Age of Ice

War of Powers

Drifa falls, and the impact of the titan shakes loose avalanches from the distant mountains. The sight of something so massive falling is something you will never forget.

Admittedly, that is because the death throes of the great white wyrm are reducing the settlement you have warded and guarded since your arrival to ruins.

At least most of the people there had fled already, so the death toll isn't quite as bad as it could be, and this does represent an opportunity to create something better.

What can you achieve when you set out to build a city from scratch, rather than trying to guide an organically growing one?

Voices From Afar

Hope is important, and sometimes so is having someone to blame, or plead with, or thank for your good fortune. People group together to do these things, and the things become ritual, and these rituals are built on, and so organised religions come to be. Here on Erebus the gods themselves exist, and while they cannot interfere directly, they can still inspire followers and grant other benefits and blessings.

If you chose the Mechanos civilisation, you may not select a religion.
You yourself are not required to follow the religion you choose.

You may select one of the following as your civilisations ordained religion:

The Order of Junil

Obedience to our Commander, our King and our God.

Junil, the eldest of the Gods, had promised to stay apart from the conflict in Creation. No one knows why he decided to change that, some say it was to combat the influence of the Ashen Veil, others that it was jealousy. Regardless of his reasons, he promised salvation to the least of men and asked only one thing in return: unquestioning obedience.

Overall The Order is easy to understand, but also easy to caricature. they are not infallible, as is their goal, but they are one of the most good religions.

Law is basically a code that applies universally. The Order is certainly judgmental, but that isn't to say they judge based on taste or individual preference. Everyone is subject to the same laws and appropriate consequences, be they king or pauper. Further, they believe this applies to all people, not just the followers of their religion. Consequences fit the Crime, guilty are punished, and the innocent are protected. But while they make a more or less Just society, mercy and redemption are weak points of The Order.

The other theme of The Order is its conflict with demons. The principle reason why The Order is rightly labeled good is because they are willing to die to protect others from demonic oppression.

Temple of the Order

More a barracks than a temple, this building houses a small shrine to Junil and a large training area where the faithful can spar and practise, honing their skills in combat for the inevitable clash against chaos.

The primary effect of a Temple of the Order is that there are always soldiers available and reasonably well trained, and since they are all in one area and reasonably well behaved the usual problems from large amounts of bored soldiers never materialises, so crime rates are reduced.

Basilica

Something like a large, open court building and a town hall, the Basilica is the place where criminals are tried and sentenced and where the running of the city takes place. The layout is as open as possible, for all should see justice be done and that the people who oversee the proper running of things should do so without the chance to conceal anything. As a result, Order cities benefit from incredible reductions in public infrastructure development and maintenance costs.

Confessors

The Priests of The Order, Confessors serve as field commanders as well as disciples of Junil, expected to be able to show great skill in personal combat, lead warriors into combat and spread the teachings of Junil as well as the other priestly occupations of healing the injured and curing the sick.

Crusaders

Those that make a simple public vow to serve the Order become Crusaders, soldiers who make up the backbone of the forces of The Order. Armed and armoured in blessed equipment they are solid fighters, especially against demonic assault. Having sworn themselves to The Order they have no problems spending years away from home fighting.

Sphener

The room was perfectly formed: identical grey tiles covered the floor and fluted columns were evenly spaced throughout the hall. Angels knelt or were seated according to their rank, which was also reflected in their dress, although the differences were often too slight for mortal eyes to recognize. In fact, the perfection of the chamber, from the exact proportions down to each fold in every angels robe, was so off-putting to mortal eyes that even the most precise couldn't help feeling like he threw the room, or the entire heaven, out of balance by his very existence.

Junil stood in the center of the chamber unwavering. Words and reports were unnessesary, there was no outward sign of stress or panic, yet every angel's focus was on the same event: sacred ground was being desecrated. It was the Seven Pines, the place that the Compact was signed. It was sacred to many gods, but Junil had committed to keeping the area safe before the gods had agreed to the Compact, to ensure that the Gods and their emissaries could meet there safely, and now that oath wasn't being kept.

It was the Compact itself that caused the problem, it stated that the gods and angels couldn't intervene directly with the affairs of men, instead they had to work through them by various limited and archaic means, none of which helped in this situation. Those loyal to Junil had been killed, struck down quickly through a form of stealth that obscured even the sight of the angelic watchers.

In the Seven Pines, there were symbols for each of the gods that existed at the time of the Compact. The svartalfar were stealing the symbols, all those except the symbol of their own god, Esus. Junil's symbol was a sword and shield that hung from one of the trees in the glade. A svartalfar assssin went to claim the symbol as a personal trophy.

Sphener broke the perfection of the room and stood. The angel opposite him, who was supposed to mirror his movements in every ritualized action, seemed confused. Was he supposed to follow, was this some ritual he had forgotten or was Sphener breaking the laws of the chamber? Other angels in the chamber, including Sphener's own lord, allowed a brief crease of annoyance to cross their foreheads to show their extreme disapproval of Sphener's action. Junil showed no reaction.

Sphener crossed the perfect floor and kneeled before the god of law. He spoke, following the tradition of the few mortals that had come here to petition Junil, as an angel had never done so before.

"Great lord, allow me to keep your promise and protect the Seven Pines. Cast me from the

vault, take from me the divine essence and have me reborn mortal such that my actions will not break the Compact and both oaths will remain fulfilled."

Junil turned his eyes to the prostrate lesser angel. His hesitation was not from concern, but from a consideration of the possible outcomes: would Sphener be able to defend the Pines, was Sphener more useful in creation than he was in heaven, was there another way to maintain both oaths, what would keep the same event from occurring again? Junil turned his focus on the svartalfar attackers and decided that Sphener could defeat them; the laws were clear, if an angel wished to fall, he could.

Junil responded with only one word, "Approved", and Sphener was gone from the chamber. The svartalfar assassin smiled as he considered his own reflection in the sword's gleaming blade. The sword was too heavy and long for him but it would sell for a lifetime's wages. Then the sword was yanked out of his hands, he spun expecting to see one of his companions and found himself staring into the breastplate of an eight-foot-tall angel instead.

The sword was functional as well as ornamental and Sphener cut him down. Like a scythe through grain, Sphener set on the rest, they were killed quickly, but it took longer for Sphener to replace all of the artifacts and remove any trace that they had been there from the Pines. When it was finally complete, he knelt and prayed.

When Sphener ended his prayer, the Pines were gone; Junil had removed it from creation to keep it safe. All that was left behind was the sword and shield. Sphener took them and headed into the woods. He had long been curious about creation and looked forward to serving Junil in this new role.

Eight feet tall and angelically beautiful, Sphener is one of only two angels on Erebus, and an incredible warrior in the battle against chaos and misrule. His righteousness is such that manes and other lesser demons are outright exorcised by his mere presence, banished by the sight of him. The more powerful demons face little better, for Sphener is easily capable of slaughtering a Balor without effort.

Empyrean Order

Wisdom and careful meditation will guide us.

Where The Order values law, The Empyrean values wisdom. Adjudication started from the teachings of Lugus, God of the Sun and punishment is not based on adherence to a labyrinthian codex of laws, but from direct consultation on the merits of each case.

Social equality and impartiality are the model between a government and its citizens as well as between empires. As such The Empyrean gives equal voice to small empires as it does those that dominate Erebus. "As every dawn is a new beginning for the world, so too can dawn break

in even the darkest heart" The Sun rises every day, bringing a new dawn and a new opportunity. In the same way, The Empyrean prize redemption and reconciliation.

People are given a new chance, even evil-doers. They are not infinitely patient, but err in the opposite direction of The Order. This is extended to other civilizations by leaders following The Empyrean, but if the evil leaders fail to heed their calls to repent, The Empyrean can certainly be roused to arms for their faith.

"The sun brings light and life; do not cloak yourself in shadows, but let your own light be an illumination." Another aspect of this religion is its opposition to shadows, darkness, and hidden things. All of their society is open; people try to live by example. This can lead to a certain self-righteousness, and certainly to gossip, etc., but deception is almost unheard of, and even tact may be rare.

The Empyrean seek redemption where The Order seeks retribution. They argue laws while The Order enforces laws.

The two can be potent allies, with The Order serving as the arm of the more cerebral Empryean, but they have a very different outlook on how best to approach evil. The aspect of creation that the Empryean exemplifies is revelation, that perfect unalterable truth. The quest for these leads to a lot of very high level discussions on most matters and a tendency to seek the perfect answer when none may exist.

Temple of the Empyrean

A massive walled courtyard more than anything, the Temple of the Empyrean has no roof so that the light of Lugus can shine in for as long as possible, with three small shrines located where the light of day falls at dawn, midday and just before the sun sets for the night. The rest of the Temple is given over to a massive forum where followers can meet and debate and philosophise, with several smaller areas where those in need can meet and resolve weighty issues or seek redemption with the help of the Luridis.

Radiant Guard

The footsoldiers of the Empyrean Order, clad in burnished bronze plate polished with such skill and care that it turns even the smallest flash of sunlight into an eye searing blaze of light that is bright enough to permanently damage the sight of attackers.

Ratha

Scythed wheels whirring menacingly. Huge, furious warhorses in front. Men with spears, javelins and arrows on the platform behind. The heavily armoured chariot gleaming in the sunlight. Banners fluttering in the wind. Is it any wonder the war chariot inspires awe? But more than being an expression of wealth and power, the war chariot is a fast, murderous behemoth of a war-engine. The sharp scythes will cut to ribbons those that are not trampled by the horses. Its speed, stability, and strength make the war chariot ideal for hunting down and annihilating squads of archers, but its usefulness as a multi-purpose weapon should not be

underestimated.

Luridis

The priests of the Empyrean Order, the Luridis are tasked with spreading both the faith and the ideals of Lugus, and so must be both well versed in the tenents of the Empyrean and as councillors for those who seek to better themselves or turn to a better path.

Chalid Astrakein

Prophecy is not a rare thing on Erebus. Throw a stone and it will hit at least three people who claim to have the gift of foresight, and at least one of them will already have paid a gang of thugs to explain why throwing the rock was a bad idea. What is rare is having more than one agree, so when Chalids parents paid to have the horoscope of their as yet unborn child cast and received seven essentially identical results from seven people, all stating the child would become a great hero people took notice.

Unfortunately, some of those people were not interested in seeing a great hero grow up to doubtless interfere in business that, while not even remotely legal was quite well established and very, very lucrative.

Assassins were duly recruited, and even before the child had been born he came under attack. Though the assassin was slain, so too were Chalid's parents, and the child came into the care of the Empyrean Order.

The child matured rapidly, an intelligent and charming young man who took the beliefs of the Empyrean Order to heart and was soon ordained and counted a popular and well respected Luridis.

Things may have continued in that vein with Chalid eventually being ordained as one of the first Lightkeepers of the Order since before Mulcarn came to Erebus and blighted the world in ice, but fate had other plans.

Escorting a caravan of pilgrims, Chalid and the convoy came under attack by a motley army of bandits. Calling down pillars of radiant sunlight scores of the bandits were simply incinerated, but eventually numbers told, and Chalid was struck down.

Or rather, he should have been.

