



Breaking the Reign of the Dead

A Pathfinder RPG Novel by H. Rad Bethlen

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H. Rad Bethlen

Rooster & Raven

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For the Daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne

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Author's Preface

Readers will find that this work diverges from the orthodox—what has been published by Paizo. I have taken as my starting point the information contained in the *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide*, yet, even as far as that goes, if the story needed to diverge, it did so. Having said that, I hope the story that follows is both acceptable and enjoyable to most people who tell their own tales in the Inner Sea.

This work was done independently of Paizo and its editorial staff. They are not to blame for anything contained herein. Indeed, they most likely have no knowledge of this book's existence. And while the intellectual property associated with the Pathfinder game is theirs, all faults are my own.

I went back and forth on whether to write this book. First, the information in the *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* is not my intellectual property. I could be sued for using it *if* I attempted to claim it as my own and profit from it. My solution is to fully acknowledge that while I created many of the characters and wrote the novel, the world the characters act in is not mine. Nor do I wish to profit financially from this work. I'm giving it away. If you paid for it, someone has cheated you.

This raises a question: it takes months, sometimes years, to write, rewrite, edit, polish, and publish a novel-length work. Is it wise to spend my time on something unprofitable when I could work on a marketable project? Here I must admit to being a slave to the story. This story wanted to be told. Besides, I saw in the story a challenge. I saw an opportunity to push myself as a writer and advance my understanding of craft. That alone is worth the effort and is its own reward. hope at least one person

discovers and enjoys this story. If so, I shall be doubly rewarded.

I would rather be a slave to the poorest peasant than reign
over the dead.

- Homer: *Odyssey*, XI, c. 800 B.C.

A Pressed Flower, Grain Exports, Aired Thoughts, and a Warning

The Cinerarium, Mechitar, Geb, Pharast, 4711

A cinerarium is a container in which to keep the ashes of a cremated body. It was Geb's morbid sense of humor that inspired him to name his palace so ignobly. It is an apt name, however. The immense pyramid—made not from sandstone blocks like those in Osirion, the country that birthed and exiled the immortal Geb, but from feldspar, a stone of granite, gneiss, basalt, and other crystalline rocks—was to be his eternal home, just as a true cinerarium holds one's mortal remains until time empties it.

Those massive blocks, quarried from the Shattered Range Mountains, were a plagioclase feldspar and thus were tinted red. The dawn sun made the massive pyramid—it dominated Mechitar's skyline, dwarfing the other pyramids, dwarfing even the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, Urgathoa's temple—pink. The noonday sun made it glow reddish-orange. The evening sun turned it the color of dried blood. The moon drained it of all color, turning it as pale as lifeless flesh.

Geb no longer occupied the pyramidal palace. He cared not for any of his palaces, libraries, summoning chambers, or macabre workshops; where, when he did care, he assembled rotting remains into semblances of life that more properly insulted it. Geb gave all such concerns over to his Harlot Queen, Arazni. She ruled the nation of Geb—he would, of course, name it after himself—in conjunction with Geb's hand-picked Chancellor and one-time confidant, Kemnebi, and the Blood Lords, a collection of sixty elites, many undead, but not all.

The Blood Lords met in what Geb nicknamed “the mortuary” but what was really the grand hall of the Cinerarium. Off one side of this grand hall was Arazni’s personal chambers, the other, Kemnebi’s offices. Kemnebi had a home of his own, a pyramid a fraction of the size of the Cinerarium—one does not upstage Geb—yet he visited it so infrequently he often forgot about it. No Blood Lords lived in or worked out of the Cinerarium, only Arazni and Kemnebi. It was a cold, silent, lifeless palace: a massive, empty tomb.

On this night the dead met. A meeting of the Blood Lords was just concluded. The business of the dead, old and new, considered. The reign of the dead continued unabated. These meetings were usually presided over by Kemnebi, with Arazni seated in a throne just behind him and a statue of Geb peering over her shoulder. Not this one, nor the two previous. Arazni was annoyed at the Chancellor’s repeated absence, which forced her into bureaucratic duties she despised. The Blood Lords did not comment. They were not given to gossip. When the meeting was concluded they left—all but one.

...

Kemnebi had the keen senses of a predator. He was a predator. Geb bestowed upon him the blessing of vampirism. It was due to these vampiric senses that he heard the hinges of the iron door squeak, pause, then squeak again. He felt the air pressure in the room drop. He felt the warmth of life come into his space. Above all these sensations was the beating of a mortal heart, the rush-and-pause of blood in mortal veins, the iron-taste of blood on his tongue.

He knew a great deal from these clues. There were few beings, living or dead, but especially living, who had the courage or brazenness to enter his offices unannounced and uninvited. He knew, therefore, it must be one of the

Blood Lords. There were only nine mortal Blood Lords. This narrowed the possibilities. As he ran through the list of potential visitors he heard the *clack-clack* of heels. A floral fragrance came to his nostrils. Still more clues.

He thought first of Narcisse, the former Duke Between the Rivers. He sometimes wore boots with heels, sometimes wore perfume, even cosmetics, but the lightness of the *clack-clack* ruled out the grossly obese cleric of Urgathoa. There was a tiefling, that is, a human with demonic blood somewhere in her lineage, also a worshipper of Urgathoa, who—while mortal—shared a supernatural tie with a phantom, but he could not recall the tiefling's name, even though she was a Blood Lord. She would never assume enough familiarity with him to enter his offices without his personal invitation.

He thought next of She-mah-hon, an ostirius kyton, emissary from the Abbey of Nerves, sent to Geb by Aroggus to welcome those few undead who can still feel and those remaining mortals in Geb to the glory of the Abbey's lightless halls and endless tortures. She was an unsettling presence, like all kytons, a race given to disturbing body modifications, and was crazy enough to desire an impromptu meeting, but Kemnebi ruled her out. She was mortal, or so he surmised, but her blood held an otherworldly and disagreeable odor. He would have tasted it in an instant.

There was Baya-Iza, a noble from Zirnakaynin, the greatest of the drows' subterranean cities, come to Geb to study in the Ebon Mausoleum and continue the ingrained habit of merciless social climbing, of which, she proved a great success. Or perhaps Kimberly Silent Eyes, a Vishkanyas assassin clever enough to realize that if she killed her employer and took their place few would object. Both were recent additions to the ruling elite of Geb, but neither seemed likely. They were minor powers in the

hierarchy of Geb, like the nameless tiefling, and could be ruled out. As the *clack-clack* neared he decided from the few remaining candidates.

"Saskia."

"Chancellor." Saskia Kalff stepped into the circle of light created by the candles on the shelf above Kemnebi's desk. "I hope I'm not disturbing you."

Kemnebi set down the pressed flower he had been contemplating and turned his head to look at his unexpected visitor. A moment of silent observation passed between the two.

Saskia was no more a friend to Kemnebi than was She-mah-hon or any of the others. This was the first time she had been in his office alone, or really, with the Chancellor alone in any setting. She knew him, of course, being a Blood Lord, but he was as unapproachable as any truly powerful leader is. By all rights she was as entitled to his time and attention as any other Blood Lord, but to act upon that right was dangerous.

She found it odd that Kemnebi was contemplating a pressed flower. It brought so many questions to her mind she nearly forgot her purpose in coming. Of all the things she expected the undead Chancellor of Geb to be doing, pressing flowers was not amongst the likely activities. She looked down at him but made a conscious effort not to possess the demeanor of one looking down on another.

He had once been human, of the Mwangi people. Specifically he was of the Mauxi people, who denied kinship with the other tribes of the great Mwangi Expanse; a dense jungle cradled by mountains. The Mauxi people still speak the Osirioni tongue and unlike the brown-skinned Mwangi their skin often showed a tint of gray. Also unlike the kink-haired Mwangi, their hair was straight. The one trait they willingly shared with the Mwangi was patience.

Kemnebi was tall and athletic without appearing overly muscular. The nobility of his features fit him well as chancellor but would be equally noticed were he a common beggar. His nobility did not come from his station but from his being. His dark eyes were made still more enchanting by the gift of vampirism. He was handsome in a way that promised delightful ruination of any seduced by him.

That he was a practitioner of the arcane arts was well known. To be a one-time confidant of Geb was to share a love of necromancy with the immortal wizard-king. To rise and stay above the Blood Lords required a true mastery of the arcane, for the Blood Lords culled the weak from their own herd. Kemnebi had learned his necromancy from Geb himself, who, in turn had learned it from Hent-er-Neheh, one of his now mummified ancestors who taught him many a millennia prior, when both were still mortal.

That Kemnebi prickled with power was obvious to any who came near. To be chancellor of Geb required a keen knowledge of protective magics. What struck Saskia the most was not Kemnebi's power but his powers of observation. His gaze was attentive which made it unnerving, unnerving because he saw what was before him, not merely the reflection of his own desire. Kemnebi, seated, looked up at Saskia.

She was one of those rare practitioners of necromancy who did not lean upon that dark school of magic in order to surpass life, but to prolong it. Nor was necromancy her obsession, as it was for so many of her peers. She knew just as much about transmutation and alteration as she did about the school of death. In mortal years she was approaching seventy. In appearance, she was approaching thirty and had remained so for a long time.

She was a native of Qadira via Taldor. Her face was squarish with high cheekbones, framed by a mass of luxurious black hair. Her eyes were large and alluring, her eyelashes long and dark, lips full and red. A beauty mark lay just below the center of her right cheek. All that was seen of her creamy white flesh was her face, neck, and upper chest, as she wore a dark blue dress, a black corset, black satin gloves, and black leather boots. About her neck was a simple gold chain and an amulet with a blue stone. Tucked somewhere in her clothing was a song bird, now quietly nesting in its mistress's pocket. This was her familiar.

