depths of Orv in search of the mythical Crystal Womb. Before they reached their destination, the dwarves fell victim to the ghost mold. The Black Desert's foul necromantic energy ensured that many of these prospectors' ghosts remain to this day. Scores of ghosts now haunt this field, including that of head prospector **Tord Brickfist** (CE male dwarf ghost ranger 15). The ghosts' sole aim, it seems, is to lure more unsuspecting victims here to expand the ghost mold field even further.

Iffdahsil: Perhaps the most compelling evidence that the Black Desert is infested with pure evil is the enormous creature that lurks beneath its sands. **Iffdahsil** (CE shoggoth mythic vampire) takes its name from an Elven phrase meaning "monstrous fiend," though this description hardly does the horror justice. The creature pulls its bulk beneath the sands in its attempts to launch surprise attacks on its prey, so it can feed on their blood. Curiously, Iffdahsil hasn't



The Black Desert



created any spawn. Although Iffdahsil is usually found near an otherwise uninhabited tunnel leading north, the beast often roams elsewhere, and all intelligent denizens of the Black Desert fear it. Any subtle rumbling beneath the sands is usually enough to scatter drow and urdefhans alike.

Renegade Tower: This enormous natural rock formation is a formidable fortification due to its hollow interior. For the past several hundred years, it has served as the lair of **Weylin Shraen** (LE male revenant witch 10/archmage 2). Centuries ago, when House Shraen still wielded great power in the drow empire of Sekamina, a rival murdered Weylin. He soon rose as a revenant, and his kin vowed to help him track down his murderer. While he hunted for leads to his killer's identity, Weylin quietly trained himself to use the strange and potent magic he plans to unleash against the object of his hate.

When his house was driven from the empire, Weylin followed their descent, hoping his family would someday help him exact revenge against the scions of his killer. Eventually, Weylin realized that his kin never intended to help. He soon broke from his family's colony and holed up inside this enormous outpost, where he conducts terrible ceremonies to try to learn his killer's identity.

Shraen: The bizarre, ruined city in the heart of the Black Desert is built in the style of ancient Osirion, raising questions as to what might have influenced the rise of that ancient empire at the dawn of the Age of Destiny. Regardless, these buildings were abandoned by the time the drow of House Shraen took up residence in them. The central pyramid serves as the colony's core, and is home to most of the surviving members of House Shraen, including **Zyra Shraen** (NE female drow lich conjurer 17) and **Nyrinda Shraen** (CE female drow vampire sorcerer 16), who coordinate the family's efforts to expel the encamped urdefhans. There are approximately 200 drow—most of them undead—living in Shraen, and in recent years their primary purpose has been to assault, spy on, and generally try to drive out the urdefhans who covet their infrastructure. Of the over 100 undead drow inhabiting the city, none are ghouls or ghosts. The members of House Shraen have a millennia-old feud with the ghoul inhabitants of nearby Nemret Noktoria, so they destroy any ghouls or ghosts they find in the Black Desert.

Four large purple worm enclosures fabricated using large stalagmites and interconnecting *walls of force* surround Shraen. These worms, which the drow have domesticated using strange techniques that took centuries to hone, act as mounts for House Shraen's traveling envoys, reconnaissance missions, and battle parties. The drow ride on the beasts' backs in special howdahs built to let them ride both above and below the desert's surface. Because training just one purple worm is an arduous task that can take years, typically only Zyra and Nyrinda are permitted to teleport within these enclosures to retrieve mounts for their kin.

Stashed deep within Shraen's primary pyramid are the treasures the drow took with them when they fled Sekamina. Items that remain stashed in the pyramid's armory—which is located in a hidden, underground room—include a *corset of dire witchcraft* (*Ultimate Equipment* 214), a *robe of bones*, a *bloodthirst dagger* (*Ultimate Equipment* 152), and scrolls and spellbooks full of mythic necromancy spells.

Slave Corrals: The Shraens keep their growing crop of slaves in these tightly secured quarters. Made of materials culled from the city's ruins, these corrals contain upward of 500 slaves that include derros, pechs, zombies, and other unfortunate creatures. The drow captured these slaves either when the creatures errantly wandered into the desert or during the house's intermittent raids against bastions of civilization in Sekamina and occasionally Nar-Voth. Some claim that a roving patrol of duergar led by the slaver lord **Danthill Rothok** (LE male duergar ranger 8/rogue 9) have even ventured onto Golarion's surface to claim new slaves for their undead drow allies in the Black Desert. Where these duergar make their base of operations remains a mystery, since they don't live in the Vault itself.

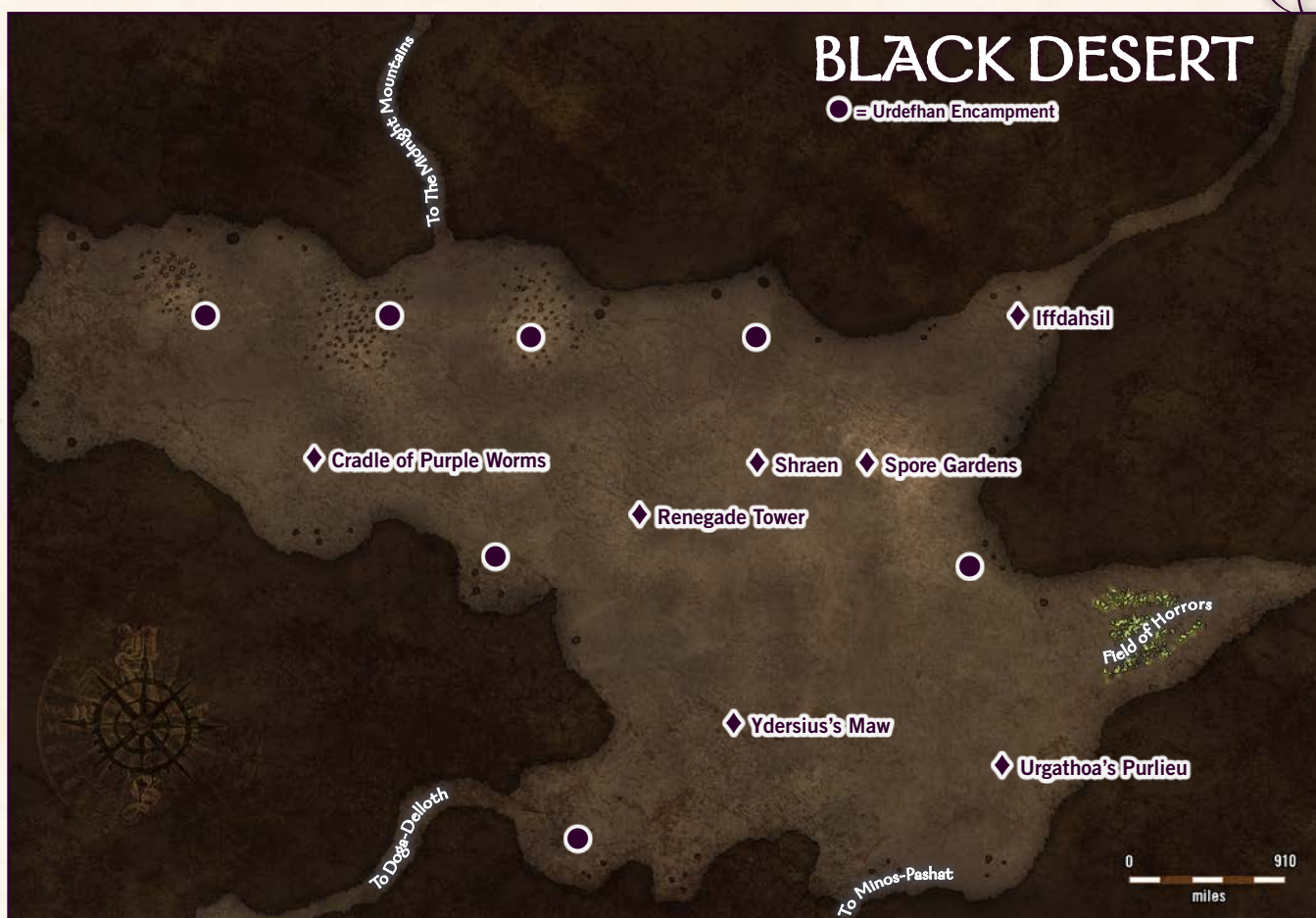
Spore Gardens: These experimental gardens are the drow attempt to learn about the strange energy that powers the Field of Horrors. Like the sporecrafting experiments that first created the vegepygmies, these experimentations are quite cruel. In fact, in an attempt to recreate the bizarre ghost mold in this controlled environment, the drow often sacrifice unruly slaves, so far to no effect. If the drow ever master the energy behind the strange mold, it's assumed that Zyra and Nyrinda Shraen will try to plant the toxic spores near the urdefhans in their attempts to drive the bloodsuckers from the Black Desert.

Urdefhan Encampments: A long time ago, the daemon-spawned urdefhans set their sights on Shraen as a perfect place from which to mount a campaign to further spread their will throughout the Darklands. However, the drow were already entrenched in the ruined city—and so the urdefhans made it their singular mission to slaughter them, or at least drive them away. In all, about 100 urdefhans and several dozen of their skaveling mounts inhabit each of these fortified encampments.

Under the guidance of **War Champion Urserf** (NE male urdefhan summoner 15/marshal 3), the urdefhans have mounted several assaults against Shraen in recent years. The battles have only managed to kill drow slaves, but the increasing scale of these attacks demands that the drow take action against these horrid creatures soon.

Urgathoa's Purlieu: This rock formation is a natural fortification used by several members of House Shraen who fanatically devote themselves to Urgathoa, including high priestess **Larielle Shraen** (LE female banshee cleric of Urgathoa 11). Larielle and three of her younger sisters are





the keepers of the *Bloodsoaked Bones*, a collection of bone fragments said to have come from the foot of Urgathoa herself. The relic's foul necromantic powers—which could explain many of the Black Desert's strange features—are also rumored to be able to transform even the most upright paladin into the most evil undead. The divine herald Mother's Maw appeared to the sisters and promised them that, one day, they would be required to give the relic to a wandering stranger. They would know, the herald said, who was worthy. In exchange, the Pallid Princess would transform them into Daughters of Urgathoa. Their instructions received, the sisters wait, remain vigilant, and guard the relic with their undying lives.

Ydersius's Maw: The shifting sands of the Black Desert have revealed this ancient ruin, which dates to when the serpentfolk ruled Golarion. This serpent-head-shaped structure is ostensibly the only remains of the serpentfolk's effort to establish an outpost in the desert. Still, the original colonists remain, perhaps due to the strange energy that pervades the Vault. Deep within this ruin is a cabal of serpentfolk liches, including an awakened demilich who quietly plots to destroy the blasphemous relic of Urgathoa that lurks nearby.