Bristling with arrows and bleeding from countless sword and spear thrusts, Chalid found he was hurt, yes, but hurt in the same way an Elephant blundering through a thorn bush is harmed.

Later, when the bandit corpses had been cleared answers were sought, and what was discovered shocked everyone.

Chalid had fallen. Chalid had fallen decades ago. Chalid had never survived the first

assassination attempt on his life.

The assassin had not been mortal, and somehow it had become bound into the body of what would have been its victim. Trapped in a human body and not knowing it was trapped the entity had lived as a mortal, and now it had discovered the truth, it found it did not care.

If anyone embodies the Empyrean Order, it is Chalid.

Runes of Kilmorph

Long have the Mountains stood, Longer still the world beneath.

Kilmorph is the goddess of the earth, She Who Dwells Beneath. She formed children out of stone, the Dwarves, and taught them the secrets of metalworking. One of the first religions available to the men of the world, Kilmorph will answer the prayers of honorable men and even send her soldiers to defend their cities.

The Runes of Kilmorph is a personal guideline, resulting from the stories of the first dwarves, mainly emphasizing personal responsibility. Followers are exhorted to do their best in their craft, deal honestly with everyone, and to repay their debts. This is especially applied to family and close kin, and results in tight communal loyalty. Followers of The Runes are usually quite industrious and seldom cheat their customers. Since this results in a prosperous economy, some followers mistake the benefits of the creed for its goals, and greed is not an unfamiliar vice. But they may not be so quick to help a stranger in need, especially one from another culture, nation, or religion, and unlike The Order or The Empyrean, they would seldom be roused to arms in defense of a foreign land--unless those foreigners had done them a favor in the past.

They are also the most traditional of the religions. Bambur himself has existed from the creation of the first Dwarves and remembers the laws of Kilmorph, for he heard them spoken in person. In many cases this unbroken tradition is as limiting as it is unifying. Kilmorph exemplifies excellence, but not from raw talent. It is an excellence gained over years of practice and redundancy.

Temple of Kilmorph

Most of each Temple to Kilmorph is underground, comprised of a large central chamber surrounded by a variety of heavily fortified vaults and treasure chambers where the gifts of Kilmorph are stored and exhibited to the faithful for a small fee. The priests are always available to advise the faithful on matters of commerce or to arrange loans that come with very reasonable interest rates, as well as offering a banking service.

Mines of Gal-Dur

A small mining complex at first glance, like most dwarven buildings the bulk of the Gal-Dur

mining complex is underground. Not just the excavations themselves, but the ore refineries, the foundries, the smelters, housing for the miners and workers and the mushroom and fungi farms to keep them fed.

The Mines themselves are the oldest and most productive mines in Erebus, a holy site of Kilmorph where worshippers wrestle hundreds of tons of high grade iron ore from the earth every day.

Stonewarden

The priests of Kilmorph, the Stonewardens serve as both clerics and temple guards. Heavily armoured, durable and tireless the Stonewardens also serve as investigators and thieftakers, trained to solve mysteries and track down criminals with speed and skill, ensuring malcontents cannot harm the local economy.

Bambur

An artist named Kheldon Ki was called before a wealthy lord and ordered to produce a statue of the lord to stand before his home for all the populace to see and revere. Kheldon Ki was a gifted artist, and all art he created was so lifelike it showed the true soul of its subject. As such, his statue of the lord radiated a sense of ego and vanity to all who looked at it. When the lord saw the completed statue, he ordered it torn down and Kheldon to spend the rest of his life in his deepest dungeons. Kheldon spent 40 years within the dungeon, blind and lonely. To fight his loneliness, he began sculpting people from the rocks in the cavern. By the end of his life, he had created hundreds of these stocky statues of men and woman all doing a variety of tasks. At a great age Kheldon lay upon the floor of the dungeon close to death. It was then that Kilmorph appeared before him and said "You have been imprisoned unjustly, for this I will grant you a wish. Choose your wish carefully though, for you will gain only one, be it for revenge against the lord who imprisoned you or a renewal of youth for you to live again." In this way Kilmorph hoped to test Kheldon, to see if he had become so bitter as to be unworthy of heaven by wishing for revenge against the lord. But Kheldon asked for neither of these two things, and instead said "I wish not revenge for it would gain me nothing, and I wish not new life, for I am ready to die; my only wish is that during my final hours I would not be alone." Kilmorph saw this as a good wish, and granted it by breathing life into all the statues Kheldon had created, and they tended to him until he died. After Kheldon's death, his soul was carried to the underworld on the back of a great dragon, and he was welcomed among the spirits of his ancestors. As for the stone people, they burrowed out of the lord's dungeon and spread through the underdark, becoming the dwarves of today.

Bambur is one of the few original dwarves remaining. He was carved by Kheldon and had Kilmorph herself breathe life into him. He is nearly as talented a crafter as his creator, but Bambur makes weapons instead of statues.

The first generation of Dwarves never age, they are exactly as they were when they were carved, but each generation of dwarves gets a slightly shorter lifespan. As they get farther and farther from the breath of Kilmorph, they become more mortal, in spirit and life. Bambur has

had to watch this fall, the Umberguard himself has even turned away from Kilmorph, but Bambur fights on for his goddess and mother. His strength, and his weapons, are available to any that fights for Kilmorph.

Fellowship of Leaves

Reverence for Nature in its beautiful and savage forms.

Deep in the woods, the whispers of Elves linger. Ancient protectors normally above the affairs of men, some men have shown enough loyalty to them to be taught their magic and even gain the assistance of the Fawns.

Nature is directly responsible for sustaining life, so it is easy to see it as good. The Fellowship of Leaves is defined as neutral though, so its tenets are either ambiguous, contradictory, or do not pertain to how to treat other sentient beings.

Perhaps this is due to a disorganized structure. followers of the Fellowship do not rely upon revelation from Sucellus or Cernunnos, rather upon reflections on the natural world around them. All followers share a respect and delight in natural places, and seek to spread the sphere of life's vitality; there is little concern, officially, for any particular lives, however.

The Fellowship will fight for their own lands, and crusade to end wide-scale corruption of nature, but rarely intervene in any conflict otherwise, or at least rarely sanction such intervention by the tenets of their creed. Personal ethics of The Fellowship vary dramatically, from emulating the care of a mother hen, to the ferocity and guile of a rabid hyena.

This is a religion pervaded with personal discovery and growth. There are no strict laws and this leads to widely varying interpretations. Remember that Cernunnos is the weakest of the gods, the only one who wasn't made by the One so he is the most likely to be overwhelmed by his task. Peaceful monks tend to magnificent gardens and brutal Calabim hunters (where the prey are slaves allowed to run for their chance at freedom) both believe they are serving the rites of The Fellowship. The aspect of creation that The Fellowship exemplifies is change, which is why there are so many variations. The change of The Fellowship is best labeled as growth, the change of a child into a man, or a river cutting a pass through mountains. Radical, unpredictable change is the province of Bhall.

One unique benefit of the Fellowship of leaves is that forests will rapidly spread across the lands of its adherents, trees springing up like weeds, and eventually developing into what is referred to as the 'Ancient Forest', a place so suffused with magic that the huge trees can and will spontaneously gain sentience and rise as Treants.

Temple of Leaves

Appearing more as a field than a temple, the sacred spaces of the Fellowship are left to nature, the boundaries marked by a line of local trees or shrubs - these could be a wall of trees or a line of cacti, depending on the location. Clean, open spaces Temples of the Fellowship promote good health amongst the populace more than any other temple.

Satyrs

satyrs are spirits of the woods and mountains and the wild places. They are half human and half beast; a bridge between man and nature - they usually have a goat's tail, flanks and hooves while the upper part of the body is that of a human, and they also have the horns of a goat. They are the companions of the god of nature, and they spent their time drinking, dancing, and chasing anything that might be a willing partner.

While they are considered somewhat comical, in truth they can afford to be, for when roused to battle they are truly fearsome opponents, especially within the forests they call home. No one will ever know just how many invaders vanished into the trees, slaughtered by berserking Satyrs who were hidden perfectly till they chose to attack.

Treants

The very heart of a mature forest, only a trained eye can discern a treant amidst the trees it protects. Incredibly long lived, they view the seasons as days, and rarely stir. It takes a man seeped in the lore of the forests and in tune with the deepest magics of the planet to awaken a treant, although they have been known on occasion to arise out of ancient forests when it is breached by invaders. Inevitably the outcome is heavy casualties to even well trained units, and the forest returns to sleep quickly. Usually the only evidence of the foiled attack is the mutilated corpses of the invaders, quickly absorbed into the ecosystem of the forest. Treants are slow, but slow in the same way an avalanche or tidal wave is slow, and just as dangerous.

Yvain the Treewarden

His ideas and character often lead others to believe that Yvain may be from the moon instead of the forests he cares for. His eccentric nature leads him across Erebus, visiting secluded glades, talking to exotic animals and chasing nymphs across pebbled river banks.

Even some within the Fellowship question if Yvain has the sincerity his respected stature would seem to require of him, but none doubt that he is the most powerful Druid and the favored child of Cernunnos. It was Yvain that first dreamed of the Ancient Forests and who is the first to face every newly discovered wilderness. To everyone who delights in finding the wonders of this world, know that the Woodelf has walked through these places before, and that they are all the more amazing because of it.

The first, oldest and most powerful of the Treants, Yvain is an incredibly powerful spellcaster, with the greatest nature spells springing from his branches the same way an apprentice casts the first few cantrips he or she masters, slinging the spells purely for the sheer joy of it. The Treewardens favourite spell is one only he has yet mastered, a spell he simply calls 'Bloom',

though the simple name does not reflect the power of the spell, for it calls up acres of healthy, thriving forest from nothing.

Octopus Overlords

The Gods speak through Dreams, and insanity is a mark of their favour.

The power beneath the waves is said to be more powerful than any other, but the Overlords are unfocused and follow a thousand different obscure agendas. The Disciples of the Overlords dare not expose themselves directly to the conflicting commands of their masters and instead use the poor as intermediaries. They are quickly driven insane by the process, which the disciples prefer as it keeps them from manipulating the message. They also share the process of turning a Warrior into The Drown (undead thralls), a process with few volunteers.

Each word of the name can well describe one aspect of the religion. Octopus is a creature more alien to man (and elves, etc.) than certainly any mammal, and even the lizardmen and others. They are incomprehensible, and thus maddening. Completely alien, and so uncaring of human's fate. Overlords show the view of this religion has of itself. Its leaders serve the Deep Monsters, and their goal is subjugation of the world.

Their domain is stolen from its rightful steward, or at least subverted. So the overlords are both reckless and insecure in their powers, and thus rarely subtle; they never use a breeze when a typhoon would do.

The Octopus Overlords themselves are thought to have been created by the the most powerful effective dreams of Hemah. Hemah, in turn, is nothing but an effective dream of Danalin, the God of Water who has chosen to sleep rather than wake to farce a world without his beloved Aifons. Hastur, the Lord of Nightmares and Archangel under Mammon, God of Mind, snuck into Danalin's Vault and now whispers in his ear, corrupting his dreams (the life of Hemah and, through him, the Ovelords and all of Erebus) into a horrible nightmare.