"Lilith?" inquired Kemnebi. Lilith was a fellow Blood Lord, a member of the clique that had long ago formed around Arazni, a lich, like Arazni, and Saskia's mentor.

"She is well," answered Saskia. "Our dear Marquis?" The Marquis Chevonde Garron was a vampire, Kemnebi's grandchild, in a sense. His sire was one of Kemnebi's "children," that is, a mortal he had embraced and turned into a vampire. Her name was Leah Ben-Reuven. Her memory was a painful one to Kemnebi as he had destroyed her in a rare fit of rage. Ever since then he had been especially kind to the Marquis and tolerant of his eccentricities. It was only by Kemnebi's leave that Chevonde was allowed to live beyond the borders of Geb. He had both a mansion in Katapesh and a pleasure barge in its harbor. He came to Geb only to attend the meetings of the Blood Lords. At all other times he kept livelier company.

It had been the Marquis Chevonde Garron who purchased Saskia from the slave markets of Katapesh. She was only seven at the time and Chevonde had elaborate plans for her. Thus began her tutelage in courtesanship and espionage. When Saskia was thirteen, polished in

manner and speech, and knew what to look for in Arazni's court and how to secretly communicate that to the Marquis, she was sent to Arazni, the perfect child courtesan. Lilith put an end to it.

"A cute trick, Chevonde," she said during a meeting of the Blood Lords five decades prior.

"An amusement, nothing more," he replied.

"Would Arazni agree?"

"If she knew," responded the Marquis, "the child would be destroyed. Am I mistaken in believing you've taken a motherly role?"

"Don't expect any courtly gossip from our lovely Saskia."

"I would never. I only hope she remembers her eccentric uncle Chevonde favorably."

Much had transpired since then. Lilith had groomed Saskia for far greater things. At Lilith's insistence Saskia became a Blood Lord. Arazni was not hard to convince. She almost always took Lilith's advice.

"Has Lilith sent you?" asked Kemnebi. The smile on Saskia's face gave him pause. "I do not mean to imply —"

Saskia stepped more into the candlelight. She reached down, her eyes and smile on him, and picked up the pressed flower. She contemplated it. "Perhaps a delicate necromantic spell," she said, twirling the flower in her gloved fingers, "has taken the life from this yet kept it whole." She looked from the flower to Kemnebi. "Is that what occupies our Chancellor and causes him to miss three meetings in a row?"

If Kemnebi could blush he would have. He had forgotten about the meeting. He had not, so engrossed had he been, even heard the Blood Lords just outside his door. As if reading his thoughts, Saskia added, "You failed even to send a representative to make your will known," before

setting down the flower, sitting on the edge of his desk, and folding her hands in her lap. The song bird chirped at the disturbance but tucked its face beneath a wing and resumed its slumber. "I make no accusations," said Saskia. She reached out and placed a hand on Kemnebi's. "I worry."

It was a bold gambit on her part. Kemnebi looked at her gloved hand, his expression unchanged. His eyes, though, spoke what his countenance did not. Saskia removed her hand to her lap but retained her casual seat. Despite her studied nonchalance, beads of sweat began to form on her brow.

Kemnebi's gaze moved to the flower. "In one of those," he said, looking now at the books. Saskia glanced at them and saw at once they had nothing to do with the arcane. "The legal codes of every nation of the Inner Sea," said Kemnebi, "that has a legal code." He looked up at Saskia. "Some do not. Some are not written down. Some legal codes are comprised only of parables and folk-wisdom kept in the heads of the village elders."

"Cheliex?" inquired Saskia.

"A labyrinth." Both chuckled at this and for a moment the tension between them lessened. Kemnebi reached out and picked up the pressed flower. "No doubt the wife of some scholar found a better use for her husband's books." He set the flower down.

"This?" Saskia picked up a single sheet of parchment marked with columns of numbers.

Kemnebi glanced at it. "Grain exports to Nex." His gaze shifted, as if he now looked to Geb's northerly neighbor. "The population of Nex grows."

"Good," announced Saskia. "We've an excess of labor and land." Both knew that legions of zombies worked the wheat, oat, and corn fields of Geb, the bounty of the land passing through decayed hands to Nex, Geb's

former enemy. The soil of Nex could barely sustain life. Geb had seen to that in the millennia-long war between himself and his closest rival, Nex. Rare was it that two such wizard-kings should stomp about the land at the same time. That they did not keep a continent between them was due to ego. That they once shared a border and warred over it was due to folly. Saskia studied the null effect her words had on the Chancellor. "If economic matters make for poor—"

Kemnebi stood and began to pace in and out of the circle of light, alternately retreating and advancing. Saskia watched as he disappeared and reappeared. "Nex grows," he said. "Nex thrives. Nex evolves." He cast his glance at Saskia. "What of Geb? There is precious little life in Geb—"

"Precious?"

Kemnebi paused. "Yes, life is precious. You must certainly believe so. Given your—"

"I do."

Kemnebi resumed his pacing but did not speak. Saskia picked up the dropped thread.

"When any mortal within the boundaries of Geb dies," she began, speaking of a law Kemnebi certainly knew of, "they are raised as undead."

"Of course," mumbled Kemnebi.

"The poor go on to work the fields or have their skeletons added to the Bonewall. Those who can afford it, or who have secured favor, are brought back as higher forms of undead." When Saskia said higher forms a smile flashed across Kemnebi's face. He knew that those of wealth and station endeavored to secure a higher place in the hierarchy of Geb by becoming various types of undead, the more powerful the better. To be a mindless undead, or a type of undead devoid of freewill, was the greatest fear of all of Geb's mortal inhabitants.

Again a moment of silence passed. Kemnebi was occupied by his thoughts. Saskia bent and looked once more over the open books. "I forgot," she said, turning a few pages. "You're redefining Geb's legal code." She looked up at Kemnebi. He met her gaze but said nothing. "It must be difficult," she added, ceasing to finger the pages. "Is it this that occupies you so?"

"All nations founded and ruled by individual personalities share the same fate," said Kemnebi. "When those individuals no longer lead, they leave behind a vacuum."

"But Geb—"

"You must remember," interrupted Kemnebi, "that for almost all of Geb's history as a nation we were at war. Now we suffer peace." He smiled, but it was a forced smile. "A warring people know not how to manage peace."

"And so?" asked Saskia, glancing at the legal books.

"And so I must establish the rules that shall govern peace, so long as it lasts." He shook his head. His pacing took on a more violent motion, an external sign of internal emotion.

"Geb hasn't fallen apart—"

"Nor will it," announced Kemnebi, stopping at the edge of the candlelight, his face defined by the flickering flames. "It will stagnate. It will decay. It will die slowly, agonizingly. Finally, it will calcify. Meanwhile," he said, resuming his pacing, "the other nations of the Inner Sea will outgrow us, evolve beyond us." He stopped again at the edge of the candlelight. "And then—" But the look on Saskia's face alarmed him. She rose and looked past him to the door but Kemnebi knew it remained closed. She looked at him.

"No other Blood Lord would tolerate such heretical talk," she said. "Let alone Arazni or—Geb," she whispered

the last, as if Geb would hear. She stepped to Kemnebi who stepped forward to meet her. Her movements were those of a panicked animal and she fell into him. He caught her, his hands around her waist, her hands on his chest. She looked up into his dark eyes and saw both the multitude of flickering candles and her own miniaturized self reflected within. "I pray you speak to no other as you've spoken to me." She parted from him, passed him, and hurried to the door. He watched her pull the heavy iron door open and slip out.

A Visit Denied, a Queen in Her Chambers, Hunting, and the Stirrings of Life

The Cinerarium and the streets of Mechitar, Geb,
Pharast, 4711

Saskia stumbled partway across the great hall, paused to steady herself as best her emotions allowed, then continued. She looked over her shoulder, searching the gloom. She advanced until she arrived at Arazni's door, here she stopped, her gloved fist in the air, contemplating a knock. She looked once more across the hall toward Kemnebi's offices. She listened but heard no sounds. She turned and looked at Arazni's door and was coming to a decision when it opened.

What had once been an Ulfen warrior of great prowess and courage, but what was now a type of undead commonly called a grave knight, stood in the doorway. Grave knights were powerful undead whose souls were anchored not only to their past glories and now fallen statuses but also, in a material way, to the armor they wore. They could not be sent to the hereafter unless their armor was utterly destroyed. If they were slain by battle or magic and their armor remained, they would return to seek vengeance.

The Ulfen grave knight was seven feet tall but was hunched to six. His massive shoulders were broadened by the thick bearskin cloak he wore, even in Geb, where cloaks were unneeded. Not that the dead get uncomfortably warm. Yet his wrists and hands were delicate, made slender, even effeminate, by death. His blonde hair had fallen from the pate but hung long and scraggly from the sides and back. Unlike most undead he retained the whole of his flesh, which made him unnervingly human. He had the look of a corpse pulled

from a bog, indeed, he had spent many years so mummified before freeing himself and seeking his armor; which, shown dully from beneath the bear's brown fur. His eyes were sunk deep in their sockets but their green color could still be seen, even in darkness, lit from within by foul magic.