Suggested Mythic Trials

Simply reaching the Black Desert might constitute a mythic trial all on its own. Whether or not this is the case, the following suggested mythic trials can challenge even an advanced mythic party when adventuring in the Vault.

The Bloodsoaked Bones: Whether the *Bloodsoaked Bones* are truly remnants of Urgathoa, they are undeniably powerful necromantic artifacts capable of bestowing mythic power upon those who use them to do the Pallid Princess's will. A party that could obtain these from their drow guardians would hold immense power. Destroying them by giving them sanctified burial in the high temple of Pharama in Sothis would strike a mighty blow to her faithful the world over. The drow of Shraen would pursue such thieves through the Darklands and beyond to prevent such blasphemy.

Iffdahsil's End: Destroying the mythic vampire shoggoth Iffdahsil is a feat that even the forces of Shraen have been unable to accomplish in thousands of years. How the inhabitants of the Black Desert would react to such a display of power within their realm might not be as much a show of gratefulness as it is a uniting against a clearly formidable newcomer to the Vault.



Mechitar

“Cling to life if you must, young wizards. Certainly there might be something to breathing in the scent of a summer day, or to tasting the food your slaves have so carefully prepared. But are those pathetic pleasures worth denying your true potential? Are you willing to forgo power and prestige because you cling to mortality? Abandon the beating of your heart and the nagging needs of your flesh! Cast off your mortal shackles and embrace the void beyond!”

—Vikroti Stroh, vice-chancellor of the Ebon Mausoleum

MECHITAR

Undead Capital of Geb

Location Western Geb

Common Threats Curses, disease, experimental magic, poison, all manner of undead

Notable Inhabitants Arazni, Blood Lords, Geb, Rinnella Brenon

Prominent Locations Cathedral of Epiphenomena, Cinerarium

Forty-two thousand souls—but significantly fewer living, beating hearts—inhabit Mechitar, the capital of Geb and the nation’s second-largest city. An undead paradise, Mechitar is the unabashed demesne of vampires, wraiths, mummies, liches, and evil living necromancers. At the height of the city’s debased hierarchy is the ghost-king Geb himself. The evil wizard remains unconcerned, however, with the city’s day-to-day affairs. Those he leaves to his trusted Blood Lords, his conclave of mostly undead necromancers.

History

More than 5 millennia ago, a wicked necromancer and exiled Osirian known as Geb raised the banner of a new nation. Greedy for power, he traveled to the southern reaches of ancient Osirion (much larger in the distant past) and began exerting his toxic influence. In but a few years, Geb had employed potent wish-magic and an army of undead to rout the Osirian governor from the land that now bears his name. First he drove the Osirian officials from an ancient settlement south of the Axanir River. Its original name is lost to time, as Geb renamed this hub Mechitar—and in short order made it his nation’s capital, the seat of power from which he orchestrated the takeover of the former Osirian province.

Although Geb quickly nullified Osirian laws and outlawed the ancient empire’s customs in Mechitar, he appropriated its majestic architecture and dense urban structure as he sought to create a refuge for his undead minions. The central corridor of Mechitar, as a result, quickly became dotted with grim pyramids. They now house the Blood Lords, who serve as the city’s oligarchy and aristocracy.

The largest and most central pyramid is the Cinerarium. A massive, foreboding structure, it stands more than 450 feet tall, is faced with the blackest obsidian, and serves as

a palace to the wizard-king and his Harlot Queen. Even the city’s buildings—including the sprawling Cathedral of Epiphenomena—are built in step-pyramid style, underscoring Geb’s obsession with creating a city that looks every bit the archetypal necropolis.

When Geb went to war with his archrival, the wizard-king Nex, Mechitar had already been thriving as an undead paradise for decades. The war-torn centuries that followed, however, were a time of great paranoia within Geb’s prized capital. During this period, the necromancer handed the city’s daily duties to the Blood Lords, who spared no effort in protecting the city and its populous—themselves first and foremost—against Nex’s wrath. They erected the city’s walls, sealed off a nearby ancient Osirian ruin and the decrepit former governor’s mansion, trapping Geb’s enemies within, and closely monitored any outsiders who spent a significant amount of time in the city. To ensure security even further, the Blood Lords established the Bellator Mortus—a legion of necromancers, graveknights, skeletons, zombies, ghouls, and ghosts that still today serve as the city’s guard.

The paranoia in Mechitar faded in the centuries since Nex disappeared. Most of its citizens believe that Geb’s war with Nex is long over, despite the fact that Geb—who slew himself more than 4,000 years ago in a fit of uncertainty over his enemy’s fate—lingers in Mechitar as a ghost. Geb’s lack of interest in his once-prized capital, however, hasn’t stopped it from flourishing. In fact, a strict (if chillingly evil) measure of order has settled upon the city. This propriety exists thanks in no small part to the steady political hand of Arazni, who remains willingly enthroned in the Cinerarium while working alongside Mechitar’s ruling class to push the city to new heights. The fact that most of the city remains undead and ageless means that its leaders cultivate mysterious, long-term schemes.

Region Gazetteer

Mechitar is a sprawling metropolis that is at once full of decrepit slums, opulent pyramids, and some of eeriest temples in Garund. Below are details on some of the city’s most prominent locations.

Blood Lords’ Alcazars: Ringing Mechitar’s Cinerarium are six smaller pyramids alternatively gilded with gold,



inlaid with black diamond chips, or outfitted with other precious materials. These structures, “alcazars,” are home to Mechitar’s Blood Lords, their families, and favored minions.

The alcazars are protected by the Blood Lords’ private security (which usually involves flesh golems, magically augmented beasts, and undead abominations) as well as Bellator Mortus guards, the latter often are paid handsomely to look the other way during the Blood Lords’ intermittent feuds. Indeed, although Mechitar’s laws expressly forbid infighting among its ruling class, a centuries-old dispute over the ownership of chattel continues to pit three Blood Lords against each other (see below). The warring Blood Lords are **Mirgona Zede** (NE female human necromancer 15), **Hyrune Loxenna** (CE male half-elf vampire witch 12), and **Quarnim Ix** (NE male devourer oracle 8).

Rumor has it that nearly all the Blood Lords have repurposed the alcazars’ extensive security for more than personal protection. Deep beneath each pyramid are winding networks of repositories said to contain the personal treasures of that Blood Lord and her progenitors. The contents of these repositories are well-guarded secrets, but most speculate that each contains several scrolls of powerful (even mythic) necromantic spells; a multitude of magic items, including *staves of necromancy*, *robes of bones*, and *darkskulls*; and artifacts of untold power, including at least one *talisman of ultimate evil*.

Cathedral of Epiphenomena: At the western end of Mechitar stands this strange and sprawling complex, which houses the living and undead clergy of Urgathoa, the most worshiped deity in the city. The cathedral’s atrium is a pyramid inlaid with onyx and garnet, and is best known for its imposing sanctuary. This public worship space contains a 10-foot-tall ivory statue of the Pallid Princess, complete with fresh, magic-laced blood perpetually flowing down its skeletal legs.

Connected to the cathedral’s atrium is a much larger, four-story building built in the style of a geometric step-pyramid. This building—as well as the complex of buildings to the cathedral’s north—serves as the living and working quarters of the temple’s order. In the center of the cathedral rises a step-spire that rises nearly 10 stories skyward. Protected by powerful *arcane locks* and a contingent of the city’s strongest guards, the middle floors of this spire contain the personal quarters of the fanatical mistress of the cathedral, **Rinnella Brenon** (NE daughter of Urgathoa summoner 9/hierophant 1). It’s said that Brenon has an alliance with an oddly rational being similar to a nightwalker that never leaves her side.

Chattel Ranches: Filling the desolate countryside surrounding Mechitar—and, spread throughout the entire nation of Geb—are countless farms where humanoid chattel is raised. To keep the more ravenous undead that populate the nation sated, chattel serves primarily as food.

This constant supply of humanoid flesh, raised from birth solely to be eaten, ensures the stability of Gebbite society by keeping the more useful living slaves and citizens of Mechitar mostly safe from the predations of their undead peers.

Cinerarium: Easily the most prominent and awe-inspiring structure in Mechitar, the Cinerarium serves both as a palace to Geb and Arazni and as the headquarters of the Bellator Mortus, the city’s official guard. The Cinerarium is faced with polished jet and obsidian. Its towers rise more than 450 feet high, with catacombs rumored to stretch just as far below ground. It’s surrounded on all sides by an octagonal moat filled with the poisonous waters of the River of Rot—the perpetually tainted canal that bisects the city. Within the building, the bottom several floors contain the Bellator Mortus guards’ training grounds and quarters,



Mechitar





including those of **Guard Captain Marden Gilpher** (CE male human cavalier 15), who enforces the city's laws so strictly that he publicly executes members of his order who stray from the service of Arazni and the Blood Lords.

The Cinerarium's uppermost floors serve as the domain of the Harlot Queen Arazni, whose body Geb stole and reanimated as a lich more than 8 centuries ago. In an affront to her virtuous past, Arazni now lives embroiled in hedonism and excess—including keeping a harem of three dozen captured or fallen warriors from Lastwall's Knights of Ozem. Near Arazni's chambers are the quarters of the five graveknights who serve as her bodyguards and personal envoys. Her chambers also include the city's treasury, rumored to contain an incredible assortment of golden sarcophagi, ivory statuary, gem-encrusted funerary items, and Geb's personal collection of necromantic artifacts. Some say the vaults also hold the secrets of the wish-magic used to purposefully turn Nex into a barren wasteland.

Beneath the Cinerarium is a maze of Osirian-style catacombs rumored to predate Geb's construction of modern-day Mechitar. The necromancer sealed these catacombs with powerful wards during the height of the wizard-kings' war, and now the maze of passages are almost entirely underwater due to the proximity of an underground stream. Untold aquatic horrors dwell beneath Geb's palace, including a vampire scylla and the bizarre, aquatic mummies that reportedly guard a dormant wellspring of mythic necromantic power Geb employed during the height of his war with Nex.

Deathless Arena: Located next to Ossum Harbor's docks, this coliseum is the city's main center of public entertainment. Its regular competitions help resolve the natural rivalries that occur among Mechitar's ruling class, who are otherwise forbidden from open conflict. Per the city's laws, any citizen may enter into the arena's weekly gladiatorial battles, either personally or via a proxy champion. These martial extravaganzas routinely see dozens of combatants enter the largest, most heinous necromantic abominations they can craft in an attempt to win—or keep—the title of Deathless Champion.