Temple of the Overlords

It lay at the heart of the temple, a strange amalgam of pearl and coral, a thing touched by the power of the Overlords. A living thing, it was constantly rippling, the way a stormy sea ripples, and we could hear its ripples in our minds, the music of distant waves. From the moment when I saw it, I knew I shouldn't have come: but some other part of me rejoiced, drawn to its lure like a moth is drawn to a flame.

The priests held gatherings at the beginning of each week, open for all. Newcomers would need to be taken to the chamber with the coral, while the rest of us knew the way, even the ones who'd only been there once before. From the moment we stepped to the surroundings of the temple, we could feel the faint whisper of the waves, guiding us towards the temple's heart.

We approached and outsiders always felt unnerved, unable to tell why, only subconciously noticing the slight wave in our shoulders, our bodies picking up the rhythm of the coral before we even ourselves realized it.

We would gather around the coral and dance and laugh and celebrate, seeing strange visions of a vast kingdom, now buried under the sea. As the hours passed, the dance would grow faster and faster and the music would grow louder and louder. Only that the music was only in our heads, an intoxicating storm that was sweeter than any nectar. We were drunk on the coral, ready to do anything, and more than one child was conceived with a total stranger on those nights. Sometimes the priests would join into our celebration, but most of the time they would just stand aside, watching, waiting.

The nights always left me exhausted, my body in pain after I had neglected its limits. I worried about going too far - every year, there were some who'd die of the exhaustion - and occasionally I tried to stay away. But the music of the waves would always haunt me in my dreams, a faint tune stuck in my head, infuriatingly just a little too quiet to be heard. And the visions that I would have after a good temple night! I was a poet and an artist, and nothing could leave me more inspired, nothing could compare to the poems I would compose after listening to the corals. Was it more for the sake of myself or my art, I'm not sure, but I always found myself returning after a while.

One of the priests, a priestess to be exact, seemed to be taking a special interest in me, when I returned after an exceptionally long absence. She never said anything, but I could feel her eyes on me when I danced, thoughtful. I would catch the occasional whisper as she discussed something with the others, though I never made out any exact words.

After several such nights, something in the music crazed me in a way it had never crazed me before. My dance was wild, my visions feverish, my body screaming in ever increasing agony as the night progressed. I could see the others growing tired and leaving, but I could not bring myself to stop, could not leave the coral that suddenly seemed to only be singing to me. I could see in the dance of the others that they did not hear the same tune as I did: their rhythm and their steps were all wrong. So when they left I ignored them, knowing that they were deaf to the true music I was hearing.

Then, when I was alone save for her, the priestess came and joined my dance. Her dance was perfect, in complete harmony with the waves, and I watched her, enthralled by the beauty I suddenly saw in her. I sought to imitate her elegance, but my own clumsiness was apparent to me - but she did not seem to mind, for she only smiled. She took my hand, and continuing to smile, she led me away from the coral, to a part of the temple I had never been in before. I paid no heed to my surroundings - the ecstacy of the coral was nothing compared to the pleasure of her attention, every muscle in my body shivering each time she looked at me. I was lost in her, the details of her body being like a vast, deep valley I could never climb out of.

It never crossed my mind to protest as we came to the pool and she pushed me into the water.

I felt something grabbing my arms and legs and pulling me down, but the priestess smiled at me, and her happiness was all that I cared for. I opened my mouth to sing a song of praise for her, and it was only then that I realized I was underwater, water filling my mouth and my lungs. For a brief moment, panic filled me and broke the spell - I screamed, and the priestess threw back her head and laughed.

The priestess still smiles at me, in a strange amused way that I have a hard time dechipering. It has become hard to think at things, after the drowning. It is much easier to kill, those that the priestess tells me to kill.

For a moment, I thought I felt a distant memory when I crushed the skull of the first people the priestess told me to slay. She must have seen my confusion, for she laughed in her angelic voice. With a happy gleam in her eye, she told me that the corpses at my feet were those of my wife and children. I looked at her and the bodies, and there was another momentary feeling of recalling something, but the words bore no meaning to me. I looked at the corpses and shrugged, and we left, her joy echoing in my ears.

I'm the bodyguard of the priestess, now. For as long as she is happy with me, the music of the waves will never leave me, and that is all that matters.

Dark, cold and waterlogged, the Temple of the Overlords is silent save for the screams of those blessed lunatics used to make contact with the Overlords and the brief terrified shrieks of those whos fate is the drowning pools.

Asylum

Unspeakable things occur in an asylum, bizzare experiments performed by robed, cloaked priests who may be insane themselves, or who may simply be following the dictates of the Overlords. Despite the general unhappiness, few people complain in a city where an asylum is always looking for its next patients, so War Weariness is reduced. Who would dare complain when doing so would simply see them dragged through the gates of the asylum?

Drown

How curious the light behaves
Reflecting off the dancing waves.
Oh how my very being craves
A view from down below.

Suspended in my watery lair,
I would not need to gasp for air,
For I'm no longer human there
Beneath the icy flow.

It's peaceful there, but I have found

I still can hear the distant sound
Of voices of the souls who drowned
And left loved ones to mourn.

The lonely wails transmit the pain
Of those who just could not remain
So journeyed to the unknown plane
Of dead souls and unborn.

But in this world there still exist
Survivors who will always miss
The passion of their lovers' kiss
That warmed them night and day.

Though here above the vast, cold sea,
My heart is without tragedy,
For I have someone dear to me
Who hasn't passed away.

Never let that be untrue
For I could not bear thoughts of you
Trapped underneath the ocean blue
Deprived of your last breath.

No harm to you would I condone,
For I'd be left here on my own
To face this tragic world alone,
A fate far worse than death.

Few willingly go into the drowning pools, but volunteer or not the end result is the same - a waterlogged dead thing bound into eternal servitude of the Overlords. Untiring, uncomplaining, unyielding, perfectly loyal. Mortal wounds mean nothing to the drown, waterlogged flesh dead already, the only way to stop a drown is to hack it limb from limb and burn it, no easy task.

Stygian Guard

Only time can forge the Stygian Guard, time and decay, for the Drown rot, slowly growing into monstrous, putrid things, bloated with foul gasses till they stand close to twice the height of a man and almost that wide, muscles turned to something like iron by the power of the Overlords they strike with the force of a cannon. Their speed is their only true weakness, for their putrified forms are almost impossible to destroy without magic, and they are surrounded by clouds of noxious gasses at all times.

Hemah

They called him an affective dreamer. It was a horrible attunement with magic that few were cursed with; what he dreamed became real.

When he was twelve, Hemah saw salamanders playing on the wet stones. They were like living pieces of painted mercury, tiny dragons who had an entire primordial world underneath the dock behind his home. They hissed at Hemah, as if confidence alone would keep him from squashing them.

That night the hisses came again, but lower, echoing through the small stone house. Slick painted demons broke through the walls. With forked tongues, they scuttled through the shadows and grabbed Hemah's parents, dragging them from the house.

He slept through it all. In the morning, the neighbors' screams woke him. Most of the house had collapsed, only his room remained standing. The neighbor's wife was a round woman with a voice so high she seemed to squeal like the pigs she and her husband raised. She rushed in and threw herself on Hemah, checking to make sure he was okay. They told him to close his eyes before they led him out of his room, but he looked.

Claw marks, blood, everything was broken...and his parents were missing. They searched everywhere for them, but couldn't find them, but Hemah knew where they were. He led the pig farmer and his wife to the river behind their home and looked beneath the dock. That's where they found Hemah's parents' broken bodies, their mouths stuffed with so much mud their throats had exploded.

Since then, everyone who has gotten close to Hemah has died, not that those who don't know him do much better. One morning, he awoke to find the entire population of the small village he was passing through was simply gone. Sometimes creatures are created that live well after he awakes. People are killed, women are raped. Men are made into puppets for the night, forced to play out scenes from Hemah's subconscious over and over again.

Some say Hemah isn't a mage, he only dreamt he was once and he hasn't forgotten the dream. Others wonder if the Overlords found Hemah and caused his dreams, or if Hemah dreamt of the Overlords and created them. What is known is that as dangerous as Hemah is awake, he is even more dangerous asleep.

Council of Esus

The most dangerous enemy is one unknown.

An oddity among the religions, the Council of Esus has no standing disciples, priests, high priests or temples. Any that worships Esus can pay to spread the religion, proving their faith and that they should have the rank they lay claim to as they buy the faith or at least the silence of others.

Rank in the council though, is a cloak, to be worn or discarded as needed. A Confessor of the Order can easily be picked out of a crowd simply by virtue of his stern and imposing robes, but how do you pick out the follower of Esus? How do you pick out the people who can conceal their afiliation simply by claiming to be other than they are?

"Shadow" is a good means, but how about an end? The followers of this religion are those who value secrecy above all else, for whatever reason. Some pursue taboos, whatever that may be in their culture. Some have some sort of psychological insecurity; most are seeking to use the power and techniques of the religion to subvert secular authority above them.

Personally, adherents to this religion detest judgement of any sort. They wish to hide who they are and what they do, and resent anyone telling them what to do. Of course, this isn't to say that they don't scrutinize each other. The other factor is a lack of trust. The god of trust is fallen, so even The Order or Empyrean share a certain suspicion of outsiders, but the Council wears deception like a coat, and knowing how they are putting one over on each other tends to make them entirely without trust even of each other. Politics within the council are Machiavellian in the extreme. They have to be, because after all, are you dealing with the same person each time the hidden council meets? Is this even the true high council? How many high councils are there? This double dealing is perhaps the only reason the Council of Esus has not taken silent control of Erebus.

Perhaps it already has...

Courtesan

Courtesans live charmed lives, floating socially above the peasantry like a cloud above the plains. Few Kingdoms have never had courtesans to attend to the nobility’s desire for a pretty face, witty tongue, and often baser talents. The Council however utilized courtesans offensively throughout the Ages, as covert information gatherers more than anything. A smile would often get them past a lonely border guard, and a bit more could earn entrance to the capital. After this? the unimaginative would perhaps seduce their way into some nobles household, or even bed, before a knife in the dark saw said noble quietly disposed of.

Such shortsightedness is not welcome in the Council and its agents.

Why assassinate someone when a few whispered words after a night of passion can sway them to an entirely new course of action without them even realising it?

Shadowriders

The riders of the Council, the Shadowriders mounts are some of the fastest in Erebus, and the riders themselves are some of the most skilled equestrians. In combat they fare as well as light cavalry can be expected to, but they are far more valuable elsewhere, for as messengers they excel - there is no blockade they cannot run, no ambush they cannot evade, no pursuit they cannot escape.

Nightwatch

The martial arm of the Council, clad head to toe in featureless black leather, the Nightwatch are infamous for appearing from nowhere, unleashing a hail of poisoned arrows and vanishing into the shadows before the first corpses have hit the ground.

Gibbon Goetia

Who is Gibbon Goetia? The small handful who recognise the name would probably agree he is the main problem solver of the Council. Or the Head of the Council. Or simply a fictional character used as a cover by an entire order of assassins. One theory states he is three supernaturally intelligent squirrels, stood one on top of another and wearing a cloak to blend into mortal society.

The man (or woman, possibly) is rumoured to be the most powerful illusionist humanity has ever produced. Or possibly it was the elves. Or the Ogres. Dwarves maybe.