He advanced, forcing Saskia in reverse, her fist still held aloft but now trembling. The door shut behind him, although no force seemed to have been applied. The sound of its closing reverberated throughout the hall. The grave knight planted the tip of his claymore and leaned heavily on its cross guard. His green eyes studied Saskia, his mouth hung open as if he were beyond fatigue, or perhaps beyond caring, but he did not speak.

Saskia knew the grave knight to be one of five such warriors that comprised Arazni's personal bodyguard. Even a lich, perhaps the most potent undead of all, would pause before challenging a grave knight. For one such as Saskia, a mortal, even a mortal in Arazni's good graces, being in such close proximity to one of her bodyguards was terrifying. When Saskia regained her composure she gathered the hem of her skirt and hurried from the hall. The grave knight's glowing green eyes followed her. She did not look back to see.

...

The four remaining grave knights stood in Arazni's large, luxuriously appointed chambers. They remained at the periphery, like so many statues, but their presence could be felt. They stared at Arazni, watching her. They had not the demeanor of bodyguards but of jailers. They did not move. They did not blink. They did not take their baleful gazes from their Queen.

Arazni was a queen but she acted at times like a princess. She sat crosslegged in the center of a massive, plush bed, surrounded by pillows and blankets. A canopy

of pink gossamer failed to conceal her from the grave knights' combined gaze. She gathered around her dolls that had cloth bodies, elaborate, colorful, bejeweled outfits, and delicate, painted porcelain heads. They were a gift from Lilith and had come from far away Brevoy.

"Mother is good to us," said Arazni to her dolls. She often called Lilith "Mother," as did many others in the clique that surrounded the Queen. Lilith had nurtured and protected so many of them. She was not a loving mother—she was a lich, after all—but she was a stalwart presence. She protected her brood like a tigress protects its cubs.

For a few minutes Arazni described an imaginary world of ballroom dances, costumed parties, and entertainments of all types, running her dolls through the dances and romances of her imagination. The grave knights listened and watched. A mood came over her and she slammed her dolls into the mattress, only the thick coating of pillows protected them.

"No! No! No!" she screamed. "Damn you, Aroden! How could you abandon me?" She reached out and yanked aside the pink gossamer to stare at the grave knights on that side of the chamber. "And you," she hissed. "Always watching, always lurking like so many filthy rats. That's what you are, you know? Rats in a prison. Waiting for the prisoner to fall asleep so you can chew on her. You're nothing! You're—" She tilted her head, hearing a familiar voice. She yanked the gossamer closed.

She stared at the dolls just under her hands, not seeing them. She began to tremble. She began to weep. She did not attempt to stop herself. She did not try to clear the tears from her face. They fell on her hands. They fell onto the porcelain faces of her dolls. They discolored the satin of her coverlets. She was undead, ripped from the afterlife by Geb and dumped back into her body, a body that was not

whole, yet she could still cry. That was Geb's doing. He wanted her to cry.

She reached up and began to touch her face, feeling the wetness, looking at her fingers, confused. She pulled up the edge of a coverlet and wiped her eyes, laughing. She leaned to the side and slipped her fingers through a gap in the gossamer, parting it and peering through. She studied the grave knight closest. He stared back but she pretended he could not see her from behind the cloth.

"I've got a dagger," she whispered. "I've got a dagger under my pillow. Do you hear me?" She giggled. "I'm going to slit my wrists. I'm going to kill myself. Do you hear me?"

The grave knights stepped forward in unison, all moving toward the bed.

"No, no," whispered Arazni. "Don't come close or I will," now she yelled, "slit my wrists!"

The grave knights pulled back the gossamer and began to pluck the pillows from the bed. Arazni leapt from one pillow to another, pinning them in place. "Not that one!" She laughed. "Not there!" She rolled over as the pillow she was clinging to was yanked from under her. She laughed like a child. "Which one is it under?" she cried. "Find the dagger or else!"

The grave knights cleared the bed of pillows. They found no dagger. They turned to look in unison at Arazni. She climbed to her knees, clutching a blanket to her breasts. She pouted, as if she were in trouble. "I was fibbing," she whispered. "Don't be mad. Just a little game. That's all. Don't be mad."

The grave knights turned and walked once more to the room's periphery. They turned again and stood, silently watching.

"Geb?" asked Arazni. "Is that you?" She spun on her knees and looked toward the door of her room. "Are

you out there?" She rose from the bed and tip-toed to the door. The grave knight closest headed her off. She looked at him. "It's Geb. He's out there. We must go to him." She stared into the grave knight's unblinking eyes. He stood before her, blocking the door. Arazni screwed up her features. "You fool!" She slammed her fist into his armored chest. "Get out of my way! I can't keep him waiting! I can't! I must—" Again she tilted her head and listened. She smiled, reached out and petted the armored chest, as if smoothing ruffled fur. She looked from the grave knight's chest to his eyes. "No, no, that won't do, little brother." She backed toward the bed, shaking her finger at him.

Arazni crawled onto her bed and curled up, clutching the coverlet. "Aroden," she whispered. "Geb." She kept repeating these two names, over and over, as if the spell they wove could fulfill her desperate need for meaning.

...

The servant entered Kemnebi's chambers, after knocking and being granted permission to do so. He was a blood thrall, a mortal addicted to vampiric blood, drinking it from his master's wrist. Kemnebi's blood prolonged his thrall's life, granted him durability and strength, even a touch of vampiric power, but it also hopelessly bound him. If the blood thrall went a day without his master's blood he would begin to wither and perish, like a leaf pulled from a tree.

Wamukota, the blood thrall, was also Mwangi, not of the Mauxi but of the Zenj. He was once a fisherman, casting his flint-tipped spear into the streams and ponds of the Mwangi Expanse. He once lived in a grass hut. He once had many wives and many children. He once bickered with monkeys that threw fruit at him. He once feared the jaguar and the python. He once told his children stories of the deep jungle, where apes ruled and where

man hid in trees. Those experiences seemed so unreal to him now that he doubted they had ever been true. He served Kemnebi and it had always been so. He knew nothing else.

"Master?" asked Wamukota. As he spoke he pushed to the floor a naked woman. Her skin was blotched and scabrous, although Wamukota had done his best to scrub the grime from it. She was hairless, not by being clean-shaven but by being bred to have no hair. Hair got filthy, hid lice, and was unsightly. The woman, now on all fours, had the intelligence of a toddler. Her simple mind could keep no language and, should her bare intellect spur her to self-expression, she possessed only grunts and hand-motions as a means of making her needs known.

She was food, bred to be consumed by one of the many flesh-hungry undead of Geb. On this night she was lucky, she might survive a vampire. Others were not so lucky, they went to feed ghouls, who consumed dead flesh, or still worse, those undead who drained the essence of life itself, reducing their meals to husks.

"Master?" asked Wamukota. "Why do you keep candles?" He made his way to the shelf, squeezing himself between the desk and Kemnebi. "You've a spell for light." He glanced over his shoulder at his master. "Need you light at all?" He turned and began to trim the candles and check the free-flowing of their wax.

Kemnebi did not answer. Instead, he studied the woman. It was difficult for him to see her as human. She was really not so different from him but he could not acknowledge that fact. She gazed at him with child-like wonder. She did not see him as a threat. She could not comprehend that she had been taken from the pens and brought here for him to feed upon. She saw only a strange man with dark skin and dark eyes. She smiled at him, drool spilling from her open mouth.

"Take it away."

"Master?"

"I'm going out to hunt."

"But Master?" asked Wamukota, abandoning the candles and coming around the woman. "Hunt?"

"Is that so strange, Wamukota?"

"It's—" But Wamukota did not finish his thought. It was illegal to hunt. That is why the chattel were bred. No mortal would dare visit Geb if she knew she might not survive her first night there. It was illegal even for Kemnebi to hunt the living. He was not above Geb's laws, such as they were. "It's only, you haven't hunted in so long, Master."

"You fear I've forgotten how?" asked Kemnebi. "A vampire does not forget the night and how to use it."

"Of course not, Master."

"Take it away, I said. It stinks."

...

Mechitar is a coastal city. The Obari Ocean laps against its feet. The Cinerarium lies at the heart of the capital but it was toward the docks that Kemnebi walked. He had dug through the closet in his office, attempting to find a robe that was less than regal. He found a robe of gold-colored cloth that was so aged and moth-eaten it had turned brown and was full of holes. He took off his leather sandals, preferring to go barefoot in the muck of the streets. He removed all rings and necklaces that were for ornament alone, including that which denoted him chancellor. He tucked his magical amulets beneath the moth-eaten fabric. He turned his magical rings gem-side down. He left his enchanted staff leaned against the wall.

Nights in Geb can be cool, even in summer. This night was especially cool, as winter had just lifted its oppressive hand from the Inner Sea. The bracing air was a pleasant change from the stuffy atmosphere of the

Cinerarium. Mechitar was not a well-lit city. The dead did not often need light to see. Nor did they cherish the security light offered for it did the opposite to them, it threatened to expose. When the sun passes over the horizon fully two-thirds of Mechitar drops into absolute darkness. The remaining third is well-lit, lit enough to make up for those parts that welcome the night. It is in this well-lit third that the living huddle against the darkness and its denizens. It was this well-lit, life-filled third that Kemnebi skirted, circling like a wolf at the edge of an isolated human habitation.

He could hear them, the living, crowded in their houses. He could hear them finishing their meals, cleaning their dishes, snapping sticks for the hearth, commanding their children to bed, the children resisting. He could hear them cursing the night, begging the gods to hold the door against the darkness on the other side. Few lived alone. Solitude was an indulgence allowed to those who feared not the night. In Geb the living slept in the light.