Ebon Mausoleum: Directly north of the Cinerarium, this glittering complex is made almost exclusively of black, magically reinforced glass. It serves as a necromantic academy for those rich or powerful enough to gain admittance—mostly the families or agents of the Blood Lords. Public demonstrations of students' newfound abilities are common. In the pyramidal front portion of the academy. Needless to say, the academy does not have a dearth of corpses for students to study and experiment on.

The back portion of the academy (as well as several surrounding outbuildings) contains classrooms and living quarters. Additionally, the heavily fortified center of the academy's northernmost wing contains the private studies

of **Chancellor Kemnebi** (LE male vampire necromancer 12), the institution's leader, and **Vice-Chancellor Vikroti Stroh** (LE female human lich necromancer 11), both of whom quietly vie for prestige and power among the city's more well-established and long-serving Blood Lords.

Ossum Harbor: A small but important harbor to Geb's international trade, Ossum Harbor welcomes ships from all over the world, and serves as the primary outlet for the nation's food exports. The harbor is staffed by members of the city's rather large underclass, who live in Mechitar's Vassal Alley.

Although working at the harbor's docks pays a pittance—if that—order pervades this industrial district. Its peacefulness is thanks to the harbor's overseer, **Vernetta Xenopha** (LE female mohrg fighter 12), who has helped defend the city from several major naval attacks. Xenopha's iron hold on the harbor and docks also may be explained by the rumor that she allies with a contingent of incorporeal undead she uses as spies. When not working for the overseer, these spies supposedly inhabit a southern storage building that Xenopha has made off-limits to her workers.

Perdinatia: Once the mansion of the region's Osirian governor, this geometric step-pyramid has been in shambles ever since Geb murdered its occupants and claimed the city for his own. Neglecting the structure once he was victorious, however, proved a blunder on Geb's part. Reports tell of a strange mist permeating the site, which has hallucinogenic and permanently maddening properties that can affect even undead. Even worse, scholars believe that the angry souls of the region's former Osirian leaders haunt the place in ghostly forms who defy the rule of Geb and all who serve him.

Reportedly tethered to the mansion is the ghost of **Khmet Khanrah** (LN male human ghost ranger 12), the Osirian governor Geb slaughtered all those centuries ago, as well as the spirits of his compatriots and the powerful undead monsters who seem to be drawn to the site. The ghosts are bound here and cannot take their revolution against Geb beyond the facility's walls, but with access to living agents or unbound undead they could control, Khmet Khanrah and his allies could prove problematic for the Blood Lords. Until such resources are available to them, however, the rulers of Geb are content to leave the ghosts isolated in the ruin.

River of Rot: Many non-Gebbiters see this fetid canal as an embarrassment to the Blood Lords, who, in the height of their paranoia, accidentally poisoned this waterway during the war between Nex and Geb. Instead of killing the city's undercover enemies, the poison seeped into the water supply, sending most living residents into the afterlife—or into undeath. Once they sealed off the poisoned canal, though, the Blood Lords decided to leave the diseased water as a particularly potent way to protect the Cinerarium



from the living. The city's water supply now comes from underground springs far below Mechitar's sands.

The River of Rot remains ignored and is rarely used, as it once was, to move goods toward the Cinerarium. This neglect has attracted several unsavory denizens to the natural catacombs beneath the canal, including a particularly lawless band of ghoulish thieves, ubashki lynxes (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lost Kingdoms*), and even agents of Pharasma, Iomedae, and other good deities who operate undetected in the city.

Thanathotmos: This bizarre ruin dates to the early years of the Age of Destiny. Nearly 100 feet wide and 200 feet tall, it's shaped like a coiled, headless serpent. Its crumbling stone head—like that of a jackal—lies buried in the sand. Powerful tomb guardians are said to rest inside, and without sufficient reason to venture into the ancient crypt, the undead of Mechitar simply leave the site abandoned.

Vassal Alley: Mechitar's most cramped, decrepit district is home to its vast underclass. Several gangs of thugs operate here, but no inhabitant is quite as feared as the dread wraiths that fly the night skies every few months, hungrily searching for any living creatures on which they might feed. An incredibly strong dread wraith—whose abilities supposedly stem from otherworldly powers—is

said to command these horrors, though to what end remains unclear.

Suggested Mythic Trials

While not the only mythic trials a GM might utilize in a Mechitar-based campaign, below are two to use directly or for inspiration. See page 45 for a suggested mythic trial involving the Harlot Queen Arazni.

Agent of the Perdinatia: The restless vengeful spirits of the Perdinatia know many secret sources of power in and around Mechitar from before Geb's coup, and may be willing to share such with the PCs if they act as the ghosts' agents beyond the walls of the Osirian ruin. What Khmet Khanramh and his allies ask of the PCs is up to the GM, and could include setting free throngs of rebellious slaves, purifying the River of Rot, or unleashing the terrors in the Thanathotmos upon the city.

Blood Lord Assassination: While Geb and Arazni ostensibly rule the nation of Geb, the scheming Blood Lords are the un-lifeblood of the its inner workings. The assassination of one or more of these influential politicians would surely have far-reaching ramifications throughout all of Geb.

Pit of Gormuz

“The place you speak of is no fallow crypt of some musty, long-dead king, nor is it some crevasse filled with orcs or goblinkin. All the gods pitched their lot together to cast the Rough Beast down that pit. Asmodeus himself serves as his jailor. What would the likes of you do there, but die and offer your souls to eternal torment? We here, who must live within earshot of the unnatural sounds that come from that gods-forsaken pit, do not speak its name lightly.”

—Chyata Naheer, village elder of Aneshke

PIT OF GORMUZ

Rift to the Prison of Rovagug

Location Central Casmaron

Common Threats Rovagug cultists, Spawn of Rovagug, twisted beasts of madness and destruction

Notable Inhabitants The Crawling Hunger, Hathriss, Kohal the Corrupted, Raskineya, The Weeper

Prominent Locations Court of Fallen Righteousness, Offal Mountain, Trough of Rovagug

In Casmaron there is a gash in the earth that will not heal—a testament to the age-old adage “Woe when the gods do battle, for the world itself bears their wounds.” The Pit of Gormuz stands as a grim reminder of how quickly a city can meet its end, and how even gods may be cast down, though they do not fall lightly. The pit is a yawning maw of misery, spawning nightmares born from the uneasy sleep of the Rough Beast, who strains against bonds that have sealed his earth-blasting fury since a time before time.

History

During the Age of Creation, the gods banded together to defeat and imprison the most destructive among their number, the Rough Beast Rovagug, setting aside their own personal differences for the sake of the multiverse. In the epic final battle of the conflict, Sarenrae rent a massive rift in the surface of one world, Golarion, cutting all the way to the planet’s core. Into this the gods threw Rovagug and sealed him within a demiplane therein, a prison known as the Dead Vault, to which Asmodeus himself holds the only key. To further sequester the Rough Beast within his cage, Sarenrae repaired the earth, leaving in place of the massive gash in Golarion’s crust a smooth scar that stretched miles across the surface of the world. As people began to spread over the world, the Dawnflower instructed her faithful to avoid this scar—a holy place that was too sacred for mortals to tread—as she knew Rovagug still possessed the ability to exert his influence from within his prison.

Over the millennia, however, Sarenrae’s worshipers misunderstood her command, and the first human civilization to rise out of the Age of Darkness, Ninshabur, built a mighty city called Gormuz upon the scar. A holy site

of Sarenites who believed they had done their goddess’s will, Gormuz stood for millennia and became a destination for pilgrims from across Casmaron. But as Sarenrae feared, Rovagug’s mad rage extended from deep within the earth, and soon visions of destruction and depravity corrupted the godly people of Gormuz.

As the city slipped further and further into decadence and evil, Sarenrae sent ever increasingly vivid omens and portents to her priests in Gormuz, but her warnings went unheard or were misinterpreted. In a final effort, the Dawnflower sent her herald, the angel Kohal, to offer the city a final chance at redemption in the year –3923 AR. The maddened hordes that now inhabited Gormuz overpowered the mighty angel, however, and destroyed him. Enraged at the death of her most trusted celestial agent, Sarenrae herself descended to Gormuz, and smote the city with her flaming scimitar.

Gormuz was destroyed entirely in an instant, but the power with which Sarenrae struck the metropolis was more than she had intended, and the blow opened the rift that led to Rovagug’s prison. Instead of the clean, almost surgical incision she had made eons before when Rovagug was first placed within the Dead Vault, however, what now lay before her was a gruesome pit filled with all manner of foul beasts, including the first of the Spawn of Rovagug to disgorge itself upon Golarion’s surface—Festering Ulunat, the great world-reaping beetle whose carapace now rests in central Sothis. Rovagug’s spawn had hollowed out the earth beneath Gormuz such that the Dawnflower herself would be the one to excavate his prison when she sought retribution against the sinners of Gormuz. Sarenrae, seeing that she had been tricked by the Rough Beast, learned a valuable lesson that day, and has since espoused more fervently than before the value of redemption over wrath.

The Pit of Gormuz has yielded other horrors into the world over the centuries in the form of Volnagur, the End-Singer; Xotani, the Fire Bleeder, a hateful behemoth who burned a hundred cities in conflagration, leaving only the ashes of civilizations in its wake; Chemnosit, the Monarch Worm, whose festering maw consumes the very people who call upon its powers; Kothogaz, the walking beetle of poison and glass that pitched its whole might against the

Vudrani empire; and the great Tarrasque, the most terrifying spawn of Rovagug, which no army or hero has yet to fell. Other monsters may have been spawned from the Pit of Gormuz over the years, but the Tarrasque was the last on record, having emerged to destroy all of Ninshabur in -632 AR.

Region Gazetteer

The deafening roar of hot, fetid wind greets any who journey to the edge of the immense 20-mile-wide Pit of Gormuz. No reasonable means of ingress presents itself along the circumference, though a treacherous series of continually crumbling handholds, bitterly named "The Last Stairway," descends into the pit below a shrine of carved maws and jagged talons. Within the pit darkness, foulness, and heat reign, and few mortals can withstand the ear-splitting wails of the winds, the face-melting blasts of hell-furnace heat, and the pure and sinister stink of the pit without losing their sanity or their lives. Still, dozens of fools try every year.