Whoever or whatever he is, Gibbon Goetia works illusion with a skill beyond what all but the greatest mages of the First Age could even hope to match, though what he conjures are illusions at the end of the day, and while imaginary troops need no food or rest or pay, they can not kill.

Ashen Veil

Sacrificing our body, blood and soul for power.

Mages spent weeks in meditation, exploring the farthest reaches of the ethereal world. The demands of the body were ignored, and they survived sustained only by magic. Their efforts were rewarded, a sentience was contacted, dark and horrible. It whispered secrets into the mages' minds, secrets of necromancy, diseases, sacrificial rites. It promised power in exchange for their blood, and they freely gave it.

Their goals are obvious and the evil undeniable, but what motivates them? I see three tiers. The initiate seeks power, more quickly than through the council, and of course with fewer restrictions than any good religion. Later, they have gotten their power, taken their revenge or whatever, but it is quickly coming time to pay the piper, and lest they be taken by the demons they bargained with, they need to find others to fill the ranks. Finally, the very upper echelon serve the same cause as their god--corrupting the world. So that when judgement day comes, Agares and his servants can point to the huge numbers of the fallen and say, "See, Temporance was flawed; my mistakes were not my fault!" So they seek to justify themselves by damning the rest of creation.

Needless to say, they are rarely pleasant to be around, feeling no remorse for any sort of cruelty or coercion; but this isn't to say that they can't work with others towards their goals, or

even get along with them. Most do not pursue cruelty for its own sake, though it would certainly not offend them if their peers were to do so, but they don't by and large indulge in it for it's own sake as the Octopus Overlords might.

Temple of the Veil

Bleak, unadorned structures of heavy, pitch black stone, the Temples of the Veil are as much fortress as prison as holy place, designed to survive both attack from within and without. Inside the bulk of the building is comprised of heavily reinforced summoning chambers where the darkest mysteries of magic are teased from demonic conjurations.

Sacrificial Altar

Souls, suffering, murder, vile acts, all these things empower demons and at the altar specific demons can be permanently made stronger by such vile acts, though the more powerful the entity is, the more sacrifices will be required, and the more terrible must be their fate.

Beast of Agares

Something like a titanic lizard crossed with a rabid hyena with a line of balefire blazing down the abominations spine, the Beasts of Agares are the shock troops of the pit. Brutally powerful, difficult to harm with mundane weapons and capable of tearing a man to shreds in a second these nightmarish pack hunters are especially deadly against paladins and crusaders and holy people.

Profane

The priests, if they can be called such, of the Ashen Veil. Paranoid if not outright insane, broken by endless hours of dialogue with demons, they are all powerful mages and inevitably accompanied by rank after rank of summoned skeletons and fireball slinging imps, if not worse things.

Diseased Corpses

A simple but nightmarishly effective soldier of the Aashen Veil, few things inspire fear like the sight of a shambling horde of diseased corpses approaching a city. Zombies infected with a string of infernal plagues, these necromantic footsoldiers will devestate opponents even if they are destroyed, and the plague dead corpses they leave in their wake can easily be raised to add to their numbers.

Black Guard

Paladins and Crusaders can fall, broken by the sheer overwhelming horror of all the darkness they struggle in vain to hold at bay. When they do embrace the power of darkness these unholy warriors are welcomed into the Aashen Veil with open arms. Weapons blazing with unholy fire, their once protective powers perverted towards inflicting pain and suffering they are few in number but shockingly dangerous.

Meshabber of Dis

The smoke twisted randomly, as if caught in breeze that was impossible in the small

summoning chamber. Kael knelt in a ring with the other students watching the mage in the center demonstrate the experiment in conjuration.

A figured formed in the smoke, an imp a little over two feet tall. His chest was soot black, and he grew lighter gray and hazy along his legs and arms, until his feet and hands were nothing but thin trails of smoke. The embers from the fire danced up into his body and whipped randomly around him, settling in his eyes, which floated lazily, and seperatly, around his forehead.

He glared at the students until Bradeline, the red robed mage, shouted "Zazim!"

The imp's ears folded back against his head at the sound of his name.

"Why do you bring me here?" The imp's voice popped like greasy meat in a hot pan.

"They will try to control the conversation, lead you where they want to go. Innocent at first, but it is a trap. Speak only of what you want from the creature, you did not summon it for idle conversation."

One of the imp's eyes remained fixed on Bradeline, while the other floated around his head going from student to student, looking for weakness. Kael was easily 10 years older than the rest of the students, and couldn't tell if the imp noticed this or not. Most of the other students paled and looked away at the imp's glare. A few returned the stare, their own fear overcome by their lust for power. Kael didn't react at all, and the imp's gaze passed quickly on to the next student.

After its examination of the room the imp dropped, placing his wraithlike hands on the stone floor. The fire brightened and the smoke flared out, momentarily obscuring the imp's form. From within the circle its scratchy voice could be heard speaking unholy words.

"The daft creature is attempting to summon more of its kin." Bradeline looked almost disappointed. "Most would attempt to flee, but both attempts will be blocked by the summoning circle you constructed. Its call can not penetrate the shell of sorcery, symbols and the enchanted powder."

Bradeline took a chain from his belt and held it toward the imp. He let go of the end, letting a copper medallion inscribed with a six pointed star swing down as he shouted the imp's name again. Bradeline was as much a performer as he was a conjurer. This time Zazim ignored him.

The powder was enchanted exactly as it should be, but it was not all silver as the spell required. The imp's call was heard, and in a gust of wind the ill-prepared powder was blown all over the surrounding shocked students. Bradeline didn't have much time for surprise, the newly formed greater demon that stood over the imp reached out and grabbed his throat.

The demon stood almost to the room's concave ceiling. He had the hooves of a goat, thick

twisted legs, and the chest and arms of a massive gorilla. He had two human heads, one with its mouth sewn shut, constantly screaming behind its pursed lips, and the other looked to have had its eyes recently gouged out. Blood and ichor ran down this face and dripped onto the right side of the demon's chest. On one forearm the demon had almost a dozen battered gold rings.

"Command me now, blood trader!" The demon grinned. Bradeline had summoned him many times, and forced him to perform acts degrading even to demons. The mage raised the medallion ineffectually in front of the demon's face, the one with eyes, but the demon only laughed. He would have toyed with Bradeline longer, but the students began to scream and he realized he had more fun in store than just this one killing. With a squeeze, Bradeline's neck was broken and the demon threw the mage's body against the stone wall of the chamber. Then he turned on the students.

A boy, more full of ego than sense, began to recite a spell prohibited to students this young. He shot his hands out toward the demon as he finished the incantation. But he was not ready for a spell that complex, and the fire intended for the demon raced up the boy's arms instead. He fell screaming as the flames consumed his shoulders and head.

Another student, one that had looked away when Zazim glared at him, had his screams cut short as the imp leapt to his chest and climbed into his mouth. Kael watched the students face flush at the realization that he wouldn't live long enough to be killed by the two headed demon that was tearing into the other students. The student fell, choking and grabbed hold of Kael's drab brown acolyte robes. Kael ignored him, the only unmoving piece of the hellish room.

The room's single door was enchanted, only Bradeline or one of the academy's other instructors could open it. This was to prevent any creature that was summoned here from getting loose and threatening the school. It had seemed a reasonable precaution to the students when they had learned of it, but now as they beat on the chamber door they realized the limitations of the door's protection.

Meshabber is not the Lord of the Balors, but like all his kind he harbours the ambition that he one day will be. Unlike his kin, Meshabber has both the power and the cunning to one day challenge Hyborem for the throne of Hell. Till he sits on that throne however, he will need allies.

Wasn't there a saying about the gratitude of demons?

Buildings

With Drifas fall obliterating your original capital you must now rebuild. Already you are being presented with various plans suggesting how the new city could be laid out, but unfortunately you lack the resources, the gold and above all else, the time to see everything built.

You have 1000 CP.

Academy
200 CP
A school, a forum, a gathering place for scribes, philosophers and teachers, an Academy is a place where the secrets of creation are uncovered and diseminated, though these secrets are of a decidedly mundane nature - treatment for illness, new tools, new methods of refining ore or gathering raw materials are frequently discovered, though what and when these discoveries are is not something you can control.

Adventurers Guild
150 CP
An Adventurer's Guild is an association of Adventurers who have joined together for the purpose of questing, and personal gain. They are diverse, and include spellcasters, fighters, and rogues. Like any guild they have a ranking system, and work for their joint benefit. The Guild gives members a front for which to recieve contracts. It builds reputation based on the success of it's members.

Alchemy Lab
50 CP
"'Don't touch that!' he shouted at me, for the third time. These Alchemists sure are jumpy, I thought to myself. A shiny, bubbling flask caught my eye, and I wandered closer when my host's back was turned. I picked it up, held it to the light, watched the colors shift and change. I was so transfixed, when the alchemist shouted again, 'You fool, put that down!' I dropped the flask. And that is how I got here."

—Syntrius the scribe, upon meeting the gods.

Aqueduct
200 CP
Several hundred miles of stone bridge, the Aqueduct was never designed for man, elf, dwarf, orc or horse to tread. Instead it is an artifical river, bringing a constant, steady flow of clean

water from the mountains into the heart of the city.

Archery Range
200 CP
Surprisingly the archery range functions as a social hub, a place where friends can gather to relax with an hour or two of practise, though the constant practise does mean soldier and civilian alike will be exceptionally skilled with ranged weaponry.

Arena
150 CP
A place where the people who you lead can be entertained by whatever spectacle you can think to arrange, be it chariot races, combat between man and beast or other events, the Arena brings hapiness to whatever city it is built in.

Bowyer
200 CP
A master Bowyer, workshops, material stores and several dozen apprentices and workers, wood and sinew can be turned into bows and crossbows of exceptional strength here, providing a definite improvement to ranged troops.

Brewery
50 CP
“Since the earliest days of the Thaw, brewers, master craftsmen would take refine grains into the most delicious of beverages. The great breweries of the first Spring were built in the Dwarven holds along their mighty rivers, to produce these refreshments. During the bitter Winters, they’d carve blocks of ice to pack in their barrels during the Summer, so that by the Fall they would be laden with alcohol, and ready to drink. So invigorating was this drink that is filled the Dwarves with zeal and gusto, emboldening them in their first forays into the world! ...though there is more than one historian who believes that the Dwarves were so driven because they were addicted to their brews and would do much and strive ever on to have just another drink.”

— Lescroc Garsmort, historian and brewer

Carnival
50 CP
Games of chance, trained animals, Parades, each civilisation has its own traditions, its own favourites, its own means of entertaining its citizens, and they are all grouped into a carnival. The advantage of the Carnival is that it takes far less resources to maintain than an arena, and can be improved by the addition of captured animals and monsters.

Command Post
150 CP
A centralised position where offense and defence can be planned and the armed forces you

have mustered can be controlled from, the Command Post allows a great increase in military efficiency.

Courthouse
100 CP

A rarity in a time when the only law comes from the strength of a warlords swordarm or a mages spells, the Courthouse is a place where the rule of the law is applied, in theory to everyone, rich and poor, noble and peasant alike. When applied fairly, crime and corruption is reduced, and when applied unfairly your coffers will fill with ill gained gold given in bribes for favourable rulings.