There were some—either foolish or unlucky—who found themselves outside of the light. A merchant, who had been delayed in an important sale, hurried home, rushing through darkened streets, holding a burning torch, but one that did not burn bright enough for comfort, whispering prayers to Iomadae and Desna, clutching the handle of his dagger with his other hand. Young lovers who foolishly risked everything on an evening tryst now rushed through the streets, leaping between pools of light, frightened, exhausted, and exhilarated. Kemnebi heard them, saw them, and wondered at the flavor of their blood but let them pass.

Kemnebi kept to the darkness but watched the light. He approached the docks and turned to look out over the Obari. Waves beat their rhythm upon the shore. He heard a hound howl. It was joined by another. Kemnebi

did not stay at the docks but turned and walked north, wishing to walk along the Axanir River, despite his vampiric fear of running water—a fear he never understood but could do little to counter. Once arrived at the mouth of the river he saw movement in the darkness.

He heard the hounds again, baying. He became aware that someone was watching him. Two hounds emerged and he realized they had been paralleling him. The man who was following him came closer. Kemnebi realized that the man, who was dressed as a sailor on leave from his ship, was not walking, but gliding. Nor was the man whole. There was little of legs under him. Kemnebi laughed. He was being hunted.

Kemnebi's laughter both surprised and annoyed the ghostly sailor. He was now close enough to Kemnebi to recognize that he was not living, but some other kind of undead. When Kemnebi turned to face his pursuer his attitude of amusement so unnerved the incorporeal undead that it eyed him suspiciously, whistled its hounds close, and turned back toward the docks.

"Not a sailor," it mumbled to its hounds. "A land-lover."

Kemnebi watched the fellow hunter go. 'Another who does not keep the Dead Laws.'

He continued from one neighborhood to the next, working his way toward the commercial center of the city. Merchants brought out their wares only under cover of darkness; they displayed strange things: ghastly spell components for necromancy, mementos from cultures remembered only by the dead, tomes in forgotten languages, and items unpleasant to identify yet more valuable than gold to those who sought them.

Kemnebi walked the midnight bazaar. He observed the few merchants and the scarcely more numerous undead customers. The bazaar had the atmosphere of one

that took place in a war-ravaged city. The shoppers moved silently from stall to stall. When they spoke to the merchants they whispered. When the merchants replied they whispered still lower. There was no dallying, no friendly chatter between shoppers. None commented on the weather. The undead were not given to idle chit-chat.

‘What do the dead need?’ Kemnebi asked himself. ‘The living need much and they desire still more than they need. But the dead?’ He left the bazaar, lest he be recognized.

While his confessed purpose was to hunt, and while the unnatural beast within him hungered, Kemnebi made no effort to capture prey. He told Wamukota that he remembered how to use the night but something in him desired contemplation more than killing. He roamed the streets of Mechitar, both dark and lit.

He heard the deep breathing, snoring, and night-tossing of the living. From the houses of the dead he heard nothing. He came upon a group of ghouls leaping wildly over a kill. The taste of fresh blood called to his vampiric curse but he hurried away before he lost control of the beast within. He felt one of his own amongst the houses of the living and his curiosity carried him to her.

There were few shadows amongst the habitations of the living but he found them. The offensive odor of garlic struck his nose like a fist. He could see that it hung all around him in bunches. This was not the only defense the living employed. Talismans were set on every window sill. Bundles of sage hung from eaves. Scraps of paper with prayers had been nailed to every door. Holy symbols—enchantments laid upon them in layers—hung from nails by silver thread. All this irritated him and nearly drove him from the area, but he persisted.

He heard her hissing before he saw her. He stepped through a garden gate and looked down and to the side.

She was seated with her back against the low stone wall. She pulled her victim closer to her, shielding her body with his semi-conscious form, and bared her fangs at Kemnebi. Her prey was a young man, a laborer of some kind, for Kemnebi could see, even in the shadow in which the man lie, that his hands were calloused and the knees of his pants worn and dirty. His clothes were of simple make, as were his sandals.

Kemnebi stepped toward the vampire. She hissed still louder. He held his hands out, proffering peace. The man stirred, his eyes fluttering, but fell back into unconsciousness. Blood spilled in twin trails from the puncture wounds in his neck, joining just above his collar bone. The sight of it, the smell of it in the air, the imagined taste of it almost drove Kemnebi to action, but movement drew his attention. The feeding vampire, more like an animal at that moment, held out one clawed hand. She combined this with a primal growl.

Kemnebi felt the challenge she was issuing. He felt the beast within him longing to respond but he suppressed it. "You break the law," he said, his voice low and controlled. The vampire, caught mid-feed, was beyond the reach of reason. Since she failed to frighten her competition she now prepared to defend her catch. She slid the man from her lap, got her feet under her, and crouched, ready to pounce.

Now that Kemnebi could see her he was stunned. Her elaborate and costly dress was ruined by the mud and vegetation of the garden through which she had scooted, the man in her lap. Her sandaled feet were muddy to the ankles. Her jewelry was caked with a mixture of mud and blood. Her hair, once combed and perfumed, was unkempt. Her face, which, at all other times must be regal and poised, had lost all that was civilized, becoming wild.

Kemnebi took a reflexive step back, not because of the danger she posed, which, to him, was minuscule, but because she so perfectly embodied his concerns at that moment that he was unnerved. He turned and stepped through the gate, paused, looked once more at the crouched, growling, feral form, then hurried from the scene, leaving the neighborhood entirely.

He was surprised at the number of undead who willfully broke the Dead Laws. He knew many consumed the chattel provided for them. He saw the numbers bred and the numbers consumed. He had no idea so many undead eschewed such easy meals in favor of stalking and killing their prey. The unexpected insight disturbed him.

He wondered what he, in his role as chancellor, should do about it. Yet it was Geb himself who had defined the Dead Laws. It was Geb who had instituted breeding programs to feed his own kind. If a determined minority were defiant of Geb's will, Kemnebi wondered, what could he do? If they did not fear Geb why would they fear him? If Geb did nothing, should anything be done?

Every vampire possesses a supernatural sense that tracks the position of the sun. The dawn surprises no vampire. Should a mortal lie exposed to the sun they will feel its heat and in time be scorched by it. What a mortal would experience from a day of such exposure a vampire feels in an instant. Two such moments of exposure would be the end. The sun is the giver of life. It burns away sickness. It is an antiseptic. The sun abhors death, rot, decay, and darkness. Vampires are of death and darkness and so the sun is their enemy.

It was due to this sense that Kemnebi realized that dawn was fast approaching. He had walked Mechitar all night, feeding not, but observing much. He turned toward

the Cinerarium and saw that its tip glowed pink. He began toward it. As he walked, the city awakened.

The sun was the protector of the living in Geb. They kept to its schedule, rising when it rose, settling when it set. There was much activity to fit into the day's allotment of protective warmth and light. The living were quick to rise and become industrious. Kemnebi—taking a terrible and foolish risk—clung to the shadows and watched as shutters opened, doors were unlocked, and faces appeared. He saw the smile on a man's face when he beheld his neighbor peeking from the doorway adjacent. The smile was returned. He continued on, clinging to the shadows.

"Where's that rooster of yours?" asked one woman of her neighbor. Kemnebi heard them as he passed on the other side of the wall by which they spoke.

"He got over the wall yesterday," answered the other woman, "most likely eaten by ghouls."

"Not ghouls," said the first woman.

"Oh? Why not?"

"They only eat *our* flesh."

The two women laughed.

Kemnebi moved on, now desperate to get behind the windowless walls of the Cinerarium.

"Are you going to make bricks today?" He heard one man ask another.

"Aye," answered his walking companion. "If the clay is not too wet."

"How can you stand to be down at the river's edge? Who knows what kind of undead lurk beneath the surface, ready to leap out."

"Only the rotten corpses of old brick makers like me, drowned themselves on purpose to end their miserable labors."

"What keeps them from grabbing you?"

"They've no sense of charity."

The two men laughed and parted.

Kemnebi arrived within the protective shadow the Cinerarium and could relax. He paused before entering and looked out over the city. 'They've a gallows humor,' he thought of those he had overheard.

He operated under the assumption that the living in Geb huddled together like so many frightened mice. That they laughed, that they walked erect, that they went about their business with unburdened hearts, that they acted like free men and women, not like cowed slaves, shocked him. Was the light of day so uplifting that the mortals of Geb forgot they served the dead, he wondered. Or was he mistaken?

...

Wamukota was waiting for him and could see at once that his master was upset. He would have scurried from his master's chambers, avoided his foul mood, but he hadn't fed. Kemnebi seemed surprised to see Wamukota or perhaps surprised that his thrall remained, looking plaintively at him. He realized why and raised his wrist to his mouth, let his canines drop, and punctured his wrist.

Kemnebi fell into his chair and let his arm fall to the side. Wamukota sunk to his knees, gently took up his master's arm, and raised the bleeding wrist to his lips. A look of ecstasy came over his face as soon as the blood splashed against his tongue. Kemnebi paid no heed to his thrall. He looked over the open books on his desk.

"Their laws are defensive," he said, speaking as if Wamukota could hear him. Even if the sound of his master's voice penetrated the intoxication of the blood the words were not for him, but were for the speaker. "Their laws protect life. That's why they have laws, because their lives are fragile." There was something charming about their laws, something he had come to admire. "They work

so hard," he continued. "To pile up the twigs of safety and security around themselves; so many nest-building birds, hollow-boned and weak, but able to fly." He smiled to himself. "And how diligently they protect their nests." He felt a pang of discomfort and looked to Wamukota. "Greedy, are we?" His blood thrall did not open his eyes. "Wamukota!"