Trough of the Rough Beast: Varying in width from a few feet to 6 miles, this ring of mostly flat stone is the first ledge below the yawning maw of Gormuz. It's a carrion wasteland fed with fresh sacrifices by the incessant hordes of vicious pilgrims who bring captives to offer the Rough Beast, hurling them over the edge of the pit to break and splatter on the floor of the trough. A brood of nyogoth qliphoth infest the decay-filled ledge, scavenging among the detritus left there for Rovagug, and occasionally rising from the pit to snatch pilgrims whose offerings are deemed unworthy of the Rough Beast. The ledge itself is a breeding ground of horrors where the broken bodies of sacrifices merge together to form great masses of amalgamated flesh that quickly absorb any living creatures that survive the fall to the trough.

The unquestioned ruler of the Trough of the Rough Beast, however, is a hideous thing as old as the pit itself. Known only as the Weeper, this towering, 30-foot-tall, cloaked monstrosity menaces with the head of a carrion bird, four arms ending in slaving maws, and too many stinger-encrusted tails



Pit of Gormuz

to count. The Weeper's back bears one rotting wing on its right side; its left wing was sheared off by angelfire thousands of years ago. The twitching stump of this ruined wing weeps black blood continuously. Drops of this ichor take hideous shape and life of their own and gather round the Weeper as mewling children and zealous subjects.

Offal Mountain: Between the opening of the Pit of Gormuz and the advent of the Tarrasque, many Spawn of Rovagug emerged from the pit, most of which caused such a wake of destruction across the face of Golarion that none were left to record their passage. One such monstrosity, Volnagur the End-Singer, is said to have devoured the settlement of Ikithan—an entire city of over 10,000 unfortunate inhabitants—gorging on flesh, buildings, and even the earth that supported their doomed foundations. After this awful feast of unfathomable proportion, the beast flew to this 5-mile-wide perch on the western wall of the Pit of Gormuz, and there the titanic beast squatted and defecated a mountain of offal.

The steaming vapors of this pile of waste, littered with the remains of an entire city, attract all manner of unwholesome parasites, and those that feed on the feces of one of Rovagug's spawn are infused with the Worldbreaker's terrifying essence. Flies the size of great wyrms circle lazily around this mountain of dung; one spray of their digestive juices is potent enough to reduce a mithral golem to morass. Purple worms of terrifying size frolic in the stinking heaps, boring tunnels through Offal Mountain, and the Crawling Hunger—the largest specimen of purple worm ever witnessed and one of Rovagug's lesser spawn—has been spotted here on numerous occasions.

While common belief holds that the destroyed town was simply a random target for a rampaging beast, the fact that the spawn saw fit to deposit the digested contents of that city into the Pit of Gormuz has led to centuries of speculation regarding its significance. Some say a relic of great power that could be of use to Rovagug in his tireless effort to escape his eternal prison was held within or beneath the city, and that the poor souls devoured there were nothing more than collateral in the spawn's quest to

retrieve the object of power. Others suggest one young girl hidden among the population was touched by prophecy and especially blessed, perhaps even by Sarenrae. Some claim this girl lives still, though she has been horribly tainted by Offal Mountain's putrid predations, and must be cleansed in the fires of Sarenrae. Both theories attract potent followers of both Rovagug and Sarenrae to Offal Mountain, and conflicts of epic proportions are waged deep among the ruins of Ikithan.

Crater of Carnal Joining: Long have the cultists of the Rough Beast sought to bring forth another of his Great Spawn. This dismal, befouled pit, originally thought by pilgrims of the Worldbreaker to be the bottom of Gormuz, is the site of an unnatural rite that lives in infamy. Here a particularly loathsome priest of Rovagug named Multh, the Monster's Midwife, gathered 1,111 "brides and husbands" of Rovagug—willing virgins of over 100 races, monsters and humanoid alike, all hoping to become the vessel for Rovagug's next spawn. His cult spent years gathering the multitude of offerings and brought them to this hell-wracked crater. He prayed to his dark master, begging Rovagug to throw off his bonds long enough to fornicate with the host of waiting applicants.

Multh rejoiced when he first saw a monstrous form rise from the depths of the crater, but then he recognized from legend Galulab'daa, a lesser servant of Rovagug that resembles a seeping awful sea of a gibbering moulder. The hideous slimy blob of appendages, maws and other less decent anatomical expressions rolled like a lust-filled tsunami over the 1,111 virgins. Most of the living offerings were mangled or crushed in this abominable rite, but four survived and quickly ballooned with child (two being rather unfortunate human and troglodyte males). The four Woeful Mothers (as they became known) all died birthing their hideous young. Only one of their progeny survived, a pale and wretched humanoid child with seeping skin like runny eggs. The mewling abomination has been nursed carefully by Multh ever since, in a lava-tube lair concealed in the crater here.

Recently, the Crater of Carnal Joining has attracted a new prospective mate for Rovagug—an awe-inspiring void dragon known as **Raskineya** (see page 60). The mad, mythic wyrm arrived 1 year ago and now makes her nest at the center of the crater, engaging in strange rituals in hopes of attracting the true Rough Beast so that she may aid it in creating new half-dragon spawn that surpass even the Tarrasque in their horror.

Broken Empire: These cavernous systems of tunnels and chambers exist at the Sekamina layer of the Darklands, and were once populated by entire civilizations of dark folk, oroads, and serpentfolk. The wars that raged between these races escalated until one among them, a strange serpentine hierophant named **Hathriss** (CE female serpentfolk cleric

of Rovagug 15/hierophant 4) summoned the Great Doom Chemnosit, the Monarch Worm, one of the unwholesome Spawn of Rovagug. Hathriss foolishly thought she could control Chemnosit. The Monarch Worm made quick fodder of all three empires, starting with Hathriss' own people, and left only destruction in its wake. Afterward its taint left these tunnels filled only with twisted, milk-eyed members of all three races infused with Rovagug's essence. The hierophant Hathriss still stalks the hall as well, armed with the *Tooth of Rovagug* (a variant *dagger of a thousand bites*); more than one foolish hero has sought to claim this accursed weapon for her own, only to be felled by the now-deathless master of dark serpents.

Court of Fallen Righteousness: This strange jagged spire rising like a horn from the south wall of the Pit of Gormuz is the domain of Sarenrae's former herald, the angel now known as Kohal the Corrupted. When the crazed, evil inhabitants of Gormuz destroyed Kohal in the final act that spurred Sarenrae to destroy their city, the angel's corpse fell into the pit his goddess's flaming scimitar carved into the face of Golarion. Plummeting the entire depth of the pit into the lava at the planet's core further marred Kohal's already ravaged corpse, but Rovagug's plan for the fallen angel was not over; 100 years after his destruction, Kohal was resurrected, now in the twisted, scarred form of a chaotic evil three-armed planetar with a body made entirely of molten lava.

Within the hollowed-out tip of this jagged spire known as the Court of Fallen Righteousness, Kohal holds court. The defiled angel is the embodiment of wrath, for Rovagug whispers into his insane mind constant reminders that he was once the herald of a god. From his fortress, Kohal plots, though rarely executes, numerous plans to invade Nirvana and take revenge on his former goddess. The fallen angel keeps a "court" of equally insane followers of the Rough Beast who make it this deep into the Pit of Gormuz. These subjects are generally powerful enough to survive the dangers above the Court of Fallen Righteousness, and are formidable threats in their own right. Fortunately for Sarenrae's faithful, Kohal and his minions are too crazed and disorganized to bring the full thrust of their power to bear, though if they ever do so, it would be catastrophic.

Bones of the Challenger: This slope of smoking earth spouts cathedral-sized gobs of magma that run in rivers towards the pool of lava at the pit's nadir. These rivulets are called the Tears of the Lost Sun, in reference to the legend that Sarenrae pulled a sun from the sky and plunged it to the earth's core to burn Rovagug in his eternal prison for all time.

The sloping stretches of volcanic earth are also littered with strange ivory monuments, some nearly a quarter mile tall. These are the Bones of the Challenger—all that remains of a gargantuan creature from Heaven that descended into

the Pit of Gormuz to take on the Spawn of Rovagug. Unfortunately the zealous creature, whose true nature is still a mystery, foolishly underestimated the combined might of the Rough Beast's most deadly offspring. The slain beast's massive skeleton now adorns the lava-drenched walls of the pit's lowest reaches; the bones' immunity to fire prevents them from being completely destroyed by the constant flow of molten earth.

Rovagug's most ambitious servitors, those with the means and will to descend to the very core of Golarion, to their god's doorstep, have hollowed out many of these gigantic bones to serve as strongholds. These fierce cultists stand vigil over their god's prison in the hope that they will be the first graced with his dark blessing of destruction upon his unholy rise.

Suggested Mythic Trials

Defeating or surviving any of the challenges above could easily count as a mythic trial, but GMs might also consider the following as options.

Ghosts of Gormuz: Though Sarenrae utterly destroyed this city thousands of years ago in judgment, not every soul within Gormuz's walls was tainted by Rovagug's influence. Some of the virtuous inhabitants who were destroyed as collateral damage when Sarenrae smote the city may remain in the area surrounding the Pit of Gormuz as ghosts. What conditions the PCs may have to meet in order to free them of their bonds to the Material Plane are up to the GM, but doing so would certainly be an act worthy of notice by Sarenrae, who still regrets her impulsive action and the innocents who died as a result.

Kohal the Redeemed: Sarenrae's fallen herald, Kohal the Corrupted, resides among the deepest layers of the Pit of Gormuz, completely defiled by Rovagug's influence and twisted into a horrific abomination. Redeeming Kohal and restoring his celestial form would be a heavy blow to the Rough Beast.

A Spawn's Destruction: While few if any of the fell Spawn of Rovagug now reside in the Pit of Gormuz itself, the defeat and destruction of any one of them or a new one birthed from the pit upon the PCs' arrival would surely constitute a mythic trial, for only the most powerful of mortals can bring down one of the abominations sired by the Rough Beast himself.

Statistics for several of the Spawn of Rovagug can be found in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #24* and *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Bestiary*.





Tusk Mountains

My children, you may hear that the old ways are dying—that no more can we follow the herds, that we must build cities and huddle behind walls like the cowards in Tolguth. That our traditions fail us. Look, my children, to the mountains: forever unchanging. They stand now just as they did when the first of us walked this valley. They will still stand long after the last of us departs. The mountains fear not the storm. They break it! We are of the stone and ice, and we do not yield!”