Dungeon
100 CP

Sited on an isolated island, in the middle of an almost uncrossable desert or more often than not deep underground the dungeon is a place of punishment where criminals and prisoners can be kept safely. Crime is reduced, dramatically when paired with a Courthouse, and prisoners can perform menial but important labour as well.

Elder Council
100 CP

During the Age of Ice, it was uncommon for anyone to live for very long. The chaos and destruction cut many lifespans short, and many of the older men grew powerful as they aged, attracting to themselves even more hostile attention. Nevertheless, there were those who survived, and often they would gather into councils of their own. There, issues concerning the community would be discussed and debated, and the council would offer the community the advice that the wisdom of their age had provided them.

There were many different Elder Councils, some of them choosing their membership simply by age, while others demanded additional merits. Sometimes Elder Councils would consist of people too old to otherwise partake in the daily activities of the community, while sometimes the majority was made up of relatively young, active people. Sometimes the councils would be entirely supported by the community and sometimes the members would still need to earn their own living. Sometimes the councils would only include members of certain professions while others accepted everyone, and so on. No two Elder Councils were ever exactly the same.

Eventually the Age of Ice passed but the tradition of Elder Councils remained, their membership slowly growing more exclusive as the average longevity increased. Lately they have been growing unpopular, with some of the younger upstarts claiming that the Elders frown on any new cultural developments, preferring to uphold only the old traditions. Yet nobody can dispute that the Councils remain an important resource for many communities, helping look at problems and issues from a perspective that no youngling could ever have.

Forge
250 CP

A forge is a furnace where metal is heated or melted. In ancient times smiths with small forges could be found in most settlements. The furnaces were stoked with coal, which was fanned by manually pumped bellows to create intense heat. The blacksmith would heat the metal in the oven and then shape it by putting the metal on an anvil and beating it with heavy hammers. The finished product was then put into cold water to harden and cool. The smith might also melt the metal and pour it into molds.

Modern forges are huge industrial structures requiring many workers to operate. The operation is similar to that in the smithy; except on a grand scale. Tons of ore are poured into massive vats, which are conveyed into the furnace. Once the metal is smelted, it may be mixed with outer materials to create an alloy such as steel, and it may undergo a number of different processes to remove impurities. The finished metal can then be rolled into sheets, poured into molds, stamped into coins, and so forth.

Gambling House
100 CP
A place dedicated to games of chance, the one thing that is certain is this - the house always wins. A gambling house will greatly increase the amount of gold that flows into your coffers, and being legal it also has a side effect of reducing crime, since underground gambling rings run by criminal syndicates will not form.

Granary
200 CP
A series of massive towers where grain can be stored, the Granary helps greatly in preventing famine, as having a store of food directly under your control means you can ensure the hungry are always fed, reducing unhealthiness and unhappiness.

Harbour
200 CP
Aa dedicated space on a river or coast where large draft ships can load and unload, the Harbour massively increases trade, allowing it to arrive from further and in much greater quantities. It also improves the amount of food available, as fishing boats have a place to sail from.

Herbalist
150 CP
As the saying goes, a penny of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and the Herbalist proves this. A healer specialising in potions and salves, the Herbalist benefits everyone, since the healing potions and cures they supply can be obtained in advance and used if or when a person becomes sick or injured.

Hippodrome
200 CP
An arena dedicated to mounted events, the Hippodrome is a place where not only can grand races be held but a place where you can obtain a steady stream of extremely skilled riders to

train and lead your own cavalry, meaning any you have will be extremely effective.

Infirmary
200 CP
A massive hospital where the sick and injured can be brought for treatment, the advantages of a place where healers can meet and exchange methods for aiding the sick should be obvious.

Inn
50 CP
The hustle and bustle of a city inn sets it apart from its countryside relative where benches have often warped to fit the posterior of its regular host. It serves much the same function, acting as a place to unwind and as a community centre, but the fiddle doesn't always stop when a new face appears.

The city inn serves other, less expected functions though: it is a center for business-legitimate or not, it is a place where new contacts are made, a center for the spread of information and new, or imported, ideas. True, some of those ideas are quickly passed over with a clearer head the next morning, some of the information is "beer talk," and some of the contacts are best left forgotten, but there are few other places where a Bannor could meet a Balseraph where they are not (necessarily) swinging a sword at each other.

Contacts are created, palms are greased, and the business of running a city, and even an empire, are made.

Extract from a recently recovered University dissertation: "A Treatise of the City Inn: the Wheels of Empire" by Kandros Fir

Library
150 CP
“We all know of stories. The old legends told around the flames, held dear by those venerable figures. The words spoken only hoped to survive for a moment, in the minds of those around, sometimes staying long enough to be passed to others. No longer. Not here. Within this building, the tales forever preserved. They live through the ages, presented for all to know. This is the heart of civilization.”

—Anonymous Librarian

With the compiling of such a variety of texts under one roof, any scholar, mage, priest and, sometimes, even the common folk may find some of the answers that they seek or, at least, clues. Furthermore, with all these literary works available and the gathering of the studious around them, the interest in learning grows and the city has a steady stream of new Sages.

Lighthouse
50 CP

A massive stone tower topped with an equally massive beacon, the Lighthouse serves as a point of reference for shipping, allowing captains to navigate further from shore without becoming lost. As well as attracting trade it allows fishermen to sail out to where the bigger schools of massive fish feed.

Mages Guild
250 CP
A place where mages can gather and in theory exchange magical knowledge. In practise they are less social than cats in a sack, so the Mages Guild also helps keep people safe by providing an environment where the spellcasters can learn without blowing themselves or others up.

Market
50 CP
A massive, thriving marketplace, this brings merchants from far and wide, ensuring both a healthy flow of gold into your coffers and a diverse array of goods for sale to keep your citizens happy.

Money Changer
100 CP
There are a great many currencies used across Erebus - coins of silver, copper, gold, lead, even mithril. So too are there wooden coins, and things even more unusual, and here they can be, for a small fee, exchanged into another currency. Being the one in control of the exchange rates allows you to boost trade from specific areas by offering good rates of exchange and to maintain a steady source of income at all times.

Palisade
50 CP
Less defensive than a stone wall, but considerably easier to maintain, this wall of tree trunks will repel most bandits and wild animals and unlike a stone wall it can easily be expanded to encompass new areas.

Public Baths
50 CP
A place that spreads if not hygiene, at least the idea of it. With saunas, icy cold plunge pools, pools heated by almost boiling hot springs the public baths serves more as a social hub than anything, a place where people can meet up and relax or discuss business or just chat about nothing.

Shipyard
150 CP
A dedicated place for building shipping, the shipyard allows for the production of bigger, more powerful ships than would otherwise be available, as well as allowing existing ships to be drydocked for repairs.

Siege Workshop
150 CP
"Master Ding, would you consider making me your apprentice?"

"Why of course! It seems very few young men ever come to me anymore to learn about the wonderful job of being a siege engineer. So tell me, what is it that made you think of becoming one anyway? The idea that you can create weapons that will turn the tide of wars, crushing the defenses of any city to rubble, and all this from a safe distance away from all the combat?"

"Yeah that sounds great!"

"Or, is it the idea that you will get to work very closely with these machines? So closely in fact that you realize that any little mistake could completely jeopardize the entire campaign. That one slight miscalculation could be the end of your company. That your catapult may be flinging boulders upon your own. Or that you may accidentally put in too much gunpowder in your cannon, causing it to blow up."

"Erm, I think I'm having second thoughts Master Ding, where is the swordsmith?"

"It seems everyone who asks me always has second thoughts..."

—Master Engineer Ding and young man

Smokehouse
100 CP
In the frozen tundra of the Age of Ice people rarely had to worry about preserving their meat for the future, for the incredibly low temperatures could keep most foodstuffs in stasis for an indefinite period. In the rare cases where hunters caught more meat than they could carry on their backs, they usually dug a hole a few feet deep and deposited it there, where the cold kept it fresh and several heavy boulders prevented scavengers. Once they lost this natural refrigeration in the Age of Rebirth though, they had to relearn how to properly treat meat against rot, generally by drying and smoking it as it hung from the rafters of a special smokehouse.

Stable
200 CP
A massive, sprawling building where animals are raised, trained and kept, a stable helps increase productivity dramatically by providing work animals and can provide good war trained mounts for cavalry, making mounted troops more effective.

Tavern
50 CP
A gathering place and a place of relaxation, the Tavern offers both a place for people to unwind and a place where a man with a good ear and a better memory can uncover a great number of

carelessly shared secrets...

Tax Office
100 CP
This can serve one of two purposes - you can have your tax farmers rake people over the metaphorical coals and see your coffers fill with gold, or you can make people happy by taxing very lightly indeed, trading income for a reduction in social unrest.

Theater
150 CP
An uplifting song can make spirits soar and hearts sing in joy. A gloomy melody can make souls wither in pain, and minds shriek with horror. An insistent drumroll can still the restless nerves of marching soldiers, and lead them on towards victory and glory... You offered me a sword, but I think I will hold on to this harp of mine...

--Aldorien Silvermoon, Elven Bard

A place where actors can meet and put on productions, the Theater entertains people and if you happen to be the one paying to have the scripts made, you can ensure people take away the right messages from the shows as well.

Training Yard
200 CP
A place where infantry can drill and spar, this area allows you to ensure your soldiers are always at peak efficiency.

Walls
250 CP
Massive, imposing thirty foot tall walls of stone surrounding your city, these make your home extremely difficult to conquer for conventional forces, but they do not make it invulnerable, for giants and ogres can surmount them without great difficulty, and there are far more terrible things out there too...

Unique buildings

While there are a great many buildings available to each civilisation, each civilisation has a small number of structures unique to them, and you may select one available to your civilisation.

The Bannor

Empty Gallows

In Bannor society men condemned to death for breaking oaths can be given temporary reprieve from execution if they serve in the military. They sacrifice their title, property, relationships and even their name. To everyone else it is as if they died on the gallows.

These men are known as Forsworn Brothers, and no matter their valor or accomplishment their execution awaits them at the end of the war. Their only reward is the opportunity to die in battle instead of in a criminals noose, and they pursue this goal with relentless devotion.

Reliquary

"My dear, beloved children, lay down your weapons, kneel and pray. Thou art about to be sanctified by the omniscent presence of this holy item. Its touch healing thousands of souls, its look giving sight to the blind, a gift, a symbol of the covenant our forebearers made with Sabathiel and his divine hosts."

Relics of Sabathiel make your cities centres of culture with thousands of pilgrims arriving daily, and both the secular and spiritual thrive. Your priests, serving these items may become prophets, and pilgrims are often quick to enlist in the military, giving you a steady stream of recruits.

The Hall of Kings

The beauty of the Hall of Kings has long served as a testament to the mixture of strong religious beliefs and the love of art shared by the people of the Age of Rebirth. Few visitors to the Hall of Kings have failed to be moved by the artist’s dedication to his subject, or his feeling for the nature of human struggle, suffering, and spiritual triumph. Few can stand within and not be awed, and diplomacy becomes much simpler when conducted within.