Wamukota opened his eyes and looked up at his master but did not remove his lips or cease his drinking. He had a strange look in his eyes, a look that mingled love, lust, shame, and hatred. Kemnebi had seen the look so many times from so many different mortals that he ceased to be swayed by it.

"Do you ever go amongst the living?" asked Kemnebi. Wamukota furrowed his brow, as if the question was absurd. "But you are living, Wamukota." The richness of Kemnebi's blood overtook Wamukota and he closed his eyes, no longer listening. "Or are you?" asked Kemnebi. "Have I made you dead, like me? Enough. Enough, Wamukota!" Kemnebi yanked his arm free and Wamukota fell back. He lifted his hand to his chin and wiped the remaining blood from it. This he licked from his fingers.

"Go out today," commanded Kemnebi. "Go out and be amongst your own kind."

"But, Master," protested Wamukota. "Whatever for?"

"Damn you, Wamukota. Go out, I say. Go out and be alive!"

Broaching a Sensitive Subject

Master Castelli's Estate, Ecanus, Nex, Sarenith, 4710

Master Castelli sat in an overstuffed chair, rotating a glass of wine by its stem as he watched the svirfneblin's blue eyes dart around the room with a bemused smile. In an adjoining room his youngest daughter, Basimah, sat on a bench beneath a window, strumming her harp and humming a song to herself. If he cared to look he could see her through the archway. Her delightful notes filtered into the room, granting it an air of peace and calm.

"How fares the Mana Waste?" asked Master Castelli.

The svirfneblin—that is, a deep gnome—was quite unlike the fey-touched illusionists, tricksters, and indefatigable explorers found on the surface. Deep gnomes dwell in underground caves far below their sun-loving kin, eschewing others' company. He rested his ever-active eyes on his host for a second, then continued cataloging the room's shapes, shadows, features, and contents.

This was the third meeting between the two men. Among humans that is enough to establish a familiarity and a certain amount of trust. Yet, the svirfneblin seemed as guarded and distrustful as he had been from the first. Castelli wondered if it was a natural trait of that people or particular to this individual. His gaze drifted to the movement of his wine. He sank into his thoughts as the red liquid rose and fell, a miniature ocean contained in glass.

In time he felt the full weight of the other man's eyes on him. He glanced from his glass to the small, dark presence sunk like a child—for he was no bigger than a child—in the twin to his own gratuitously padded chair.

The svirfneblin's eyes were motionless, boring into him like ice pressed against unprotected flesh. In that moment, Master Castelli, an accomplished practitioner of the arcane arts, a deft political operative, and a man of wealth and public esteem, felt as vulnerable as an infant.

"How do you do it?" he asked, his voice cautious, out of fear of what he might learn. "How do you survive that hellish expanse?" Basimah halted her harp-play. Into the resulting silence, Master Castelli continued. "Geb and Nex, those two god-like wizards, tore apart reality itself in their millennia-long war. The Mana Waste, their battlefield, is a living wound upon Golarion."

The knowledge that the nature of magic itself had been rent and twisted, made aberrant and uncontrollable, especially in the region known as the Spellscar, filled him with considerable disquiet. To sit across from one who regularly traversed, who seemed quite capable of surviving, even thriving, in such hostile environs, made him nervous.

Ilyx, for that was the name given by the svirfneblin, remained silent and unmoving. In the adjoining room Basimah's footsteps were heard. A door opened and closed. Master Castelli raised his glass to his lips, gulped down the remainder of his wine, and, with a visible shudder, cast the evil forebodings from his person. He focused instead on the svirfneblin's find. For Ilyx was much like a prospector, not panning for gold, but for something much more valuable.

The svirfneblin observed the outward signs of Master Castelli's inward change of mood and anticipated his desire. Before his host could voice his wish, Ilyx scooted to the edge of his chair, dropped to his feet, and crossed the room to the small chest sitting just inside the door. The jangling of his weapons and the metallic rustling

of his chain shirt echoed about the room. His footfalls were silent.

He carefully picked up the chest, turned, re-crossed the room, and set the chest before Master Castelli. He spun the chest to face the other man and pulled open its lid. The reflected light from the chest's contents illuminated Castelli's face, coloring it with washes of orange, yellow, and pink.

"Astonishing," said Master Castelli. He looked from the lightning glass, he had no other term for it, to Ilyx. "There's more here than the last two trips combined," he observed with a sense of pleasant shock. He reached for a piece of delicate glass, but the chest's lid shut, barring his fingers. He looked to the svirfneblin. "Yes, of course." He rose and went to a sideboard.

He glanced at the space between the sideboard and the window sash. He knew that a magical creation—invisible and dangerous—stood unmoving in the space. He had created the creature himself and had commanded it to act as his bodyguard. He glanced over his shoulder, looking at Ilyx, who stood behind the chest, his child-sized hand on its closed lid, gazing back at him.

'Can he detect my creation?' Castelli wondered. He knew that gnomes, surface gnomes, the only kind he had any real familiarity with, had an innate understanding of magic. He was unsure if the svirfneblin, separated eons ago from their surface-dwelling kin, shared that natural aptitude.

"Care for a glass of wine? I've a wonderful vintage from Andoran." Castelli asked. The deep gnome did not stir. "Suit yourself." He opened the sideboard and found the small, bell-shaped bottle. He pulled it into the light. It appeared empty, yet was corked. He knew it to be magical. He also knew it to contain an endless supply of fresh air. All one had to do was un-cork the bottle and breathe, no

matter the vacuum, noxious gas, or other hazards, the bottle would ensure that, at the least, the owner would not perish for want of air.

He made it himself, crafting was his first love. Ilyx requested just such an item at their last meeting. In an uncharacteristically long, precise explanation, Ilyx said the Mana Waste was frequently swept by magical storms that either sucked the air from the land or deposited their own noxious mix of gases—perhaps remnants of Geb’s atrocious, killing fog—upon it. In such cases, opined Ilyx, fresh air was much desired.

Master Castelli turned from the sideboard. “This,” he held up the magical bottle of air, “in addition to your usual asking price.” Castelli looked to the case resting against the chair. He knew that Ilyx used a rare item, a gun, and that it resided in the case. “If you would allow me to examine—” A sharp look from Ilyx answered. “I was only suggesting I could make ammunition for it.” But the offer did not interest the svirfneblin. Master Castelli crossed the room and extended the bottle to the ebony-skinned gnome.

Ilyx accepted the bottle, lifted his hand from the chest, uncorked the bottle and held his fingers over the opening. He could feel the air’s force as it exited. He brought the bottle to his nose, looking at Master Castelli, and tested the air. Finding it to his satisfaction he re-corked the bottle and stuffed it into a pouch at his waist. He then made his way to the sideboard where he investigated, peering like a child up and over the edge, the other bottles, uncorking them, smelling, sometimes tasting, and re-corking. He decided in favor of a brandy from Molthune.

Master Castelli settled himself into his chair, pulled the chest onto his lap, and opened it. He gazed down at the erratically-shaped pieces of glass. He knew how they were made. In his years of crafting he had come across one

or two pieces. He knew that deep in the Spellscar desert violent, magic-fueled storms raged. He knew that when lightning struck the desert dunes the heat melted the sand, forming lightning-shaped glass. This was true of all such occurrences, whether in the Spellscar desert or out of it. However, in the Spellscar, whose sands were saturated with magic, and whose storms were not a result of any natural weather, but of the capricious whims of Geb and Nex's angry magics, such glass held amazing properties.

"Did you know," said Master Castelli to Ilyx, who was settling himself once again in the too-comfortable chair, the tumbler of brandy at his slate-gray lips, "that with this glass I can make any type of ioun stone? It's true." He laughed. "Normally crafting an ioun stone is a rather particular process, like baking a fine pastry. One must balance the ingredients carefully, in the case of an ioun stone, pairing the correct crystalline structure with the desired magical effect." He looked down at the colored pieces of glass. "This glass happily accepts whatever magics I put into it. You would think it too fragile, but once it takes the enchantment, it's shatter-proof." He glanced at Ilyx then back to the chest's contents. "I've made a gift of one such ioun stone to Iranex of the Orb, through intermediaries, of course. I received a hand-written thank you from Iranex herself, expressing delight." He waved his hand in mock-humility. "Of course, such things don't impress you, do they?"

Ilyx had finished his brandy. Master Castelli noticed and rose, stepping to the sideboard. He retrieved the bottle of Molthune brandy and refilled his guest's tumbler.

"All is in order, yes? All parties satisfied?" He looked down at the svirfneblin, who gazed up at him with his ice-blue eyes. Master Castelli smiled, but his smile faded. "If I may test your patience a bit further," he

studied the smaller man's face, but could discern no emotion in its features. He continued, nonetheless, "I must broach a sensitive subject."

Ilyx tilted his head at this unexpected continuance.

Master Castelli returned to the sideboard and placed the bottle of brandy with its companions. With a bit of arcane speech and a weaving of his hands through the air he caused a bit of magic to shape itself into existence; the effect being, the room was cut off from divination, scrying, and other forms of eavesdropping, magical, or mundane.

He turned to face Ilyx. "Have you ever been to Geb?"

Ilyx, who had been savoring a mouthful of brandy, swallowed, then turned to look at his host. For the first time since entering Master Castelli's sprawling estate that morning he spoke, "Dangerous," was all he said.