—Jorn, Bloodspeaker of the Greattusk Tribe

TUSK MOUNTAINS

Savage Wilderness of Giant Proportions

Location north-central Avistan

Common Threats Dinosaurs, giants, megafauna

Notable Inhabitants Jarl Gnargorak, Larisa, Lenas, Murrog One-Ear

Prominent Locations Bos-Phargrumm, Earthnavel, Red Rune Canyon, Tolguth

In the shadow of the Tusk Mountains lives a world from another time. Here, where the ice age never ended, where mammoths and cave bears live on, the Mammoth Lords live as they have for centuries. Hot springs and steam create valleys of eternal springtime, and the ground shakes with the mighty steps of dinosaurs. The children of the ice god Thremyr rule the mountain heights. Lying between the witches of Irrisen and the demons of the Worldwound, nestled beneath the Crown of the World, the Tusk Mountains offer no easy life. In this land of time held still, deeds shout louder than words, and legends wait to be born.

History

Like the fangs of a great beast, the icy peaks of the Tusk Mountains jut up from northern Avistan. They form the base of the Crown of the World and bisect the Realm of the Mammoth Lords, before running south to form the border of the Hold of Belkzen and Ustalav. Though the Tusks rise to nearly the height of the mighty Kodar Mountains, the many passes and passages through the mountains make them less of a barrier.

The history of the Tusk Mountains is sparse, largely confined to the tales of the Mammoth Lords. They warn of the tribes before them, who trucked with ancient powers beneath the surface and paid a price beyond the loss of their lives. The bloodspeakers say little of these tribes, save the cryptic dismissal, “They were us, but not of us.”

Mastodons, woolly rhinos, smilodons, and other beasts from forgotten ages roam through the Realm of the Mammoth Lords, including the foothills and valleys of the Tusk Mountains. In the eastern range, volcanic activity and steam vents warm many of the valleys to almost tropical temperatures. In the warmest of these valleys,

dinosaurs and other reptiles supplant the megafauna found elsewhere. Legends hold that these strange creatures migrated from deep below Golarion’s surface, where they dwelled in a savage land of mighty beasts lit by a second sun. If this is true, an earthquake or other event has since closed this path of migration.

Before Earthfall, few creatures lived in the frozen heights of the Tusk Mountains. With the *Starstone’s* impact came the waking of Thremyr, and thus the birth of the frost giants. The frigid heights of the Tusks suit the frost giants perfectly, and tens of thousands of them dwell among its peaks. The frost giants eschew regimented societies, and each jarl rules over a mountain or two at most, though the rise of Jarl Gnargorak threatens to change this. This “high jarl” now claims the fealty of a score of jarls and grows increasingly bold in his sallies against the Mammoth Lords.

Yet more frost giants live as slaves of Mammoth Lords tribes. The first frost giant children to be enslaved were captured for sport or stolen from sleeping giant camps as proof of warriors’ prowess. A few enterprising Mammoth Lords took it upon themselves to raise these stolen giants to adulthood as living battle prizes. These foundlings soon established their worth through manual labor and fighting side by side with the Kellids. Ownership of a foundling demonstrates the power of a Mammoth Lord clan, with the mightiest clans owning as many as a dozen. Even though the tribes treat their giants more akin to family than the slaves they truly are, some foundlings inevitably rebel against their status. Such rebellions have been the end of more than one tribe that harbored more foundlings than its warriors could handle.

A century ago, the corruption of the Worldwound swallowed up the neighboring nation of Sarkoris. Now that influence threatens to engulf the Realm of the Mammoth Lords and the Tusk Mountains. *Hrungara*, the point beyond which mammoths do not willingly go, advances with each passing season. Corrupted megafauna now roam the Thunder Steppes, and fiendish creatures plague Tolguth and its surrounding valleys. Every year, increasing numbers of Kellid bands cross the mountain passes for the relative safety of the western lands.



Region Gazetteer

Though the Tusk Mountains extend as far south as Belkzen and Ustalay, it is the northern Tusks where legends walk. North of Hillcross, the rule of orcs and humans gives way to that of frost giants. In the north, winter witches and demon lords scheme for control, and titanic dinosaurs stride within bowshot of walled compounds.

Bos-Phargrumm: In the highest reaches of the western Tusks stands the ice fortress of **Jarl Gnargorak** (see page 52), self-proclaimed high jarl of all frost giants. Forever collapsing under its own weight, Bos-Phargrumm stands atop the crushed remains of its older layers. Giants labor constantly to add new floors to Gnargorak's monument of pride. The jarl and his most favored minions live in the newest and most opulent levels; the rank and file at the bottom, their halls choked with fallen ice and the detritus of scores of prior occupants. Monstrous creatures dwell in the collapsed chambers beneath the fortress, slithering and burrowing in search of morsels left behind from better days. During his rare stays at Bos-Phargrumm, the jarl shares his chambers with a harem of cloud giants, each an accomplished warrior or spellcaster. The jarl's harem serves as his personal guard and privy council, and runs affairs at his fortress when he is absent.

Gnargorak's reign extends throughout the Tusk Mountains, and his most trusted vassal jarls are each granted a castle of their own upon gaining Gnargorak's favor. Among them are **Karthugra** (CE male frost giant cavalier 10), who rides a white dragon into battle; **Fronav** (CE female frost giant sorcerer 14), who is known to wield a *staff of the magi*; and **Thimroth** (NE male frost giant ranger 8), who leads a celebration of giant polar bears.

Dreamer's Reach: This barren peak, the highest within scores of miles, offers a commanding view of the surrounding mountains. Kellids in search of divine guidance climb Dreamer's Reach and quickly strip to the waist at its summit, braving exhaustion, exposure, and hunger until either Desna grants wisdom in a waking dream or the spirits usher them away to the Boneyard. Animals and giants avoid Dreamer's Reach, leaving the treacherous climb and exposure to the elements the only threats. Yet the veil stretches thin in the realm of dreams, and those seeking visions at its peak may find themselves in battle with nightmares made far too real.

Earthnavel: In a valley reachable only from above or via a network of treacherous caverns, a 13-tiered pit pierces Golarion, its walls lined with the ancient skulls and bones of all manner of fierce creatures. At the bottommost tier, a tunnel barely wide enough for a human dives deeper still—the *sipapu*, or Earthnavel in the Common tongue. Besides deadly dinosaurs adapted to eternal dark, fur-clad ghosts of long-dead warriors roam in the caverns beneath the



Jarl Karthugra

Earthnavel. Only the eldest bloodspeakers of the Mammoth Lords know the rituals that hold these ghosts at bay.

Those who descend the pits, pass through the sipapu, and brave the caverns beyond eventually reach Deep Tolguth, the Orvian lost world of dinosaurs and troglodytes. Long ago, saurians wandered up from the mountains of Deep Tolguth and onto the surface of Golarion, populating the valleys surrounding Tolguth (the namesake of its Darklands cousin) with dinosaurs and even stranger beasts. But time has collapsed much of the route to Deep Tolguth, and the Earthnavel blocks the path for all but the smallest creatures. **Murrog One-Ear** (CE female orc cleric of Gorum 14/hierophant 7) lairs beneath the Earthnavel, having tortured the secret to appeasing the spirits from a Mammoth Lord bloodspeaker. She searches for a set of magical skulls she believes will allow her to open the Earthnavel and release the mighty beasts of Deep Tolguth onto Golarion's surface. For more information on Deep Tolguth, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Into the Darklands*.

Haven: Nestled in a hidden valley north of Hillcross lies the secretive and peaceful village of Haven. Here Kellids and giants live in peace, dwelling side-by-side in crude stone buildings and monastic simplicity. Oddly placid dire bears, smilodons, and winter wolves roam the streets along with mammoths and mastodons. Animals and villagers labor on terraced farms on the valley slopes. Haven welcomes all strangers, celebrating their arrival with a feast at the grand hall. Hidden inside this hall lurks a terrible secret: a cold-tolerant bodysnatcher (see *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4*) that consumes and replicates Haven's guests. Chief among its servants is **Lenas** (LN male pod-spawned human druid 10/hierophant 5). It was Lenas who discovered the bodysnatcher seedling struggling to survive, rescued it, and nursed it to full growth before surrendering his body to its embrace. Lenas wears the *Verdant Stone*, an ancient amulet that grants regenerative power to nearby plants, prevents his vegetative form from deteriorating, and gives him full access to the druidic abilities he had in life.

Mammoth Graveyard: In a mountain valley in the foothills of the eastern Tusks lie the bones of countless thousands of mammoths and mastodons. Mammoths near the end of their lives travel to the valley before lying down and giving in to death. Though long sought for its king's ransom in ivory, the valley has matured into a mythic location with a sort of sentience, guiding creatures to their final rest while warding the valley from outsiders. Travelers find the valley only by accident, and never twice. Yet mammoths no longer seek out the valley; it has become hrungara. The Worldwound has corrupted the genius loci infusing the place, turning it from a guardian into a sadistic hunter. Bone golems roam the graveyard, and near its center rotting corpses of the recent dead have melded together into a flesh colossus. Unlike a normal flesh colossus (see *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4*), this monstrosity discorporates into a horde of mammoth zombies.

The ivory of the valley holds value beyond mere material worth. When used by those with mythic power, *figurines of wondrous power* carved from the ivory of the graveyard gain a mythic simple template (GM's choice).

Mount of Black Fire: The vents and craters of this shattered peak erupt not with magma but with ebon flame (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #22: The End of Eternity 38*), which consumes and extinguishes normal fire. This ebon flame, normally unstable except in small quantities, flows from overlapping gates to the Planes of Fire and Negative Energy bound together at the mountain's core. Though the ebon flame is different from that sought by the Blackfire Adepts, the mountain and its connection to distant planes nevertheless draws powerful members of that arcane cult to the mountain, though they have yet to

discover a means of controlling the eldritch power of the great volcano.

Red Rune Canyon: This interconnected maze of canyons has been claimed by the relentless expansion of the Worldwound, and festering black boils and sores weeping bloodlike mud now adorn its walls. Under demonic influence the canyons shift their paths slowly, etching a progression of blasphemous runes into Golarion's surface as demonic fortunes wax and wane. The oppressive evil of Red Rune Canyon drives animals and any beasts brave enough to enter it mad. The taint of the canyon grants these creatures one or more of the following templates: advanced, fiendish, or savage simple. Even limited exposure to the canyons prompts aggression in more intelligent creatures; longer exposure warps both body and spirit.

The malevolent **Larisa** (CE female tiefling sorcerer 12/archmage 4) arrived at Red Rune Canyon a few months ago. Through blasphemous sacrifice, she's gained control of the glyphs inscribed by the canyon. At each new moon, she calls forth a new symbol and siphons power from the distant Worldwound. When she bends the canyon into her grand spell's final rune, she will at last metamorphose into a full demon, no longer cursed by the taint of mortal blood.