The Kuriotates

The Order of Arches

Kilmorphs' bounty is open to all who seek it in her name, but only an architect can turn it into a building truly worthy of her glory.

Abdul-ibn-Nadir, Malakim Architect, speaking on the completion of the Temple of Kilmorph in Ithralia.

A rarity in the new Age of Rebirth, the Order of Arches is dedicated to ensuring all buildings within the Kuriotate lands are airy, beautiful and decorative. Beyond this, and not well known is that the Order is also dedicated to discovering methods of designing buildings that are as strong and dureable as they are visually stunning.

Waters of Amathaon

"Welcome to our establishment! Come, I shall show you the way. Here we have the caldarium where you can feel take a proper hot bath. If heat isn't to your temper, then along here with have the tepidarium were the water is deliciously warm. Then for those in need of a refresher, a quick jump into the frigidarium will get your blood pumping!. A special treat after a long day at diplomatic table; we have one of the new sudatorium, where the moist steam will loosen tense muscles. For those disliking humidity, the dry steam of laconicum is for you! This way to the vestibule where you can disrobe in private."

Owner of the Thermae, Poldi Federigo, greeting the Lanun diplomatic party to the Mechanos

Public baths are important places in many of the cultures of Erebus. Often built as public monuments, they are used by everyone, whether rich or poor, free or slave. A person could eat, exercise, read, drink, shop, socialize, and discuss politics.

When asked by a visiting Doviello chieftain why he bathed once a day, an Amurite governor is said to have replied "Because I do not have the time to bathe twice a day."

Governors, Dukes and other powerful nobles often built baths to gain favor for themselves and to create a lasting monument of their generosity. A rich man who wish to gain the favor of the people may arrange for a free admission day in his name. For example, a Baron with ambitions to a higher standing might pay all admission fees at a particular bath on his birthday to become well known to the people of the area and thus become widely seen as kind and generous.

The Waters of Amathaon are both the largest and the most luxurious public baths ever to exist, dwarfing even the facilities in the First Age empire of Patria.

Bazzar of Mammon

Commerce is the lifeblood of an empire. A farmer sells his prize horse to buy seed for next season, and the tax collector takes enough off the top to equip a footman. A noble buys a tapestry imported from across the continent, and the King's campaign can continue for another month. As such, it is not discontent that is the greatest threat to a ruler's ambition. Bread and carnivals can assuage unhappiness, or garrison troops should those measures fail. Rather a people's satisfaction has the potential to deplete the treasury and starve an empire. If the farmer is content with a smaller gain, from where does the soldier's arms come? If the noble is

pleased with his bare halls, shall the war end sooner? Indeed, if the soldiers themselves do not yearn for a better life than their fathers, why will they quit the farm for a mercenary life?

In light of this, the Stewards of Inequity make an offer which even rulers devoted to Junil have a hard time declining. Let the royal market be seeded with a relic of the King of Avarice here, or one of his praying acolytes there. Let his temples be unmolested in your capital. The people's hearts shall take up a little-just a little-greed. So will their labors be intensified with avarice, and the nation profit.

The Luchuirp

Gridlines

Most cities in Erebus lit their streets with alchemical or magical lamps placed at regular intervals, which not only prevented the stubbing of toes but also hindered criminal activity. Luchuirp cities in particular were well known for the number and regularity of such lamps, though many visitors simply put this down to their penchant for magical devices. These lights actually served an even greater purpose than usual however, for hidden on the top of each lamp was a small ball of lead in the shape of an eye, with runes to Nantosuelta and Sirona scribed on the back. Invaders of Luchuirp cities would unknowingly dicover the purpose of these little statues in short order, for each golem therein could 'see' through each of the eyes at once, letting them expertly counter each assault at the right place and time.

Pallens Engine

"You see, my boys, it is a marriage of sorcery, craftsmanship, and to be frank, a lot of luck. That our golems can throw fire is wondrous enough to our enemies but most never think of the real wonder in how we are able to do this in the first place! I mean who would have thought a love sick sorcerer's attempt to make a crystal that would carry a flicker of flame inside forever to give to the lady who had constantly spurned him would end up being the discovery that gave our golems a power usually reserved for siege engines? By my father's beard, Kilmorph certainly smiled upon us that day!"

Lurchirp Crystalsmith Harin Forkbeard to a new group of apprentices

After the accidental discovery of embedding a crystal with mana from a fire node, Luchuirp craftsmen have used a process one part alchemy, one part sorcery, and one part mechanics to gift their golems with the ability to blow up fortifications. Yet for all their jewelers care, the making of such crystals is fraught with danger as often times the crystal explode under the strain, making the Pallens Engine workshop an odd mix of precision workshop, jewelry shop and armored bunker.

Adularia Chamber

"Let's discuss the golem. A mighty and loyal fighter with the strength of several full grown men, who never needs to eat or sleep, who never runs away in fear. The perfect warrior. When our enemies see an army of constructed soldiers marching at them, they know that they will have to fight for with everything they got in order to survive. Now, imagine if you couldn't see the golems..."

Luchuirp Golemsmith Rit Kewnlin adressing a prospective apprentice

Utilising failed crystals shattered in the Pallens Engines, an enterprising if slighty unconventional mage was able to fashion a chamber that allows golems placed within to have light folded around them, leaving them invisible till they engage in combat.

The Lanun

Sea Haven

A unique structure, to say the least, the Sea Haven is a collosal barely mobile floating harbour created by lashing together dozens of ships into one artificial island. While moving the Sea Haven is extremely slow and difficult, but for a nation of pirates the value of a mobile harbour and shipyard should be obvious, to say nothing of the taverns, brothels, gambling houses and pawn shops that litter the floating island.

Pearl Beds

Made of repurposed wood stripped from the hulls of salvaged ships and weighed down with ballast stones from the same wrecks these structure resemble massive noughts and crosses boards that float around ten feet below the surface of the sea, Oysters quickly colonise them, and the Lanun pearl farmers are experts at gently prying shells apart and sliding in a single rain of sand that quickly becomes a thumb sized pearl, occasionally even the Black Pearls so valued by mages as spell enhancers, and very very rarely even the fist sized Golden Pearls used to summon the Great Krakens.

Smugglers Cove

A small and unnasuming waterside shack, the cove is home to someone who will not admit to knowing anything about anything, but might just admit after a very careful conversation to perhaps knowing someone who might know about what you require, be it a specific item or how to contact a person interested in obtaining such things as you may have found abandoned, perhaps in a merchantmans hold, perhaps in a warehouse that burned down a short time after you visited.

Either way, you can expect to pay a great deal or to sell 'goods' for a fraction of their true value, but what you loose out on pricewise you gain in sheer convenience.

The Jotnar

Gloso Dolmen

The Gloso or Glow Sow is a horrible dark boar with glowing eyes and razor sharp bristles on its back. They are surrounded by a hellish heat that can set vegetation and clothes on fire. They live in ancient dolmens or graveyards were they sharpen their bristles by scrubbing them against the gravestones. The Glosos fights by running at its targets and slicing them with the bristles on its back. When enemies approach these massive, moss covered stones each dawn a herd of Gloso will burst forth to rampage through their ranks.

Dying Ground of the Whales

Travel far enough into the miserably cold lands of the Jotnar and you will reach the shores of the Sea of Spears, a place where Ice and Water and Land are locked in eternal combat, massive waves casting meters wide icebergs to shatter into razor sharp shards on the unyielding rocks of the shore.

Here in this forsaken place the mighty whales come when it is their time to die, and the shores are littered with dead and dying leviathans. In the cold the flesh remains edible for years, and the bones and oil and ivory represent an almost unimaginable source of supplies and wealth.

Irontusk Herds

As men tamed Cattle, so did the Giants tame the great Mammoths that roam the tundra. In the Age of Ice the great tusked beasts thrived, though now outside Jotnar lands their numbers are slowly beginning to decline.

Due to their sheer size and the fodder they require there are never enough of the great Irontusk as anyone would like, but there are always enough angry young bulls to give to whatever Jotnar are insane enough to ride them into battle, creating the sort of cavalry charge that quite literally reshapes the land it passes through.

The Mechanos

All entries here gained automatically and for free since the Mechanos cannot choose a religion.

Mana Refinery

With each type of Mana tied to one of the gods the Mechanos have rejected, the idea of using magic was unnaceptable. In time though, the ever inquisitive Enginseers discovered that if placed under enough pressure, Mana would destabilise and loose its affinity, becoming pure,

refined Mana.

Highly deadly unless safely wrapped in lead Refined Mana is the source of the Mechanos power, for it is an incredibly stable, incredibly efficient fuel source.

Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the most important building in all Mechanos cities. Not only does the great clock regulate the life of all citizens, it is also home to adepts of the Cult of Technology, venerating all machines and the power of the human mind. Moreover, deep within the clock, surrounded by rotating gears and fuelled by refined mana, live the machine spirits. New spirits are born here and can be transfered to the newly built machines.

Burleigh and Stronginthearm Inc.

Their products, sold in order to help peace-loving friendly states perform minor police actions in unruly outlying parts of their nations (naturally) are renowned world-wide, though in order to keep their export license the company is forbidden to trade in firearms, instead making a fortune selling crossbows and melee weaponry on the international market and supplying the Mechanos with blackpowder weapons of exceptional quality.

Mr. Burleigh runs the business and financial side; he is also the President of the Guild of Armourers. Rarely seen Pors Stronginthearm seems to be the technical genius behind the product. Their partnership has entered the language signifying serious, expensive armament, as some say "This house protected by Smith and Wesson", elsewhere in the multiverse.

Mechanos Arquebusiers

What infernal mind come have created such a device? It requires no strength to hold nor skill to aim. It bursts with the crack of the demons whip and runs on the ash of fires burnt dim. The wielder has little need for training and need never view the countenance of his victim. I can only be thankful that the Mechanos are presently engaged against the Bannor and show no interest in our forest lands.

Algas the Mild, Elven Herbalist

Not a structure but a unit, and one unique to the Mechanos, and one that forms the core of their armies.

The arquebus was unable to match the accuracy of a bow in the hands of a highly skilled archer. The arquebus did, however, have a faster rate of fire than the most powerful crossbow, a shorter learning curve than a longbow, and was more powerful than either. The arquebus did not rely on the physical strength of the user for propulsion of the projectile, making it easier to find a suitable recruit. It also meant that, compared to an archer or crossbowman, an arquebusier lost less of his battlefield effectiveness due to fatigue, malnutrition or sickness. The arquebusier also had the added advantage of frightening enemies (and horses) with the noise.

Wind could reduce the accuracy of archery, but had much less of an effect on an arquebus. Perhaps most important, producing an effective arquebusier required much less training than producing an effective bowman. During a siege it was also easier to fire an arquebus out of loopholes than it was a bow and arrow. It was also possible to load an arquebus (and indeed any smoothbore gun) with small shot rather than a single ball. Small shot did not pack the same punch as a single round ball but the shot could hit and wound multiple enemies.

The arquebus required a much lower level of skill than the typical archer. Most archers spent their whole lives training to shoot with accuracy, but with drill and instruction, the arquebusier was able to learn his profession in months as opposed to years. This low level of skill made it a lot easier to outfit an army in a short amount of time as well as expand the small arms ranks. This idea of lower skilled, lightly armoured units was the driving force in the infantry revolution that took place early in the Mechanos history and allowed early infantries to phase out the longbow.

