

# LOST FOUNDATIONS



# Lost Foundations Setting Guide

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## Introduction

The world is broken. For the last century, humanity has been driven back, entire cities and towns wiped off the map. The Calamities are both mundane - famine, plague, war - and magical. The land itself has been warped. Once far-off jungles or mountains have appeared out of thin air, sometimes on top of settlements. To the south, the Deadlands slowly encroach, an area where nothing can live. And nowhere is safe from the Desolations - twisted natural disasters infused with wild magic. Fire could rain from a once-clear sky, crops could freeze in the height of summer, or a once-placid river could flood and turn to acid. In the aftermath, monsters appear, killing everyone in their path, and even those who survive are often left twisted and mutated. The wilds now teem with dangers, and even the surviving cities are surrounded by greater ruins.

For it was not always this way. Once, the Guild of Runecarvers created magical wonders that for centuries lifted humanity up. Even today, the runes they left behind, their mere building blocks, allow mages to wield magic, and the few complete devices that survive are rare and powerful artefacts. With the Guild's guidance, the cities had united in the Noiartine Coalition, and most lived lives of prosperity, ease, and safety of which people today can only dream.

And so, a desperate plan has emerged - to delve into the vast, abandoned, monster filled ruins of Petriokheia, the lost capital of the Coalition, the base of the Runecarvers, to find out how the world was once made safe so long ago. A new settlement, New Triokh, has been established as a base of operations, for this will be a lengthy endeavour, and even survival this close will be difficult.

You will play the members of the New Triokh Expeditionary Company - those who have answered the call, who would both protect New Triokh and uncover the secrets of the past. Perhaps you believe the world can be saved. Perhaps you are driven by curiosity. Or perhaps you simply seek riches and power amongst the ruins of great wonders. Together, perhaps, you have a chance.

# The World



Lost Foundations is set in and around the Noiartine Bay. The grand civilization created by the runecarvers, the Noiartine Coalition, was a union of numerous city states around the Shallow Sea. Sheltered from the ocean by an archipelago, this sea was an ideal hub of trade and commerce. Now the runecarvers, the Coalition, and even many of the cities are gone, but humanity endures.

The surviving city states may no longer be united, but they still have cultural links. The Noiartine people, the native inhabitants, are by far the most numerous in the Bay. While each city now governs itself, there is still trade and communication, and they still share certain cultural touchstones, such as the guilds and the knightly orders. This does not mean relations are always friendly, however, but the cities have learned that committing troops to open warfare is too risky in this dangerous post-Calamities world.

During the time of the Coalition, a vast road network was built, cutting straight lines through the countryside, connecting the cities, the towns, and even some villages. Now they are

often unmaintained, and all manner of dangers beset travellers on the road. Ship travel is safer, though inherently more expensive and exclusive, and this still means most smaller settlements now have to fend for themselves. Most of the cities have gone from controlling vast areas to much smaller regions of influence, and even within the cities, there are often abandoned areas now gone to ruin.

The collapse of a civilisation has a way of making the world smaller. During the days of the Coalition, explorers and merchants travelled vast distances, discovering many lands and far off peoples. But since the Calamities, even travel between the cities has become dangerous, and none return from venturing beyond the Bay. What remains of the rest of the world is unknown. For now, this is what remains of civilisation.

Petriokheia, the old capital of the Coalition, lies on the western coast. Once the greatest city in the known world, it is now nothing but a vast expanse of ruins, filled with all sorts of dangers. New Triokh, where the Expeditionary Company is based, is located on an island in the River Axis that flows through Petriokheia. The population is entirely new settlers, many still making old buildings inhabitable, for no one has lived here for a century prior. With the resources that may be found, New Triokh has great potential, but who knows what the future holds for it.

To the west of Petriokheia lie the Bulwark Mountains. Already high and imposing, long ago the runecarvers altered the weather to cover them year-round in snow and ice, to keep out the people beyond, who they saw as nothing but barbarous raiders. There was once a singular passage through, but during the Calamities this was blocked by a massive glacier when the land shifted, making them an impassable barrier.

To the north of Petriokheia lies the recently abandoned city of Galesios. Its population fled two years ago, and many are still seeking a permanent home. Further north is the archipelago over which the expansive city of Ippios stretches, once a hub of shipborne trade with the wider world. Their navy is the only remaining naval power, and the city's monopoly on maritime trade within the Bay makes it wealthy and powerful, but even Ippian sailors will not venture into the deep ocean these days, for ships that do so rarely return.

The eastern peninsula is sparsely inhabited, covered partially in thick woodland and partially in swamp. Scattered villages remain in the woods, but the cities that once stood here have fallen. Some of the survivors fled into the swamp to escape the monsters that pursued them, and now live a nomadic life aboard boats.

But it is the south of the Noiartine Bay that has always been the heartland of civilisation. The fertile region known as the Valleys held numerous cities once. One by one, they fell, but the land is too rich to abandon, and numerous smaller towns and villages survive, both old and newly founded. They have unified politically, becoming known as New Haven, and claim to be a new city, the only one founded since the Calamities, though most other cities do not recognise them as such.