"Exceedingly," added Master Castelli. "Would you consider going again?" He crossed the room and sat down in the chair across from Ilyx. "Your compensation would far exceed the difficulties and dangers you would face, I assure you." He glanced to the pouch in which the deep gnome had stuffed the magical bottle of air. "Far exceed what you're accustomed to."

"No."

Glossary of People and Places

Abadar: the god of cities, law, merchants, and wealth.

Abaddon: An Outer Plane, home to the Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Abbey of Nerves: When the kytons, the original natives of Hell, were forced to flee, they went to the Plane of Shadows, led there by Aroggus. Aroggus created a massive cathedral to house his homeless race. Not only is the Abbey of Nerves an ever-shifting maze of rooms, halls, and corridors—to confound would-be attackers—it is a place of torture, pain, and suffering where the kytons are free to explore their twisted art.

Abraxas: The demon lord of forbidden lore, magic, and snakes.

Absalom: Perhaps the most famous city in all of the Inner Sea, Absalom is also the wealthiest. It is rumored that Aroden created the island and city of Absalom. It is home to the artifact known as the *Starstone* as well as the *Spire of Nex*.

Abyss, The: One of the Outer Planes, home to the demonic races and the demon lords, as well as many evil deities.

Aedha “Weeping Tree” Nijis: An elf, born in Kyonin. She ventured into the Axan Woods seeking the Twilight Unicorns. She did not find them, instead, she was nearly killed by evil fey of that forest. She saw Rhianna’s hunting lodge and asked for aid. What she got was undeath. She became Rhianna’s lover and in time a Blood Lord.

Agrellus Kisk, Archmage: Leader of the Arclords and one of the three of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Ahrhune ag-Hashid: A Garundi born in Thuvia. He was a pirate under the protection of Prince Zinlo. Upon retirement he became a cleric of Sarenrae.

Aleksandr Kovalenko: Born in Cheliav, he made his way to Ustlav where he met and fell in love with Rhianna Ceinwen. He would later travel to Geb where he was embraced by Kemnebi. He is a Blood Lord.

Alkenstar: A city in the Mana Waste, founded by and named after a refugee from Nex. It is home to many forges and other heavy industry.

Aluum: A type of golem created by the Pactmasters of Katapesh, powered by the souls of slaves.

Andoran: A fledgling democratic state on the northeast corner of the Inner Sea. It is considered a revolutionary country due to its free-market ideology and military abolitionist philosophy.

Apollyon: The horseman of pestilence.

Araminta, a Carnival of Death: Once a Varisian (and a changeling, not wholly human) who traveled as part of a caravan, she was a harrower, a type fortune teller that uses specially designed cards with symbolic meanings. She was killed by Lilith and raised as a zombie lord. She is a Blood Lord.

Arazni, Queen: Once a herald of Aroden, she was ripped from the afterlife and forced into undeath by Geb. She became his queen and is the nominal leader of Geb.

Arcanamirium: One of the most powerful institutions of magic in the Inner Sea region. It was founded by the Arclords and is in the Wise Quarter in Absalom.

Arclords: This group of spellcasters trace their lineage to the household servants of Nex and claim they represent his true beliefs and intentions. However, they stood apart from Nexian politics until one of their own gained a powerful seat on the Council of Three and Nine.

Arlantia: A dryad and resident of the Southern Fangwood in Nirmathas. She was corrupted by Cyth-V'sug.

Aroden: A powerful wizard who raised the *Starstone* and became a living god. Despite his divinity he died in the year 4606, one hundred and five years previous to current events.

Arodus: The eighth month of the calendar year, a summer month, named after Aroden.

Aroggus: A kyton demagogue, he led the kytons out of Hell and made the Abbey of Nerves to hide them from their foes.

Ashoka: A member of the Whispering Way, a lich, and a Blood Lord.

Asmodeus: The ruler of Hell and the god of contracts, pride, slavery, and tyranny.

Aspenthar: The second largest city in Thuvia, ruled by Prince Zinlo.

Astor Bizet: High Priest of the temple to Pharasma in Quantum.

Avistan: A continent on Golarion. Avistan is divided from Garund, which is to the south, by the Inner Sea.

Axan Woods: A forest in central Geb.

Axanir (River): A river that flows from the Shattered Range Mountains to discharge in the Obari Ocean just north of Mechitar.

Azlant: A continental empire whose collapse led to the Age of Darkness.

Azlanti: The people of the Azlant Empire, now extinct.

Bandeshar: A sprawling mansion in Quantum, home to the Council of Three and Nine.

Barrier Wall (Mountains): A long, east-west mountain range in northern Garund. South of the range is the Mwangi Expanse. North of the range is Rahadoun, Thuvia, and Osirion.

Basimah Pareja: Daughter of Castelli Pareja.

Baya-Iza: A drow and native of Zirnakaynin. She is now a resident of Mechitar and a Blood Lord.

Bhavya: A catfolk who is also a merchant in Mechitar. He runs a pawn shop with his business partner, Xylia.

Birth of Light and Truth, The: The holy book of Sarenrae.

Blackmarrow Altar: A powerful artifact made of black skulls which can create a set amount of undead every day.

Blood Lords: Part of the ruling elite of Geb, along with Queen Arazni and Chancellor Kemnebi. There are sixty Blood Lords, only nine of which are mortal, the rest being undead.

Bonewall: A massive—and animate—wall of bones created by Geb to protect the city of Yled.

Borume: The Master Alchemist of Oenopion and one of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Brevoy: A nation in the northeastern corner of the Inner Sea region, bordered in the north by the Lake of Mists and Veils. Lilith is a native of Brevoy.

Calikang: A blue-skinned, six-armed giant used by Nex in his war against Geb. They now roam the Mana Waste in a futile attempt to right the long-ago wrongs of Nex and Geb by restoring the aberrant magic of the land to its natural state.

Casmaron: A continent of Golarion which lies to the east of Garund.

Cassius Allius: A member of the Whispering Way, a lich, and a Blood Lord. He is also a ratfolk who achieved lichdom not through necromancy but through alchemy, with a touch of necromancy.

Castelli Pareja, Master: A member of the Nexian intelligence service whose chief area of concern is Geb. He is also a spellcaster and crafter of magic items.

Catfolk: A feline humanoid race.

Cathedral of Epiphenomena: A church devoted to Urgathoa, located in Mechitar, Geb.

Cayden Cailean: The god of bravery, ale, freedom, and wine. He was once mortal and became a god through the *Test of the Starstone*.

Changeling: A race of humanoids with hag blood in their ancestry. Their eyes are different colors and, depending on the type of hag, they have other defining characteristics.

Charon: The horseman of death.

Cheliox: A powerful nation devoted to the worship of Asmodeus.

Chevonde Garron, Marquis: Born in Galt, his family, like that of Narcisse's, was wiped out in the revolution. However, by this time Chevonde was already a vampire residing in Katapesh. He is Kemnebi's grandchild. His sire was Leah Ben-Reuven. He is a Blood Lord, the only Blood Lord allowed to reside outside of Geb.

Cinerarium: A pyramid constructed by Geb in Mechitar. It is home to Queen Arazni and houses both Chancellor Kemnebi's offices and the meeting hall for the Blood Lords.

Council of Three and Nine: Nex's rulers—the Three (Iranex of the Orb, Elder Architect Oblosk, Agrellus Kisk) and the Nine (Borume, Dunn Palovar, Master Phade, Gen Hendrikan, Elemion, Astor Bizet, Rixende Orth, Fero Zetterling, and Pyree).

Cruciform Cathedral: A cathedral devoted to Iomedae in Nerosyan, Mendev.

Cyth-V'Sug: The demon lord of disease, fungus, and parasites.

Dagillus: An instructor at the Ebon Mausoleum and member of the Whispering Way. Not yet a lich but on the path to becoming one, led to that destination by Eratosthenes. Despite his association with the Whispering Way and his powerful allies, Dagillus is not a Blood Lord.

Darklands: A vast series of tunnels and caverns beneath the surface of Golarion.

Daughter of Urgathoa: A rare type of undead created by Urgathoa to reward her faithful.

Deathsnatcher: A type of monstrous humanoid that can create and command undead.

Deskari: The demon lord of chasms, infestations, and locust.

Desna: The goddess of dreams, luck, stars, and travelers.

Destiny, The: A pirate ship once captained by Ahrhune ag-Hashid. It was destroyed by a div.

Div: A relative of the genie. An evil spirit.

Dread Wraith: A large and more powerful wraith.

Drow: An offshoot of the surface-dwelling elven race that now resides in the Darklands. Unlike their cousins, drow are almost universally evil.

Dryad: A type of fey that protects nature.

Dunn Palovar: The Chief Fleshforger of Ecanus (he crafts golems) and one of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Dwarf: One of the races in Golarion, stout, often surly, and tradition-bound. Dwarves primarily live in mountain strongholds. They are known for their love of stone and metal work.

Earthfall: An event in which the *Starstone* fell to the surface of Golarion, creating the Inner Sea.

Ebon Mausoleum: A school of necromancy located in Mechitar, Geb.

Ecanus: The second largest city in Nex, known for the Fleshforges.

Ecorche: A type of undead giant without flesh. It flays its victims and temporarily wears their flesh.

Elana de Oliveira: A native of Nex. She is a student at the Ebon Mausoleum and assistant and companion to Saskia Kalff.