An arquebusier could carry more ammunition and powder than a crossbowman or longbowman could with bolts or arrows. Once the methods were developed, powder and shot were relatively easy to mass-produce, while arrow making was a genuine craft requiring highly skilled labor.

Taking all these things into consideration, the Mechanos armies are utterly terrifying once the Arquebusiers become commonplace, easily able to slaughter rank after rank of barbarians while the stunned savages stand in shock and horror, unable to even understand why their companions are exploding into bloody gibbets of meat around them.

The Doviello

Bear Totem

So little is know of early worship in the cold Doviello lands. One of the few accounts that exist came from the renowned explorer/merchant Tindal Keys whose glib tongue charmed even those northern savages. His accounts tell of giant carved totems dedicated to a bear that the Doviello seemed to revere in a basic shamanistic way. Tindal noted that this totem seemed to be mostly for one clan and surmised that other totems to other animals might also have been worshiped by other clans of Doviello. However one of Tindal Keys greatest strengths was to know when to close a deal and get out. Now the answers are lost under the long tread of years.

Excerpt from "Words to Our Gods" by Elohim scholar Kadisha Tadi regarding early Doviello worship.

While the Bear Totem and the rituals surrounding it are almost entirely just tribal superstion, there will be the occasional warrior who makes contact with an ancient Bear Spirit and

becomes one of the legendary Baerskarn, Werecavebears...

Berserker Pit

Somewhere between an arena, a training area and a violent pitched battle, the Berserker Pit is a uniquely Doviello institution. A place where all arguments are settled in combat, the pit sees its most famous use a week after the Doviello declare war. The greatest warriors the clan has produced gather, three thousand strong and for three days they battle. By right of arms the last one standing is acclaimed as warleader and earns the utter loyalty of the rest of the Doviello, as well as being able to select a bodyguard from the survivors, safe in the knowledge that they are some of the most battle hardened warriors on Erebus.

Wolf Den

Not sacred to the Doviello, Wolves do hold a unique place in society since they were the animals that Charadon took inspiration from all those years ago. The huge, horse sized beasts are regarded as kin, and it is not uncommon to see Doviello accompanied by Wolves they have known since infancy, growing up alongside the massive canines with man and beast both profiting greatly from the arrangement.

The Calabim

Governor's Manor

Sometimes a small, exquisitely decorated appartment, sometimes a dramatic hilltop manor in a state of carefully ominous dilapidation, the Governor's Manor is present in every Calabim settlement of any size, and is the home of the most powerful vampire, or rarely family of vampires, present. Some rule overtly with an iron fist, some rule covertly from the shadows, the man behind the man behind the throne, but each of them does rule, and the city is kept relatively crime free and properly maintained, and in the event of an attack they are always the first and most terrible line of defence.

The Eyes and Ears Network

Not a building so much as a loose organisation of spies and informers, the Eyes and Ears Network is a means for the Calabim to keep a very close eye on their own people, and to a lesser extent their neighbours, though watching for signs of rebellion, identifying and then dealing with any ringleaders that may appear is always the first priority.

Pillar of Chains

The citizens marched into the city plaza picketing and demanding the liberties their neighbors possessed. They chanted and screamed at the palace as Flauros watched from his balcony. For hours they demonstrated, becoming bolder as the day went on, and more citizens joined.

The guard stood their posts, they didn’t threaten or seem aware of the horde of violent

protestors before them. The citizens toppled statues in the plaza, destroyed benches and shook the palace gates and still Flauros waited.

A wave of euphoria struck the crowd, they had risen up and Flauros hadn't responded. They were not powerless, they weren't afraid, Flauros was afraid of them. This thought intoxicated them, generations of the Calabim have suffered without complaint or voice, complacent in their fear. But their fear was gone now, they were a new people united against their cruel aristocracy.

The sun dipped into the horizon, bathing the protestors in the reds and oranges of early night. Lengthening the shadows of the buildings until they reached out across the plaza like dark teeth on the worn granite cobblestones. For a heartbeat the angry wild cries of the protestors stopped as the shadows covered them, there was silence in the plaza. Then came the screams.

In the morning, where there once was graceful statues and benches there was now a giant pillar of granite, iron and blood. Hundreds of barbed chains were woven around the tower and held fast by those chains were all those that protested the day before. Most were torn bodies ripped to pieces and hung on the chains, but a few still lived and writhed within its grasp.

Flauros would often stand on his balcony and admire what he called the Rose of Prespur. With its thorns and blood stained top it almost seemed as such. Regardless of its artistic merits the people of Prespur never protested again.

Prison, punishment and food supply, the Pillar ensures that mortals who think of rebelling quickly think again.

The Archaos

Spider Pen

Not all the spiders of the Archaos are bred for war - some are bred and raised for the quality and quantity of their silk, the huge, mile after mile of silk carefully teased from the huge, barely mobile spiders and woven into silks of incredible beauty and durability, a trade good valued across the entirety of Erebus.

Brood Nest

While many just assume that a Giant Spider is a Giant Spider, the Archaos know better, having long since carefully bred the massive Arachnids into several different, unique strains.

You may select one strain to serve as the basis for your Arachnid hordes.

Rhagodessa

The Rhagodessa strain were bred from Huntsman spiders, those Aarachnids who never spin webs and instead actively run down prey. As a result these spiders are light, agile and

terrifyingly quick, easily able to outpace the fastest horses.

Mucrosa
Relatively slow and physically the weakest of the Giant Spiders, this breed is noted for having masively oversized fangs and the most potent venom of any Spider, a toxic soup that can corrode metal and liquify flesh in a fraction of a second.

Agroneta
Water is the greatest weakness of all but one kind of Spider. The Archaos saw this and carefully over many decades bred the rare pond dwelling Water Spider into the monstrous thing it is today, a Giant Spider capable of dancing across the surface of water as easily as it crosses dry land.

Sword Spider
Massive, vicious and heavily armoured in thick chitin plates, the Sword Spider is a spectacular combatant, though unfortunately it lacks any poison.

The Woven Wall
For anyone used to the massive stone walls that defend the cities of other races and civilisations, the mass of white fibers that make up the defenses of the Archaos cities simply look comical.

Appearances can be deceiving. Anyone trying to climb the wall will find themselves trapped by the mass of spider webbing, and soon enough swarmed by the legions of spiderlings that dwell within.

Complications

As difficult as your battles here will be, there are always ways to make things worse, and there are always opponents eager to take what you have created, either for themselves or simply to destroy it...

The Sheaim
+ 400 CP
There is no history of the Sheaim as a people before the Age of Rebirth. As the Age of Ice ended, they were a people from all civilizations gathered toward one purpose: ending creation through the fell magic of Armageddon spells. Most pursue this focus to increase their arcane knowledge, some believe they will receive an eternal reward for destroying creation, while a

few just want the world to end.

The Sheaim are ruled by Os-Gabella, the first and if she has her way, the last as well. When the gods created Man they created two immortals to begin the species, a man and a woman. The woman they named Gabella, and she was to be the helper mate of the man. But Gabella was defiant and refused to be dominated. When the conclave found her possessed of a dark will and ordered her submission through means physical or arcane she fled to the Bair of Lacuna and was hidden by the goddess Ceridwen. The gods went on to form a new mortal mate for the first man, and through her mortality was passed on to all generations.

In the Bair Gabella adopted the name Os-Gabella - "Gabella the Unbound" - but found herself unable to exist immortal and alone. She may have broken the gods' need to serve, but she still held a need for companionship. The gods knew this and expected her to eventually return. But, still defiant, she came out of the Bair during the 6th generation of man and stole two babies which she took back with her. One she named Alexis and the other Flauros and she raised both as her own children.

Long abandoned by her children, Os-Gabella has tired of creation. Now she seeks to destroy it, and she means to begin Armageddon to do that. She really doesn't care if Hell or Heaven wins in the conflict, she wants to force the gods to end it all, and in doing so end her.

The longer the Sheaim are allowed to exist, the more terrible things will become as they erect more and more planar gates, calling forth legions of increasingly deadly demons and allowing hell itself to spread across the surface of Erebus.

The Svartalfar

+ 400 CP

During the Age of Magic, the elves were ruled by two separate courts. The Seelie court (the fairer and more spiritual) ruled during the spring and summer, and the Unseelie court (the more arcane and malevolent) ruled during the autumn and winter. When Sucellus died, the elven prayers went unanswered. Because the Unseelie court was in power when it happened, they decreed that the elven deity was gone and that Esus would be adopted in his place. Normally, the Seelie court would wait for spring and then reverse the ruling, but spring never came as the Age of Ice began. The Unseelie court saw this as a symbol of their dominance and began to punish elves that refused to stop worshipping Sucellus. This caused a bloody civil war within the elven nation during a time when their numbers were already hard-hit. The Age of Ice eventually stopped the war as bands were separated by expanses they couldn't cross. Now that the Age of Ice is over, they are free to reach out and begin their war anew.

Masters of stealth and magic the Svartalfar will never fight face to face, instead sending unseen legions of mage-assassins to slaughter foes before they even understand they are in danger.

The Balseraphs

+ 400 CP

The Balseraphs form a nation of lies and illusions led by a madman and his daughter. All those still clinging to sanity fled long ago, and now the Balseraphs share Perpentach's madness, living to amuse him. He goes to war on a whim and fights unpredictably, but is no less a threat for it. Despite the capriciousness of their ruler, the Balseraph cities are marvels to behold, dizzying carnivals filled with endless amusement and captivating horrors.

Some call Perpentach The Laughing Man, or the Momus, or the Jack of Tears. Whatever he's called, the King of the Balseraphs has held court at the dark heart of his capital Jubilee for at least two centuries, and there is evidence he occupied this land before the Age of Ice, though perhaps in a different form. He has since grown mighty on the power of the blood of captured slaves.

Yet the Laughing Man is not a mere menace to be feared and destroyed. Mad, capricious, and deadly being that he is, he also possesses a certain gallows humor, a fondness for bravery and honesty, and a seemingly insuperable compulsion to keep his word (though he is fond of using tricks and the subtleties of language to keep from being locked into any agreements).

As for his daughter, Keelyn? Not many children of Courtesans spend their lives in the palace of their sire, but not many are born from a Sheaim spy and Perpentach himself. The day Keelyn's mother discovered her imminent arrival was the day she was discovered to be more than a pretty flirt who had caught the Clown Prince's eye. There were supposed to be magic wards around her to prevent pregnancy from interrupting her mission. She doubted that she could keep Perpentach's favor in this state, and maternal instinct made her want to avoid putting the new life growing inside her in danger. She most certainly could not keep his favor, however, when he discovered her making her last report to Tebryn through an enchanted mirror. She attempted a return spell, but the entire palace was warded against it. Chained in the dungeon and promised a swift execution, the spy had one request: "Please, please, just spare my... our child." Contemptuous disdain was replaced by amused malice on Perpentach's face.