To the west of the Valleys lies Eloivos, mostly abandoned other than the fortified guildhouse of the Poets' Guild, and Leviathan's Heart. When the land was shifting, the body of a vast marine creature was deposited atop this city, destroying much of it. But these days, it is a

thriving city once more, using bone from the carcass as a resource and building material. Some of the population has begun to develop fishlike characteristics. Scales and gills might seem strange to outsiders, but for people here, they have become ordinary.

To the east of the Valleys is the Rasa Plain, a mostly flat expanse fit only for grazing livestock. The coast is dominated by a large plateau, upon which sits the fortified city of Kurbellum. It was here that a rogue group of runecarvers deliberately twisted the world, moving the land about. Much of their work had no clear purpose, such as the solitary mountain which looms over the Plain. But their main goal was to alleviate the famines that devastated the Coalition a century ago, and to this end they brought far-off jungles closer to make use of their fertile soil. While most of the strange fauna and flora died in the century since, some of them became infected with unknown magics that have caused them to thrive and become more dangerous. Kurbellum is surrounded by more of these patches than anywhere else, including one right in the centre of the city - most of the population now live in and around the mighty city walls. Despite these dangers, Kurbellum remains open and welcoming to all refugees - if they can reach it.

Further east, along the banks of the Iteru river, is the city of Hatteshpur. Regularly replenished with fertile soil when the river floods, it supports a large population and a matching army. The only surviving city with the strength to match Ippios, the enmity between the two dominates the Bay's political sphere. Uniquely, Hatteshpur maintains a cultural and religious link to its pre-Runic history. The God-Queen Hatteshpa who founded the city is still worshipped here, and with the people of the Bay beset by danger, paladins who would follow her example to divinity once more venture forth.

The lands south beyond the Valleys were never widely populated, but people did once live there. Merchants from the Coalition used to venture south, through mountains, steppe, and jungle, to reach the distant Southern Kingdoms, an expansive and vast area inhabited by various nations who had significant wealth to trade in exchange for runic creations. But now none who travel that way ever return, for that way lies the Deadlands. Within them, all plants, all animals, all people simply die. They do not even rot, lying motionless and unchanging under the sky. Slowly, year by year, the Deadlands expand. Two entire cities have been lost this way, for reasons none can explain.

Travel beyond the Bay may have become impossible, but there are still some who trace their ancestry beyond it. In the waning days of the Coalition, groups from beyond the Bulwark Mountains united, calling themselves Volhov's Kin after their charismatic leader, and invaded from the west. Their assault was devastating to the already weakened cities, and the final blow to Petriokheia itself, but when some sought to return, they found that the land had shifted, and the one pass through the mountains was blocked by a massive glacier. With Volhov dead in the fighting, the army splintered apart. A century later, the kindred have long ago made peace with their new home. Each kinband is a tight-knit family group, but they are no more likely to be allied with other kinbands than anyone else. Kinbands frequently act as nomadic mercenaries, though several have forged new paths for themselves in the century they have been here.

The other major non-Noiartine group in the Bay is the Ergaliasi. Their homeland is a continent across the ocean to the east. When the Calamities began, disaster struck there as

well, and a grand fleet set off, seeking refuge with the grand civilisation and magics of the runecarvers. Instead of safety, these refugees found chaos here too. But the island city of Ippios, where they had landed, welcomed them. The battered city and desperate fleet would each have been weak, but together they became one of the most populous and powerful places in the Bay. Integrated into Ippios at all levels, the first generation of Ergaliasi deliberately chose not to pass on knowledge of their old home, believing it best forgotten. A select few, the Remembrancers, keep this information, to ensure the old mistakes will not be repeated.

## Recent History

The years are measured since the Inscription - the creation of the first Rune. This timeline covers the Calamities - the series of disasters that destroyed the Noiartine Coalition, and the century since.

The present day is the year 1024. The current date can be found by subtracting 1000 from the real world date. In the last century, the year length has become erratic and unpredictable, leading to some days being skipped - Lost Foundations does not run outside of university times, but the in-universe time gap may not always be the same as the real world one.

- 890s     The first of the Calamities begins when crops start to fail, leading to food shortages. Over the ensuing years, this becomes worse, with famine becoming widespread.
- 902       After several attempts at less drastic solutions fail, a project led by the runecarvers of Kurbellum teleports a section of southern jungle to replace nearby failed farmland. The fertile jungle soil works well for growing crops, and the project is stepped up.
- 904       With the soil from the first patch of jungle already beginning to fail to produce crops, the runecarvers of Kurbellum teleport several more sections of jungle, as well as a chunk of mountain and a patch of desert. In one case, an inhabited village is replaced instead of empty land. Despite how much it is doing to counter the famine, the wider Guild of Runecarvers denounces this project as dangerous and unreliable and orders all guild members to return to Petriokheia to work on a solution to the current crisis. Dispensation is granted to Galesios, whose runecarvers are treating a local plague, but many of the runecarvers of Kurbellum defy orders.
- 905       The first appearance of the Druse-struck. Over a period of months, many people across the Coalition develop strange symptoms for unknown reasons.