Thremyr's Steps: Frost giant legend holds that Thremyr, wroth at being awakened from his slumber, forced this rocky passage between the mountains on his way to the Crown of the World. Ice trolls, cold riders, and winter fey hold this rugged pass despite periodic frost giant forays to reclaim their sacred ground. At the height of the steps, a lone norn with mythic abilities, called the Fate Watcher, holds court over trolls and fey alike. Embedded in her brow is an ice-blue sapphire from Thremyr's very flesh that grants her mastery of frost magic and dominion over all that tread the ice. This *Jewel of Ice Unending* cannot be removed from her brow while she still draws breath.

Tolguth: Volcanic activity heats Tolguth and its surrounding valley, and steam from geothermal vents keeps its vegetation as rich and lush as any rain forest. Dinosaurs and other primeval beasts roam among its ferns and cycads—both mundane dinosaurs and saurians imbued with mythic power. Kellids revere the great reptiles almost as gods, while the orcs of Belkzen covet them as beasts of war. Built on high ground near the valley's heart stands the walled stockade of Tolguth that shares the valley's name, a summery refuge from the frozen north. Year by year, more of the vents warming Tolguth succumb to the wintery call of the Witch Queen, leaving its western reaches wrapped in snow. To the east, the Worldwound whispers, and monstrosities that are more than a match for dinosaurs now tread within sight of Tolguth's walls.



Suggested Mythic Trials

Mythic adventures in the Tusk Mountains primarily draw adventurers into the northern Tusks, where creatures of the forgotten past meet fiends from the Great Beyond. Among the possible mythic trials a GM may incorporate into a Tusk Mountains campaign are the following.

The Bones' Redemption: To rid the Mammoth Graveyard of the Worldwound's corruption, would-be rescuers must enter a false reality that imprisons the genius loci's intellect, which manifests as a colossal spectral mastodon. Here, they must do battle with feral spirits and mythic demons, while cataclysmic storms and earthquakes signal the mirror world's rapidly approaching end. Purging the demonic taint from the formerly benevolent sentient location is a task worthy of a mythic trial.

The Doors Unopened: The reshaping of Red Rune Canyon has weakened the already failing barriers between Golarion and the Abyss. At each new moon, the rituals of the tiefling Larisa force open another gate, spewing demons into the Tusk Mountains to rampage

unchecked. Though the first few gates stayed open for only a few seconds, the most recent rift opened inside the stockade of Tolguth itself, and took a full minute to close. Ending Larisa's schemes and ensuring that no further gates open in or around Red Rune Canyon will require feats of bravery both vastly difficult and too perilous for anyone without mythic power to achieve.

Waking the Beasts: When fully activated, the bone-lined tiers of the Earthnavel form a powerful beacon tied to the subterranean realm of Deep Tolguth. With the proper sacrifices, the beasts of Deep Tolguth can be called to the surface, turned back, or even mastered. Millennia ago, the first Mammoth Lords overthrew the masters of the Earthnavel and called upon its power to constrict the sipapu. Each of the nine lords claimed a single deformed skull from the tiered pits and hid it away, leaving the Earthnavel powerless. Now Murrog One-Ear, warpriest of Rovagug, seeks the nine stolen skulls. She aspires to raise an army of dinosaurs, and with them at her command to wrest control of the Mammoth Lords' armies. Adventurers who can prevent Murrog from successfully obtaining all nine skulls are worthy of prestige and the granting of mythic power.

Valashmai Jungle

The landscape here offers only murder. Yesterday Shalem picked a blossom. Her eyes ran red with blood all day, and Osril's prayers to Iomedae proved fruitless. We had to cut her eyes out so the spores would not spread. I would make for the ships tomorrow if I could tell where they were, but the jungle cheats me. Landmarks move in the night, the shimmering mist above the canopy shows the sun in random spots by day. If you find this journal on my corpse, burn me—I'm certain this place has infected my body.

—Final Entry in the Journal of Min Shen Wan, Lantern Lodge Pathfinder

VALASHMAI JUNGLE

Primordial Jungle of Ancient Fallen Civilizations

Location Southern Tian Xia

Common Threats Carnivorous plants, disease, kaiju, xills

Notable Inhabitants Agmazar the Sky Titan, Bodhjeva,

Burning Agony, King Mogaru, Lord Varklops, Old Ebon Claw

Prominent Locations Goroyasa, Kashang, Sky Titan's Grave, Swamp of the Dark Brood

The Valashmai is one of Golarion's most deadly jungles, a place of poison and demons, where one may lose her soul along with her life. The predators who stalk the wild steaming jungles are strange and cruel. Pythons and panthers—the kings of lesser jungles—cower in whatever corners of the Valashmai they can claim, for here bizarre creatures such as ahuizotls and kamadans rove in great packs, and the primal, predatory dragons known as kongamatos slink below the surface of still swamps. These are the lesser terrors of the Valashmai, for the jungles shroud an ancient civilization of onetime conquerors—the towering, reptilian Valashmaians for whom this killing landscape is named.

History

The jungle eats all things, including time. The steaming jungles devour memory and history, voraciously feeding on the past and covering it anew with a carpet of fronds, vines, and leaves. Monuments to kings who once claimed a hundred cities and 10,000 slaves lay sunken at the bottom of swamps, and the visages of great gods whose long forgotten names once shook men's souls are now covered in 10-foot-thick masks of moss and fungus—lost in the wild fecundity of the Valashmai.

Civilizations rose and fell on the peninsula in times immemorial. Some of the oldest legends speak of a nameless kingdom of powerful elementals whose glories spanned the Age of Serpents. This empire is said to have been guided through the centuries by an immortal azer who burned with green flames, known today only as the Jade Hegemon. None know the ultimate fate of this elemental empire, though some claim the citizens fled into the heart of the Chenlun Range, and that it is their

elemental power that fuels the heavy volcanic activity in the area. Few ruins still remain from this legendary empire, and many skeptical scholars refute its existence as mere myth.

Next, the reptilian people known as the Valashmaians rose to power. The Valashmaians' origins are a mystery, but evidence left in their wake indicates they stood three times the height of a human, and their massive stone structures still stand today as a testament to their long and influential rule of the jungles that now bear likeness to the reptilians' name. Ancient accounts paint the Valashmaians as tyrannical, plane-shifting slavers, whose ruthlessness was sufficient to bring the entropic jungle into order under their rule. The Valashmaians populated the peninsula with slaves from a thousand worlds, from which some scholars claim the catfolk, lizardfolk, gripplis, vanaras, and other strange humanoid tribes that now populate the Valashmai are descended. The Valashmaians were cruel taskmasters, and eventually the slaves they gathered from the multiverse rose against them. Over centuries of revolt and crushing crackdowns, the reptilian overlords finally surrendered and fled Golarion to begin their evil empire anew on some fallow world where their wretched reputation had yet to precede them.

When the Valashmaians vanished, anarchy reigned in their wake. The empire collapsed and the slaves of the imperial reptilian giants fractured along racial lines. The heights of the empire's culture and learning vanished in a scant few generations.

Region Gazetteer

The Valashmai Jungle is alive, as much a living organism as the beasts and humanoid tribes that populate it. Not only does the jungle live and breathe, but it also is a practiced killer, culling whole tribes and reducing invaders to so much fertilizer since the dawn of time. Valashmai is home to some of Golarion's fiercest predators: Burning Agony, a dragonlike behemoth who spews swarms of stringing red ants from its three maws; the terrible, immortal tiger Old Ebon Claw, the One-Eyed Hatred, who has faced thousands of Golarion's mightiest hunters and picked their bones clean; Bodhjeva, called

the Devourer Goddess and the Many-Horned Queen by the tribes of the jungle who fear her coming as they do the end of all things; the mythic Star Titan, whose fall shook the Valashmai and whose origins still puzzle explorers and scholars today. Insectile horrors such as burrow-blade beetles, who seek the heart (and some say the soul) of their crippled hosts vie with dream-death poison in an ongoing struggle to prove what hazard can cull the most adventurers from the dread interior of the Valashmai.

Worse, the jungle twists its shape, hides the sun, moves the stars—all as if the environment were actively working to thwart the navigational efforts of those who breach its borders. Natives claim these landscape-wrenching effects are leftover enchantments of the Valashmaians, used to inhibit organization among their many slaves. Even the most adept rangers lose their path among the killing trees and poisoned swamps of the Valashmai, and any they lead into the dense trees are all but doomed to die.

Goroyasa: This massive desolate island lies blanketed beneath a spore-riddled blight of strange fungus, the mere touch of which enslaves the mind of its hosts, while granting them terrifying physical prowess. Once a civilization of giants called Goroyasa home, and rumor has it their utopian cities are hidden beneath hundreds of feet of mossy fungal growth at the island's center. Sages who have flown above the interior claim that the living field of mold originates from a crater at the epicenter of this ancient cyclopean kingdom and that some botanical experiment gone awry is most likely the cause of the mind-corrupting fungal infection plaguing the entire island. Others claim the giant kingdom was once part of the peninsula, but when a strange meteor fell upon their capital and the evil-tainted fungus began to spread from its crater, the wizard-kings of the giants' higher-caste sundered their home from the peninsula and cast it into the wild sea. A few legends claim the meteor fall preceded the arrival of the Valashmaians, and was precipitated by the slavers to remove the giants, the only civilization capable of opposing their planned conquest of the peninsula. Any creature setting foot on the island risks infestation by the virulent fungal spores that coat every surface, and those who do not succumb to such mind-wiping horrors are subject to the deprivations of the foul inhabitants who call the island home—the giant near-mindless vegepygmy-like spore-slaves of Goroyasa who sacrifice anything that avoids the fungus to the demon lord Cyth-V'sug.

Kashang: The stepped temples of the ruined Valashmaian city of Kashang at the eastern foot of the Chenlun Mountains are haunted by the remnants of countless abandoned faiths—a host of foul gods worshiped by the myriad slaves of the reptilian overlords.

The old legends about this sprawling complex of interconnected temples speak of the strange gods of the Valashmaians' slaves brought with them from their distant homeworlds and the lip service the Valashmaians paid them to keep their chattel docile. When the slaves eventually drove the Valashmaians from the jungles, it was here, in Kashang, where the first seeds of chaos took root, as the countless cults who worshiped here vied for control of the complex and the souls of those of other faiths. Today, silence and stillness haunt Kashang, and even the most predatory of jungle creatures avoid the region out of fear of the eldritch divine power locked within its dark stones. Each temple contains the lost knowledge of now forgotten faiths, including otherworldly guardians bound eternally to guard these secrets. Of the few mortal creatures to inhabit the dread temple city are a large tribe of mongrelmen who live amid the massive ruins and

Valashmai Jungle





beneath them in a series of labyrinthine caverns. Led by the high priest **Chalim Malgta** (NE female mongrelman oracle 15/hierophant 3), these savage mongrelmen exhibit both the physiological and cultural remnants of countless slave races, including catfolk, grippli, human, vanara, and others with no modern-day equivalent, the results of millennia of interbreeding in their isolated ruins, influenced by the teachings and divine hands of scores of nameless gods.