Elemion (Individual): A mutant from the Mana Waste. He is a tripartite being. He is a member of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Elemion (River): A river that flows from the Brazen Peaks to discharge into the Obari Ocean just north of Quantium.

Elf: A long-lived and noble species of humanoid, adept at magic.

Empty Threshold, The: A temple to Zon-Kuthon in Graydirge, Geb.

Encarthan, Lake: A lake in central Avistan.

Erastil: The god of family, farming, hunting, and trade.

Erastus: The seventh month of the calendar year, a summer month, named after Erastil.

Eratosthenes: An elven lich from Kyonin. He is a Blood Lord and the leader of the Whispering Way in Geb.

Fangwood: The Southern Fangwood is the largest forest in Nirmathas. The Northern Fangwood is in Lastwall. The Fangwood is vital to Nirmaths's economic, military, and cultural survival.

Fero Zetterling: An agent of Nex's powerful Merchant's League and one of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Fetchling: A semi-derogatory nickname for the kayal race.

Fext: A type of humanoid undead born of battle and death. It is exceptionally hard to kill and can only be wounded by obsidian. It "lives" for war.

Final Blade: An artifact used in executing the revolution's enemies in Galt.

Fleshforges: A complex of magical workshops in Ecanus which are used to create golems and other unnatural beings.

Galfrey, Queen: The ruler of Mendev.

Galt: A nation enduring a bloody terror, a revolution gone wrong. Both Chevonde and Narcisse are refugees from this failed state.

Garund: A continent on Golarion. Garund is divided from Avistan, which is to the north, by the Inner Sea.

Garundi: A dark-skinned, proud yet friendly human race found in Absalom, Geb, Katapesh, Nex, Osirion, Rahadoum, Thuvia and elsewhere.

Geb (Individual): One of Golarion's most powerful necromancers. Born in Osirion and a founding member of the death cult that arose amongst the Pharaoh's royal embalmers. Geb was exiled from his homeland and went on to found his own nation. He is the mortal enemy of Nex. When Nex disappeared into his Refuge, Geb committed ritual suicide. However, he was cursed to return to Golarion as a ghost.

Geb (Nation): The nation founded by Geb, ruled by undead.

Geb's Rest: A remote location near Geb's northern border. Geb waits here, for what and why, only he knows.

Gen Hendrikian: A nagaji, cleric of Abraxas, and Chief Riddler (equivalent to High priest) of the Scrivenbough.

Ghoran: A plant-based humanoid that reproduces via a seed grown in the abdomen.

Ghoul: An intelligent type of humanoid undead that consumes the flesh of corpses.

Giant, Tomb: A race of giants concerned with death and the undead.

Gnoll: A hyena-like humanoid, intelligent yet feral.

Gnome: A humanoid race of short stature, descended from fey.

Golarion: The third planet from the sun, home to many forms of life. The Inner Sea region resides on Golarion.

Gorum: The god of battle, strength, and weapons.

Gozran: The fourth month of the calendar year, a spring month, named after Gozreh.

Gozreh: The god of nature, the sea, and weather.

Grave Knight: A type of undead bound to its armor.

Graydirge: A town in central Geb, just northwest of the Axan Wood.

Groetus: The god of empty places, oblivion, and ruins.

Hag: A humanoid female, usually hideous in appearance but not always, which can command powerful magics. Hags are loners and evil but they occasionally gather to cast potent spells.

Half-Elf: A mixed race of human and elven origins.

Hell: A deep, multi-layered pit in the outer planes, ruled by Asmodeus and his archdevils.

Hent-er-Neheh: The daughter of Nakht-Neb-Tep-Nefer and Geb's aunt and initial instructor in magic and necromancy. She was mummified by her father and is a mummy lord. She was one of the founding members of the death cult in ancient Osirion. She is a Blood Lord.

High Isgerian: An architectural style modeled after the architecture of Hell.

Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Four god-like beings who are the instruments of death and destruction. They reside in Abaddon. They are: Apollyon, Charon, Szuriel, and Trelmarixian.

Ilyx: A svirfneblin solo adventurer who uses firearms.

Inner Sea (Region): A collection of nations that surround the Inner Sea and occupy the northern half of Garund and western half of Avistan.

Invisible Stalker: A creature native to the Plane of Air. It is comprised of air and is impossible to see and difficult to injure.

Iomadae: The goddess of honor, justice, rulership, and valor.

Iranex of the Orb: A witch and member of the three of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Irori: The god of history, knowledge, and self-perfection. He was once mortal and became a god through self-perfection.

Isgar: A nation beholden to Cheliaz, its neighbor to the west.

Isle of Kortos: An island in the Inner Sea, home to Absalom the nation and Absalom the city.

Iztahuatzin: A deathsnatcher that lives in the foothills of the Shattered Range Mountains in western Geb.

Jalmeray: An island nation off the coast of Nex in the Obari Ocean.

Jasmine, the Dead Bride: A zombie lord and Blood Lord of Geb. She died on her wedding day and still wears her blood-stained and tattered bridal dress, thus her name.

Kaltessa, Lady: A noble woman who lives in Isger. She is the high priestess of the archdevil Mammon in the Inner Sea region.

Katapesh: A nation, the northern neighbor of Nex. Also, the capital of this nation.

Kayal: A humanoid race from the Shadow Plane.

Keleshite: A people of the desert, arrogant yet able. They are a human race found in Katapesh, Nex, Osirion, Qadira, Taldor and elsewhere.

Kemnebi: The Chancellor of Geb. He was once a student of Geb's. He descends from an advisor to the Pharaoh and studied under Geb. He is a vampire and the leader of the Blood Lords.

Khamati: Cousin to Geb, nephew to Hent-er-Neheh. He is a mummy lord, cleric of a god long forgotten, and a Blood Lord.

Kharswam: The ruler of Jalmeray.

Khemet, Ruby Prince: The ruler of Osirion.

Khufnu: A distant relative of Geb's. He is a mummy lord, a worshipper of Shax, and a Blood Lord.

Kimberly Silent Eyes: A Vishkanyas assassin who killed her employer (a former Blood Lord) and took his place.

Kyonin: A nation of elves that was once abandoned by them, although they have now returned.

Kyton: A humanoid race given to extreme body modifications. They were the original inhabitants of Hell but were betrayed and have removed to the Shadow Plane.

Lamashan: The tenth month of the calendar year, a fall month, named after Lamashtu.

Lamashtu: The goddess of madness, monsters, and nightmares.

Land of the Linnorm Kings: A nation in the northwest of the Inner Sea region. It derives its name from a dragon-like creature called a linnorm that inhabits the frozen plains and mountains of that region.

Latitia, the Diseased: One of the highest ranking priests to Urgathoa in Geb. She was changed from a human into a Daughter of Urgathoa. She is a Blood Lord.

Leah Ben-Reuven: One of Kemnebi's children (a mortal he embraced a.k.a turned into a vampire). She is Chevonde Garron's sire. She was killed by Kemnebi.

Lich: A powerful type of undead. Becoming a lich is a long, arduous process. Most fail.

Lilith: A lich and advisor to Queen Arazni. She is called "Mother" by Arazni and many of those who surround the Queen. Although a lich and a Blood Lord, she is not associated with the Whispering Way.

Llorona: A type of undead that drowns its victims in rivers. Llorona are created from mothers who drown their own children.

Mammon: The archdevil of avarice, watchfulness, and wealth. He rules the third layer of Hell.

Mana Waste: A region between Geb and Nex. This was the battleground for the war between those two god-like wizards. The land is filled with aberrant magic and magic dead zones. The eastern half is largely unstable and dangerous, home to roving tribes of

mutants. The western half is more stable. Alkenstar, Dongun Hold, and Martel are all in the west. The Grand Duchy of Alkenstar is nominally under the control of Nex, although it has a great deal of independence.

Masgava: A lich, member of the Whispering Way, and a Blood Lord.

Material Plane: The known universe and all that resides within.

Mauxi: A people native to the Mwangi Expanse, although descended from the Osirioni people.

Mechitar: The capital of Geb.

Mendev: A nation on the western shore of the Lake of Mists and Veils, occupied with a crusade into the World Wound.

Mohrg: A type of undead that resembles a skeleton but retains its digestive tract, which it uses to consume the living, for which it has a great hunger.

Moir a the Disowned: A refugee from Galt. A human wizard and Blood Lord. She was disowned by her family, prior to the revolution, due to her study of necromancy.

Molthune: A nation run by a military oligarchy. It is the northwestern neighbor of Isger.

Mummy: Mummification was originally a religious ritual meant to prepare the body for the afterlife. This ritual has been corrupted to turn the corpse into a type of undead.

Mutant: The aberrant magic of the Mana Waste has mutated the region's inhabitants. Many are born with debilitating defects, although some have strange and even useful "powers."

Mwangi Expanse: A dense jungle nation surrounded on three sides by mountain chains.

Naga: An intelligent monster with a serpentine body and a humanoid head.

Nagaji: A race said to be descended from or created by nagas. These serpentine humanoids have lidless eyes and are not widely trusted by other races.

Nah-le-tah: A tomb giant, cleric of Urgathoa, and Blood Lord.

Nakht-Neb-Tep-Nefer: The great uncle of Geb and one of the original founders of an ancient death cult in Osirion. He is a mummy lord and a Blood Lord.

Narcisse, the former Duke Between the Rivers: A refugee from Galt who conspired to murder his own family and steal their wealth. He is a cleric of Urgathoa and Blood Lord.

Neacal Aodhan: A lich, member of the Whispering Way, and a Blood Lord.