"Oh my my my, what to do? Death is surely too good for you! A child, though, is a means to my end-- where death would break, this pain can rend your soul in two for my delight, shall I make him a slave, or set him alight? Mayhaps my offspring a tool I'll make. Your archmage lord? His life he'll take! Servants attend, this wench to give tender care, for she must live-- Upon the birth of our dear child, revenge can bloom, oh joy, how wild!"

Thus did the Balseraph ministers carefully observe the spy, until the birth of her daughter. They awaited Perpentach's orders. They never came, their leader seemed to have forgotten the entire matter, and no one wanted to remind him of his embarrassing dalliance. They dare not let harm befall the daughter of their mad king--but similarly, they dare not appear too involved in the child of their master's enemy. Powerful conjurers were assigned to keep her safe from the day she was weaned from her wet nurse, but they were instructed not to get attached to

her. Thus her only companions from the time she could toddle away from her room were the wizard's summoned slaves, bound to protect her. She learned to talk from imps , danced with djinn , haunted the hallways alongside nightmares , and rode Sand Lions before she saw a horse .

Yearly, her only playmates would vanish, to be replaced by new summons. In her eighth year, she begged of 'Puppy' the imp, "Please don't leave me this time. I like you best!" It would later be debated whether it was due to actually befriending a servant of hell, some scheme of the mischievous beast, or her magical parentage, but the imp turned to her and smiled. "Milady Keelyn," he rasped, "I enjoyed our time together, but I must return to my masters... unless perhaps you could ask them?" And so the child, whose only friends were monsters from the mists, learned to summon them herself. The next time her father was out, wandering out visiting festivals as he was wont to do for weeks or months at a time, his ministers met. They always did, to determine which of his insane orders they could subvert without his noticing and which they must carry out. This meeting however, was interrupted by Keelyn and a Balor , flanked by a pair of pit beasts. "Giggles," the girl said to the beast, "tell them that I'll be in charge for awhile." The Balor roared.

The Balseraphs are madness and magic and chaos entwined. Perpentach is insane and the most powerful mage ever to walk Erebus, and his daughter Keelyn is by far the most skilled summoner alive today. As a result, it is impossible to say just what form attacks will take, with a rain of explosive toads just as likely as your reflection stepping out of a mirror to stab you in the back one day.

The Compact Broken

The Gods signed The Compact and swore to leave Erebus forever, but it will become apparent as you rebuild your civilisation that not all of the gods servants find The Compact to be an agreement they can or will abide by. One of the following three will enter Erebus, intending to claim it for themselves and you will find yourself and your rapidly expanding civilisation in a battle that will determine the fate of the world itself.

The battle will be long and hard, for your opponent is terrifyingly powerful, and his hosts are some of the most powerful since the Godswar.

Beware, for if your civilisation is ended so too is your adventure, for you will have failed in your given task.

Being destroyed by the rampaging barbarians that blanked Erebus or crushed in battle with your chosen opponent are the two most likely outcomes, but twisting your followers into something else will also count as failure. It may be tempting to trap the souls of those who have entrusted you with their fate in undying metal forms or consuming them all for your own twisted amusement, but such things will see you loose.

The Frozen

The forces of Mulcarn were feared greatly during the Age of Ice. In the Age of Rebirth, people talk fearfully of the Infernal menance (or, depending on your viewpoint, the Mercurian menance). But the Frozen made both look like amateurs.

Mulcarn ruled a vast amount of forces. Many were fashioned directly, such as his court of frozen statues or the columns of Ice Wraiths, while the Frostlings served as the meat of the Frozen legion in its march on Erebus. The frozen, reanimated corpse things given a perverted form of life by the will of The God of Winter and serving the same purpose Manes do the Infernal.

However, this legion of terror, embodied with the force of Mulcarn, was eventually defeated. Their commander Taranis the Unchanging was trapped by Sucellus in battle, and Mulcarn was slain by Kylorin. With the vanish of their god's power, the Frozen withered. They fled to Mulcarn's realm, or dispersed and sought out the tundras of Erebus.

Yet, they were not gone for good. During what they called the Era of Ascendency, the Illians, the poor, mad mortals who worshipped Mulcarn attempted to ascend their leader Auric Ulvin to take the now empty throne of the God of Winter, a number of Spells of Ice and Stasis they cast gave back strength to the Frozen forces. A final spell called Taranis back from his island prison- along with a countless legion of frostlings and other beasts.

Taranis had but one goal, and that was to reclaim the world. He did not recognize Auric Ulvin as

his master, and attacked all in his path no matter what lord they swore allegiance to. Taranis, being unchanging, held his position inside the Frozen capital. The ice-demons under his command expanded his empire rapidly, soon reclaiming the tundra for the servants of Mulcarn.

Since Taranis has no power over souls passing from Erebus, he has constructed vast crystal ice cities which collect souls and freeze them as frostlings. When the Frozen returned, countless souls were captured and bound to serve Taranis (and Mulcarn) forever.

-- From Chapter 1, Volume II of Cryo-Demonology, by Sidar Historian Aritar

Once the mindless servants of Mulcarn, the legions of The Frozen now serve Taranis the Unchanging, Mulcarns aspect of Stasis given form and terrible, hateful will. While the Frozen exist an ice age will slowly spread from their lands, engulfing the world of Erebus once again in ice, and the colder it becomes, the more powerful the Frozen grow, and the more numerous they become...

The Infernals

What could be worse than hell? The domain of a fallen god, whispers of it are found in every religion.

"The wicked shall face their eternal punishment in hell," says the Confessor.

"It's fires burn hotter than any forge, and the foolish burn away like fool's gold," the Stonewarden warns.

"The hottest days of summer do not compare," intones the Priests of Leaves, "and there is no rebirth for those defilers exiled there."

The Cultists babble, "In the fire or in the void, your masters cannot speak to you, nor you to them; shun the realm of the fallen sun, and falter not in your labors for your lords, or you shall be so banished!"

And in the rituals of the Ashen Veil lie these words: "From the fires of the pit, come our secrets, but we acknowledge we are supplicants, and offer the price you seek. We come to bargain, not command, oh Lords of the darkness and eternal fires. For this presumption, take not our souls, take those of our foes."

But the truth is much worse. Hell is an attack on every aspect of the souls that dwell within it. An excruciating forge built to transform the weak and broken into physical manifestations of

Agares' hate. In life a man may consider an act unthinkable, but through the slow manipulations of hell that act will become acceptable and then enjoyable. Many spend eternity in this slow grind, hating those above them and crushing those below them.

Hyborem was not so easily satisfied, he thirsted for new challenges. With the covert assistance of Agares, the walls of creation were weakened imperceptibly by rituals learned by the Ashen Veil. Hell, always existing alongside the infinite plane where mortals dwelt, was given brief, tortured access. Hyborem took his servants and set out at once.

They are forced to carve a city from the dirt with their own claws when this reality refuses to submit to their will. But that will is strengthened by Hyborem's demonic desires, and his underlings abject fear of him. Hot tempered and Impatient, he is nonetheless cunning and willing to watch the kingdoms of men, even to learn from them how to operate in this realm, until his goals are fulfilled and he can bring as many mortals into hell to torment for eternity.

With literally unending legions of demons Hyborem is limited only by the amount of souls he can gather, so he will turn his unspeakable intellect towards corrupting the kingdoms and empires of mortals, stoking the fires of ambition and hatred till there is no atrocity too horrible to contemplate. Man will turn against man, brother will strike down brother, children shall slaughter parents and all will become Manes, the least, the most wretched demons of Hell, and Hell itself will slowly begin its march across Erebus, the terrain corrupting and becoming tainted, poisoned ash wastelands where nothing good can live.

The Mercurians

There is a word in the Angelic tongue for "love". Three, in fact. There are words for "mercy", for "compassion", for "tender kindness". The closest word to be used on this particular medium is carved upon his left forearm: "prudence." Like the word he just finished upon his chest, "justice", this is prayer in his native tongue written in blood and pain upon his now mortal flesh. "Holiness", across his cheeks. "Wrath", along his right forearm. "Judgment", his brow. "Courage", down his torso. Each a prayer to gods he turned his back on. Attributes of divine judgment he seeks to cultivate within his soul.

He was just finishing carving into the fingers of his right hand when two young men approached the lord, dwarfed by his stone-faced sergeants that led them. "What... what is he doing?"

"It is a prayer... with every pain, I beg for the strength to finish my task." He rose. He towered over even his own mammoth soldiers. The other man gulped. "But aren't you... aren't you a god? To whom do you pray, m'lord?"

Basium turned to face his men. "Why do you disturb me?"

"I am Lars Lort, lord Basium. We wish to join your cause, me an' Kobe here. A horde of Infernal beasts destroyed our hometown, we were the only two survivors."

"Then take you a sword--we march on the morn."

"Well, sir, if we may," said Kobe, "we two are more than mere sell-swords. See, we've a bit of magic between us, that's how we survived the assault, by hiding invisible like. But we were watching and we learned something. Wait an' we'll show you." Without waiting for prompting, the two young mages began their spells. Basium took a long, slow breath, the rune on his left arm throbbing.

It was the Sulfuric smell that first alerted Basium. All his muscles tensed at its arrival before he was able to recognize the presence of his enemy. Curiously, the Balor stood motionless in the middle of camp. "Isn't it great?" Lars exclaimed gleefully. "We watched how the Infernals gated in reinforcements, but we figured out how to put the ward of command around it ourselves. With us around, you can fight fire with fire!"

Basium leapt upon the Hell-beast, wrapping his bare fingers around its neck. Smoke began immediately to hiss from the demon's skin, and in moments flames began to lick at Basium's fingers. On each of the fallen angel's fingers was carved one of the five angelic names for the Most Holy One. The Balor writhed in pain, breaking free of the Lorts' simple command warding in the process. He whipped at Basium with his tail, raked his back with his claws, bellowed with an unearthly roar, all to no avail—the Mercurian was unshakeable. Eventually the demon was reduced to an almost pitiful writhing and moaning until all that was left was a hellish smell and hissing puddles of black blood.

Basium rose, and stalked towards the two mages. "You call forth a Balor in my own camp? Let me show you what I do with fire--I extinguish it!" Basium roared. Lars felt his brother's warm blood splatter on his face before he even noticed that Basium had drawn his war hammer. He never noticed the second swing.

Basium walked back to his mat by the fire-pit. He picked up his ceremonial dagger, and began to trace the W on his arm.

Basium broke the Compact. He was an angel under Arawn, but when the Compact was signed, he refused to give up the direct battle with the evil. He and a small host of other renegade angels disobeyed their lords and kept fighting. They spend their existence split between time within creation and in hell waging their war directly. They can be found anywhere evil exist. They care little for people; they are only concerned with destroying evil and chaos, and are sometimes confused with demons because of their relentlessness and unwavering drive to purge all that they stand against without mercy or compassion.

The Mercurians are fewest in number, though when the good and the just fall they can rise again as Angels under Basiums service. The Mercurians are all truly terrifying opponents, each Angel capable of slaughtering an army of mortals single handed, and the longer they remain on Erebus the more powerful they will become, till true Angels appear, beings of impossible beauty and awe and magnificent terror that mortals cannot comprehend or even look upon without being unmade.

An Unlight in the Darkness

Win or loose, the energies unleashed in the conflict shine out like a beacon into places outside, and like a beacon they serve to reveal the way to Erebus...