Sudisan Peaks: The Sudisan range is one of the most verdant expanses of Golarion, its lush greenery appearing as a dreamlike paradise from far off. The Sudisans served as a final stronghold to the withering empire of the Valashmaians, and the slave overlords created the plant life here as a last bastion against the fury of their rebelling servitors. Each species of tree, vine, flower and frond is a killer—here the terrifying arcane mysteries of a race of plane-hopping reptilian slavers have changed the very land itself. Their great works are dreadful indeed, and the Sudisans breed poisons feared across Golarion.

The most common dealer of demise on these mountainsides is the mumbalam tree. Animated garrote vines, razor sharp and able to sense living prey, hang from the branches of the mumbalam by the hundreds. Most intruders lose their heads to these dread reapers, and those whose natural defenses or armor saves them from instant decapitation are instead pulled skyward with tremendous force and pinioned on the impaling branches above. The magic-infused wood of the mumbalam pierces adamantite with ease. Skeletons dangle from the branches of the trees, which most adventurers mistakenly assume tribesfolk placed there as grisly warnings, not realizing until too late the horrifying truth of these predatory trees. Legend speaks of a mighty treant mumbalam called the **Old Executioner of the Mountains** (NE variant mythic treant druid 10) who leads an army of other mumbalams into battle against the agents of encroaching civilizations.

As if the poisons and murdering trees of the Sudisans weren't enough, a mythic tiger of unrivaled ferocity has roamed the mountainsides for hundreds of years. Old Ebon Claw, the One-Eyed Hatred, claims the Sudisan Peaks as his personal hunting ground. Every great hunter dreams of bringing down this stalking nightmare, but to date only the great titan Gallapherus has even managed to wound it. After claiming Old Ebon Claw's left eye as a trophy, Gallapherus found his triumph short lived, as the tiger laid the titan low and feasted on his guts.

Swamp of the Dark Brood: These dismal marshes of sucking mud, boiling pools of acid, and vicious predators are home to hundreds of tribes of lizardfolk, chief among them the Black-Tongue Biters, the Blood Stingers, and the Thickscales. These tribes engage in nearly constant

warfare, slaughtering one another with a savagery born of hundreds of years of mounting hatred. Still, these fierce tribes wage their petty conflicts in the shadow of a far more dreadful threat.

One of the most dangerous races to serve the Valashmaian Empire—an ever-growing horde of xills—still hunts these marshes and the surrounding jungles. Taken from their extraplanar environs by the Valashmaians, the xills were forced to serve as assassins and task masters over the giants' other slave races. Eventually, the xills rallied around a strange immortal brood-mother, and overthrew their Valashmaian overlords, forcing them from the marshes after a decades long conflict of protracted strife on both sides.

The xill masters of these swamplands congregate around a tremendous mound of mud and dead trees, where their captives give birth to fresh levies for their expanding host. No one knows what dark designs these brutal alien monstrosities harbor for the rest of the peninsula, or even the continent. Some sages worry the xills are biding their time, building a host of unthinkable size with which to surge across Tian Xia—a blight born in a bygone age whose savage fury is destined to be spent on the innocent civilizations to the north.

The xills bow to a mutant brood-mother, rumored to be the same who led the rebellion against the Valashmaians ages ago. This brood-mother, named **Bodhjeva** (CN female xill sorcerer 12/archmage 6), is known as the Devourer Goddess, the Many-Horned Queen, and the Great Mother of Xills. Most of the time, she slumbers beneath the mile-wide mound of mud at the nexus of the xills' dominion, but on occasion she rises to hunt the enemies of her brood, rampaging across the swamplands and devouring whole tribes of lizardfolk.

Once per year, for a moon's turn the lizardfolk tribes cease hostilities during the Brood Hunt, when shadows come alive and members of each tribe vanish by the dozens, dragged into the trees by the xills, who always take prey alive to serve as agonized incubators for their ravenous young.

Thunderblood Peak: This towering volcanic mountain dwarfs the rest of the Chenlun Range surrounding its august peak. The Thunderblood is named for the potent earthquakes that rock the mountain's core, always threatening eruption. Thunderblood was once known as Thisskarshai, a powerful redoubt of the Valashmaian Empire, crowned with a stellar observatory used to chart dimensional travel. The reptilian slave-lords were pushed from the mountain by fierce bands of elementals from within the mountain—now believed to be the remnants of the previous elemental empire from before the dawn of time. The elementals themselves have retreated back into the heart of the mountain,





VALASHMAI JUNGLE

leaving the abandoned observatories and other cyclopean structures of Thisskarshai in ruins around the peak's caldera. Explorers of the peak may only gain access at the behest of **Bokashi, Lord of Burning Hearts** (CE male invincible fire yai fighter 8), who rules over the former city and its tribal fire giant inhabitants. If angered, he can augment his fire giant armies with legions of oni from the surrounding region, and is rumored to know the means of summoning the eldritch elemental forces that lie sequestered deep within the earth.

Suggested Mythic Trials

Few locations on Golarion present as much danger and potential to claim mythic power as the jungles of Valashmai. Below are just a few mythic trials to consider for characters who wish to tap into the ancient, eldritch power that suffuses the jungle.

Elemental History: While little is known today of the Valashmaians who ruled the jungle millennia ago, even less is known of the elemental empire said to have first inhabited this land at the dawn of time. It is said that knowledge is power, and in this case, such an axiom is true, for a party that uncovers the secrets of this long-lost

civilization would likely find such information sufficient to warrant a moment of ascension. Such secrets have eluded discovery for millennia, however, and are likely to be closely guarded by beings of incredible power.

The Secrets of Kashang: While some of the deities venerated in the temple complex of Kashang remain today, others have been forgotten to time, or perhaps never existed at all. Despite their mysterious origins, it's no secret that divine mythic power courses through the ancient cyclopean stones. Uncovering some of the lost lore of the Valashmaians' slaves' faiths could unlock great power in any who find it, though the same could be said for any of the ruins' gruesome inhabitants should the mongrelmen uncover the secrets first.

The Star Titan's Grave: One of the deadliest threats in the entire Valashmai is the mighty undead kaiju known as the Star Titan (see page 52). Designed by beings on another world to fight undead, the great four-armed monstrosity now inhabits the eastern jungle and terrorizes not only creatures that have risen from the grave, but any others that stumble across its territory. Defeating this mythic abomination is a task of truly epic proportions, and would easily herald a party's moment of ascension.

Yjae

“Look to the left of the sun. It looks like a speck, but I tell you, it’s a city in the sky! That is where the Sky Spirits dwell in their floating city Yjae, a remnant of a time when humans were great as gods. They scorned the earth in pride, using their magic to temper the abiding wind of the heavens. But twisted things make their home among its ruins. Only a fool would venture to Yjae, where nightmares walk and dreamers die. Best to keep your feet on the ground... for that is a long way to fall.”

—Vachir the Swiftheart, of the Mutabi-qi

YJAE

Flying City Overrun by Otherworldly Horrors

Location High above the deserts of Shaguang

Common Threats Denizens of Leng, errant traps and latent magical effects, oni

Notable Inhabitants Avalanche King, Loko, Musafti the Burning, Shebe, Yellow Harridan

Prominent Locations Crag of the Avalanche King, Dream Pools, Nine-Faceted Citadel, Tower of the Yellow Harridan

Yjae, the Windblown City, is all that remains of the height of human civilization in the earliest days of what those of the Inner Sea call the Age of Destiny. This last known Shory city is damaged beyond repair. A drifting phantom wandering the skies, Yjae is the lost soul of a once great empire. Its people are descended from greatness, but they have fallen into arrogance and decadence, and have allowed nightmares to lay siege to their floating sanctuary.

History

In the storied Age of Destiny, through the wisdom and the great magic of Old Mage Jatembe, passed down through the generations, men and women rose to literal heights unattained before or since. The aeromancers of the Shory empire created Kho, the first of many flying cities, in –2323 AR, employing a new magical principal called Aeromantic Infandibulum. The flying cities of Shory plied the skies over Garund for almost 2 millennia, but as with all great empires, they eventually declined, as the cities succumbed to disease, war, or monsters. Unlike for nations based firmly on the ground, the fall of Shory was much more literal than figurative, and one by one the flying cities of the once-great empire plummeted catastrophically to the ground.

Seeing their empire crumbling around them, the rulers of the city of Yjae sought to escape the fate of Kho, Ulduvai, and the other doomed cities of Shory. In an act of equal parts desperation and arrogance, the triune Sky Masters of Yjae abandoned their sister cities and fled east across the Obari Ocean, soaring high above the clouds along the upper edges of the habitable skies. While Kho and the other Shory cities fell one by one from the sky to crash into the Barrier Mountains of the Mwangi Expanse, Yjae made

an impossible journey to the Wall of Heaven in distant Tian Xia.

There the Sky Masters of Yjae faced an insurmountable barrier, for these mountain peaks stretched even higher than the Shory city could fly. The Sky Masters attempted a treacherous navigation of the lowest passes they could find, yet powerful winds and other, stranger influences that seemed to rise from eerie ruins on the stark mountain slopes seized the flying city and tossed it like a leaf in a typhoon. The city smashed against a mountainside—nearly a quarter of its towers and understructure was crushed and it almost spiraled into the ground. Worse, strange denizens of the high mountains invaded the city when it slipped through a thin barrier between reality and the terrifying realm of Leng.

With a quarter of the city in ruins, its magical method of propulsion irrevocably destroyed, and sinister denizens of a nightmare dimension seizing control of parts of the city’s understructure and damaged towers, Yjae’s three rulers managed, somehow, to maintain control. But the damage was done—while Yjae still floats, its ability to move on its own has been lost. The areas containing Yjae’s magical propulsion artifacts now fester with the warped energy of Leng, and its byways are home to terrors. Since that fateful crossing, Yjae has drifted with the winds, stuck forever in the eddies and rivers of air that churn miles above the deep desert of Shaguang below.

Since then the descendants of the Shory have fought a long campaign against the denizens of Leng and other grave threats that have arisen on the crippled floating city. Hanging on to the legacy of their forebears, nurturing vain hopes of someday regaining the districts lost to nightmare and repairing the city’s propulsion system, the Shory have persevered for thousands of years in the face of horror.