Nemret Noktoria: An ancient necropolis beneath the sands of Osirion.

Nethys: The god of magic. He is known to have both a good/protective side and an evil/destructive side.

Nex (Individual): One of the most powerful wizards ever to exist on Golarion. He founded the nation of Nex. He fought Geb to a standstill. He finally left Golarion, disappearing into the Refuge of Nex. He has not been seen since.

Nex (Nation): The nation created by Nex. It has a high density of spellcasters.

Nirmathas: A war-torn nation comprised of a distinctly independent people.

Noreen Paisely: A llorona and a Blood Lord.

Obari (Ocean): The ocean that separates Garund and Casmaron.

Oblosk, Elder Architect: A pech and one of the three of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex. Of all the council members, only Oblosk knew Nex personally.

Oenopion: The third largest city in Nex and home to both a large ooze colony and a great many alchemist.

Ólchobar Yevan: A lich, member of the Whispering Way, and a Blood Lord.

Oppara: The capital of Taldor.

Osirion: One of the oldest continually inhabited regions in the Inner Sea. The birthplace of Geb.

Pactmasters: The secretive ruling elites of Katapesh.

Pashow: A town in south central Thuvia, near the Barrier Wall Mountains.

Pech: A type of humanoid fey that lives underground. The pech are known for their shyness and their stonework.

Phade, Master: An invisible stalker and member of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Pharasma: The goddess of birth, death, fate, and prophecy. It is Pharasma who judges the souls of the dead.

Pharast: The third month of the calendar year, a spring month, named after Pharasma.

Pyree: A holy hermit and worshipper of Iroiri. He is one of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, the rulers of Nex.

Qadira: A nation on the western coast of Casmaron. It is on the eastern shore of the Obari Ocean, across from Osirion.

Quantium: The capital of Nex.

Ragathiel: The Empyrean Lord of chivalry, duty, and vengeance.

Ratfolk: A humanoid race of bipedal rats.

Ravener: A type of undead dragon.

Refuge of Nex: A crystalline tower erected by Nex that leads to a different dimension. After Geb attacked Quantium with a killing fog Nex entered the tower and has not been seen or heard from since.

Rhianna Ceinwen: A vampire, the child of Aleksandr Kovalenko, who was once her lover and a Blood Lord. She sired Trevedic Faull after being asked to do so by Aleksandr.

Rixende Orth: High Priest of Nethys in Nex.

Rova: The ninth month of the calendar year, a fall month, named after Rovagug.

Rovagug: The god of destruction, disaster, and wrath.

Sands, The: The first pirate vessel that Ahrhune ag-Hashid sailed on as a youth.

Sarenith: The sixth month of the calendar year, a summer month, named after Sarenrae.

Sarenrae: The goddess of healing, honesty, redemption, and the sun.

Sarkosis: A nation that was destroyed by the arrival of the World Wound.

Saskia Kalff: A native of Taldor who was later orphaned in Qadira and transported to Katapesh to be sold as a slave. She was purchased by Chevonde Garron

who molded her into a courtesan and spy. It was Chevonde's intention to place her close to Queen Arazni but Lilith discovered his plot and took Saskia as a student. She is a Blood Lord and the mentor to Elana de Oliveira.

Scrivenbough: The temple to Abraxas in Quantum.

Sellen (River): An east-west river that runs along the northern border of both Galt and Kyonin.

Serving Your Hunger: The holy book of Urgathoa.

Shadow (Undead): A simple-minded type of incorporeal undead that is little more than its name implies.

Shadow Plane: A plane of existence that darkly mirrors the Material Plane.

Shattered Range (Mountains): A long, north-south mountain range in eastern Garund. West of the range in the Mwangi Expanse. East of the range is Katapesh, Nex, the Mana Waste, and Geb.

Shax: The demon lord of envy, lies, and violent or sadistic murder.

She-mah-hon: A kyton and emissary of Aroggus. She is a Blood Lord.

Shoanti: A war-like but proud people who inhabit Belkzen, the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Varisa and elsewhere.

Skoan-Quah (Skull Clan): One of the clans of the Shoanti people. They have a fascination with death.

Southern Fangwood: See fangwood.

Sovyrian: Little is known about the land to which the elves escaped from Kyonin before Earthfall.

Sovyrian Stone: The gate through which the elves of Kyonin escaped before Earthfall.

Spellscar (Desert): A desert on the eastern side of the Mana Waste. It is known for violent and unpredictable weather and other magic-fueled geological features and hazards.

Starstone: An artifact that fell to the surface of Golarion (much like a meteor), creating the Inner Sea and initiating the Age of Darkness. It was later brought to the surface by Aroden. It has the power to grant divinity to those who past its test, few do.

Starstone, Test of: Anyone may attempt the *Test of the Starstone*. Anyone who passes the test is granted divinity. Those who fail die. Each test is unique to the individual who takes it. It is unknown who created the *Starstone*, why, or how it came to fall on Golarion.

Stavian, Grand Prince: The ruler of Taldor.

Sthaga: Sthaga was once a human cleric of Urgathoa but has since become a dread wraith. He is the High Priest of the Church of Epiphenomena in Mechitar, Geb.

Stilgar: A dwarven wizard and owner of Stilgar's Scrollworks.

Stilgar's Scrollworks: A business that creates scrolls to order and scrolls for sale to the general public. It is located in Oenopion, Nex.

Stormflood (River): A river in southeastern Galt.

Styx (River): A supernatural river that flows through Abaddon and the Abyss. The waters of the Styx can erase a person's memory.

Sulah, Bones of Wood: A ghoran who was corrupted and is now a unique type of undead. She is a Blood Lord.

Svirfneblin: A type of ebony skinned gnome that lives underground.

Szuriel: The horseman of war.

Taldor: An imperialistic nation in the southeast corner of Avistan.

Tanglebriar: During the period when the elves had abandoned Kyonin a demon named Treerazer was exiled to the southern forest of that nation. His presence has corrupted the forest, earning it its current name. The elves have so far been unable to dislodge him.

Tar-Baphon: A powerful lich and tyrant who was imprisoned.

Thuvia: A desert nation in northern Garund.

Tian: One of the natives of Tian Xia.

Tian Xia: A continent on Golarion which is difficult to reach from the Inner Sea.

Tiefling: A humanoid with demonic blood somewhere in his or her lineage, revealed by physical markers such as wings, horns, barbed tails and so forth.

Treerazer: A powerful demon that inhabits the Tanglebriar in southern Kyonin.

Trelmarixian: The horseman of famine.

Trevedic Faull: A kayal who came with his clan group from the Shadow Plane to Taldor. He later went to Geb to study at the Ebon Mausoleum, at which he now teaches. He met Aleksandr Kovolenko and the two became friends. He was embraced and made a vampire by Rhianna Ceinwen. He is a member of the Whispering Way, a worshipper of Nethys, a necromancer and a Blood Lord.

Twilight Unicorns: A group of unicorns residing in the Axan Wood. They are unlike unicorns found elsewhere in that they are not inherently good and they have the ability to prophecy; although, few have been able to locate them in order to make use of their gifts.

Tykylainen: A ravener, who bargained with Geb for the boon of undeath.

Ulfen: A tall, blonde haired, pale skinned race of humans found in Irrisen, the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Varisa, and elsewhere.

Uoser: The apprentice and personal assistant of Hent-er-Neheh. He is a mummy lord and a Blood Lord.

Urgathoa: The goddess of disease, gluttony, and undeath.

Ustalav: A cursed land on the north shore of Lake Encarthan. It is home to many undead.

Vampire: A type of undead that both survives on and draws power from the blood of the living.

Vennonius: A ghoul and one of the diplomats to Geb from Nemret Noktoria.

Viratus: A ghoul and the chief diplomat to Geb from Nemret Noktoria.

Vishkanyas: A somewhat serpentine humanoid race. They are known for their ability to produce poison which they often coat their weapons with using their long, forked tongues.

Vocorix: A ghoul and one of the diplomats to Geb from Nemret Noktoria.

Voradni Voon: A warlord who sieged Absalom twenty two years after Aroden had created it. He failed.

Wamukota: A Zenj and a native of the Mwangi Expanse. He is one of Kemnebi's blood thralls and his most loyal and trusted retainer.

Well of Lies: A dangerous dungeon complex in southwest Nex. Nex himself explored the dungeon and ordered it sealed.

Werewolf: A lycanthrope, a cursed humanoid that changes shape into a wolf and a wolf-man hybrid.

Whispering Way: A secret cult dedicated to undeath, especially the achievement of lichdom.

Whisperwood: A large forest in eastern Cheliox.

World Wound, The: Once a nation known as Sarkosis, now a blasted region surrounding a rift that connects Golarion to the Abyss.

Wraith: A type of incorporeal undead that drains the life force from its victims.

Xylia: A gnome, native of Nex, who now runs a pawn business in Mechitar with her catfolk business partner, Bhavya.

Zenj: One of four distinct peoples of the Mwangi Expanse. They are the most numerous. They inhabit the central area of the expanse.

Zinlo, Prince: The ruler of Aspenthar in Thuvia.

Zirnakaynin: The largest drow city in the Inner Sea region. It is located in the Darklands.

Zon-Kuthon: The god of darkness, envy, loss, and pain.



H. Rad Bethlen has been compared to Isak Dinesen (*Seven Gothic Tales*) and Fritz Leiber (*Swords and Deviltry*). He is known for his work in the fantasy and horror genres as well as his non-fiction. He has been published in Europe and America.

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