All the while, the desert-dwelling nomads of Shaguang venerate the Shory almost as gods, referring to them as Sky Spirits. Unaccustomed to such wonders of magic and technology, and interacting only rarely with the strange, dark-skinned people who descend from the heavens above as though walking on air, the people of the Mutabi-qi have elevated the Shory to the stuff of legends. Few possess true knowledge of the hapless city of Yjae far above them, for it

is often too distant to see from the ground, and even fewer possess the means to reach the city. Perhaps this is for the best, however, for the potential evil contained within Shory's overtaken districts is enough that the Sky Masters consider a quarantine of the entire sky city a reasonable isolation to maintain.

Region Gazetteer

Yjae is a city under siege. The descendants of the Shory, ruled by three seemingly immortal Sky Masters of the old empire, engage in pitched battles with the denizens of Leng across miles of ruined cityscape and shattered islands, where multitiered buildings of splendor and monuments of immaculate craftsmanship now stand largely in ruin. Most of the old districts are in shambles, and few Shory bother to use their ancient names any longer.

Aeromantic Maelstrom: This massive whirling vortex of multicolored magic vapors erupted from the bowels of Yjae shortly after its collision with the jagged peaks of the Wall of Heaven. A stone spur the size of a cathedral ripped into the bottom of the city, rupturing several vast chambers containing arcane-infused coolants and the wild magic seals that once allowed Yjae to command the very clouds and shape the surrounding weather to the whim of its masters. The maelstrom exploded forth with such force that the entire three districts above it—The Whelm, Wind Towers, and Sky Wave Heart—were completely obliterated. Thousands of Shory were atomized in an instant, their ashes swept up into the maelstrom and poured into the sky. Strange ashen snows fell on Yjae for the next 3 days, leaving its inhabitants with the taste of the melting essence of the spell-seared dead on the tips of their tongues. The Aeromantic Maelstrom has raged ever since, gushing a fountain of arcane power into the sky. On clear nights, the maelstrom is visible from the deserts below Yjae, appearing like a multi-hued comet frozen in the sky.

The maelstrom's whirling eldritch fires vaporize spell-tempered adamantine as easily as paper. Musafiti the Burning sees the Maelstrom as an opportunity more than a catastrophe. The Sky Master believes that if an expedition could be mounted into the damaged inner-workings from which the maelstrom roars, one might direct its torrent of destruction and turn its annihilating blast towards the Spire District where the denizens of Leng make their stronghold. Loko and Shebe continually forbid this dangerous gambit, believing the risk of accidentally misdirecting the maelstrom towards their own holdings, or worse detonating the entire city, is too great to wager on.

Crag of the Avalanche King: When Yjae crashed into the Wall of Heaven, the denizens of Leng weren't the only stowaways carried off by

the flying city. This peak of stone broke free from the mountains and landed on Spear District, crushing many of the city's military forces before they could battle the city's new enemies. Upon this broken peak, a terrifying void yai (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 210), called the Avalanche King by the Shory, commanded a powerful city-state of oni and their yeti slaves. The Avalanche King is thorn in the Sky Masters' sides, and their efforts to destroy him and his tribe of evil spirits continue without success.

Deep below the Avalanche King's crag, buried under tons of stone, lie magically sealed vaults containing some of the Shory's most dangerous military innovations: great arcane cannons, capable of atomizing a great wyrm with a but grazing shot, and strange reality-warping lenses that can transport entire enemy armies to a distant plane of existence. The Sky Masters at once relish the thought of reclaiming these weapons of peerless might, and shudder



Yjae





at the thought of the Avalanche King discovering these buried caches for his own terrible use.

Dream Pools: Once this sprawling array of pools was the pride of Yjae's Pleasure Gardens district. Always filled with balmy, pure water and refreshed continually by potent magic, the pools attracted the rich and powerful of the city's oldest imperial families. These marbled glories seem untouched by the disasters of Yjae, but the subtle and insidious influence of Leng has perverted them. The pools are filled to the brim with a strange radiant purple fluid that sheds a mesmerizing glow. Any who touch these Leng-tainted waters are assaulted by the dreams and nightmares of a thousand sleepers all at once. With their minds reeling from an onslaught of fragmented visions and sensations ranging from the exultant to the erotic to the nightmarish, these dreamers usually surrender, gladly hurling themselves into the pool and drowning in the throes of an ecstasy far outstripping any drug, magic, or lover's embrace.

As the descendants of the Shory lose their faith over time, many come here to seek an ecstatic end to the misery of their lives. Also, the youth of Shory carefully extract drops of these dream-laden waters, using them as a potent narcotic, and some on Golarion who are aware of the water's effects would gladly pay exorbitant prices for even one drop of these purple waters.

Nine-Faceted Citadel: This towering cocoon of crystal crackles with arcane energy and thrums with the power of a thousand stars. The energies of the citadel course through its mithral-laced walls of crystal, directed inward toward its core where, subsumed within a diamond the size of a storm giant's fist, the essence of a mythic protector slumbers in a matrix of spells forgotten 5,000 years ago. The true nature of this protector is a mystery even to the Sky Masters, who are as hesitant to release the creature as they are to admit they need its help. Whatever it is, it's a creature of such power that Shory's first aeromancers felt confident tasking it with the protection of an entire flying city.

A regal solarium rests at the apex of the Nine-Faceted Citadel, its transparent walls offering the Sky Masters of Yjae an unbroken view of their beleaguered city. Here in three floating crystal thrones, the Sky Masters hold court, engage in petty feuds, and attempt to design new plans to hold and retake their city, each more elaborate and desperate than the last. With most of their subjects long dead or turned to wretched creatures by the sinister influence of Leng, the Sky Masters command their dwindling forces in desperate gambits to defeat their twisted foes.

While the protector held within the Nine-Faceted Citadel was meant to be released in Yjae's time of need, the Sky Masters were proud and arrogant and hold to this day that they are capable of saving the city from its fate. After centuries of bungles and bringing Yjae to the brink of destruction with their pride, the Sky Masters continue

to stumble on year after year, continually blaming one another for their collective failures, and watching their city crumble from the safety of their solarium.

Arguably the wisest and most powerful of the Sky Masters of Yjae, **Lokoa** (LN male human monk 15/guardian 4), is a mysterious man who always appears naked save a loincloth as white as snow, and a smooth, flawless ivory mask and matching gauntlets (which he never removes). His long-limbed body is honed to pure physical perfection. Some of his followers claim his gauntlets and mask are actually artifact-level magical prostheses that fully replace his flesh-and-blood hands and face, which were lost to the dread ministrations of a past enemy who inflicted wounds so dire they prevented his ruined appendages and features from regenerating even under the treatment of Shory's greatest healers.

Lokoa's rival Sky Master is **Shebe** (NG female human wizard 16/archmage 3) is a striking, tall, ebon-skinned queen bedecked in a skin-tight suit of shimmering silver scales and wearing an elemental cloak of white water that flows freely from magic shoulder clasps like a waterfall upon her back. Her command of magic is superior to that of her counterparts, and she rightfully boasts the strongest command of aeromancy among the Sky Masters. To this day she blames Lokoa's insistence on navigating through the passes of the Wall of Heaven for the disastrous crash that brought on all of Yjae's miseries.

The brashest of the Sky Masters is **Musafti the Burning** (CN male human fighter 18/champion 2), who is also the only one who harbors delusions of victory over the denizens of Leng. He is a fierce warrior who often leads bands of Shory into the Spire District, engaging in frantic battle with the Yellow Harridan's minions. Musafti's duels with the Avalanche King are the stuff of legend, and much of the ruination of the Broken Slums is the direct result of their titanic clashes. Musafti's features are unknown for he always appears sheathed in swirls of pure blue eldritch flame that obscure his true form. He carries a shield said to be crafted by Old Mage Jatembe, which visits wounds upon any who strike it equal to those they dealt. Musafti cannot fly Yjae at all, and is helpless in all matters of aeromancy, deferring to the other Sky Masters in these matters. Musafti supports Lokoa more often than Shebe out of spite, for Shebe has refused his romantic advances for thousands of years.

Tower of the Yellow Harridan: When Yjae crashed into the Wall of Heaven, the once-proud towers of the Spire District came crashing down, and thousands perished in a matter of moments. Within a day, some twisted influence of Leng invaded the district, and many of these ruins reformed as if shaped by the hand of a mad god into one sky-rending tower of impossible geometry, reaching upward for miles into a layer of swirling dark clouds that ever cling to its higher reaches.





Within, the spatial rules of reality hold no sway, and strange twisted perspectives and warped architecture unfolds. Here the denizens of Leng make their home, hidden in impossible angles and always hovering on the periphery of sight. Packs of hounds of Tindalos prowl shadows and pockets of interspace. Misshapen many-limbed nightmares lurch along cracked walls and ceilings, mewling pure madness into the night.

A creature known as the **Yellow Harridan** (CN female advanced mythic lamia harridan^{ROTR} oracle 10), a handmaiden of the High-Priest Not To Be Described, reigns over the denizens of Leng on Yjae, though her commands are inscrutable. The hordes under her control engage in all manner of horrifying predations, but seem to do so without any overarching strategy. As always, the interests of Leng prove too twisted for mortal minds to fathom, and each Sky Master maintains his or her own theory as to the designs of these dread foes. The Yellow Harridan has never been seen or faced in battle, but Loko believes she is the warped offspring of the High-Priest Not To Be Named and some lamia queen. With one foot in Leng and one on Golarion, she is capable of bridging the layer that separates this world from the sprawling, bone-ridden plains of nightmare.

Suggested Mythic Trials

Few locations present the potential for mythic ascension like an ancient flying city overwhelmed with malevolent creatures from a mysterious plane of existence. Below are two possible mythic trials GMs might use in a campaign involving Yjae.

The City Repaired: The destruction wrought upon the city of Yjae in its collision with the Wall of Heaven permeates nearly every structure of the metropolis. Nowhere is it as heavy as beneath the city, where the inner workings of the Aeromantic Infandibulum have been damaged beyond the survivors' ability to repair. Someone with enough resources and ambition could scour other Shory ruins to recover the requisite parts and repair the damaged navigational mechanism of Yjae through a complex arcane ritual.

Leng Exiled: The Sky Masters have enough on their hands with a broken city under their control, so efforts to repair the city have been delayed for millennia because of the denizens of Leng who corrupt the city from within. Even the amassed powers of the Sky Masters couldn't rid the city of this extraplanar influence, proving that such a task is truly in the realm of legend.