Civil war erupts among the runecarvers in Petriokheia. The reasons, as well as the extent of the conflict, are kept as guild secrets but it is clear that many runecarvers and Excubitors have been killed in a bloody conflict.

- 907 The runecarvers of Kurbellum begin providing patches of jungle to other cities, helping relieve the famine. At least one mountain is moved from the Bulwark Mountains to an unknown location, significantly enlarging the one pass through them.
- 908 A section of Sarfud is teleported away, replaced by a piece of seafloor and a colossal, thrashing marine creature. The flood of sea water causes devastation in the remaining pieces of the city, which comes to be known as Leviathan's Heart.
- 910 In the spring, a massive war host of Volhov's Kin moves through the newly enlarged mountain pass. The nearby city of Eloivos falls almost immediately. The runecarvers of Kurbellum teleport an immense glacier into the pass, blocking it, but most of the host is already through. Much of the war host lays siege to Petriokheia, but multiple smaller armies move to attack other less defended locations. The eastern cities raise forces to relieve the western ones, gathering at Ippios. Much of this army, along with the centre of the city is lost when a mountain lands on it, in what becomes known as the Sundering of Ippios.
- 911 The runecarvers of Kurbellum replace a section of their own city, including their Guild Hall, with a chunk of jungle, and are never heard from again.
- During an attack by Volhov's Kin, a massive fire destroys most of the city of Barjaka. Both sides accuse the other of starting the blaze.
- 912 The city of Bashila is destroyed in an explosion of unknown origin, its ruins becoming known as the Chasm.
- Volhov's forces breach the walls of Petriokheia. A massive, deadly, battle ensues, with the few survivors from either side being those who fled early on. Many survivors say they felt the ground shake and rumble after they fled. The few who return report the city is filled with angry ghosts, and it is abandoned.
- The Deadlands are observed for the first time, swallowing several small southern settlements.
- 913 The plague of Galesios runs its course. The inhabitants of the city enter the Guildhall of the Runecarvers, hoping to find survivors. They find only corpses, and instructions, which, when followed, produce the first Awakened. With the hope of surviving runecarvers extinguished, the Coalition, already teetering, dissolves.
- 914 The first of the Desolations. Several towns and villages are destroyed.
- 917 The Guild of Physicians catalogues the first mutations.
- 922 The city of Dellozeh is abandoned, following a short lived but deadly plague.

- 923 Following years of tensions about what to do with the Guild of Runecarvers gone, most of the Excubitors reinvent themselves as the Patchwork Knights. The remnant that refuses to do so collapses soon after.
- 928 The Guild of Scribes calls the first inter-city conclave since the Calamities.
- 929 Traders attempting to reach the city of Majiyah report they cannot reach it, as the Deadlands have expanded to encompass it.
- 935 The Guild of Scribes demonstrates their new invention, alchemy, to various city governments.
- 942 A large refugee fleet of Ergaliasi from the continent across the ocean to the east arrives in Ippios, seeking the protection of the runecarvers from the disasters that ravaged their homeland. While unable to offer them the safety they desired, the Tetrarchs offer them a home in exchange for political allegiance.
- 943 The joint naval forces of Ippios and the Eragaliasi attack and burn the fleets of all other coastal cities, achieving complete naval dominance, a monopoly on maritime trade, and the lasting enmity of many other cities.
- 949 A civil war erupts in the city of Martahun. Both Ippios and Hatteshpur commit troops to a proxy war, all of which are lost when the city collapses into the ocean during a Desolation.
- 950s Without the runecarvers to maintain them, the Blessed, the honoured dead animated to do menial labour in place of the living, have been slowly deteriorating. During this time, large scale use ceases.
- 956 The city of Benastur, situated on the coast of the eastern ocean, is destroyed. The only surviving witnesses are a small group of Ergaliasi sailors, who refuse to speak of what they saw.
- 960s The Wake of the Butterfly, a movement which believes mutation should be revered rather than shunned, becomes widespread, although fragments had existed prior to this.
- 962 The Deadlands expand to encompass the city of Sugane. After the fate of Majiyah, and the slow expansion since, much of the population had already fled north as refugees.
- 975 The city of Ruweiha is abandoned following a Desolation. The land became toxic, growing only food that killed for miles around.
- 984 New Haven, a coalition of several agricultural towns in close proximity to each other, declares itself a new city, the only one since the Calamities. Leviathan's Heart is the only city to officially acknowledge them as such.
- 1018 Callistrate's Emergents, a splinter group of the Wake of the Butterfly that believes in forceful mutation of others, sacks several smaller settlements, and is

condemned by the wider movement. Facing armed resistance from the cities, they retreat to the wilderness, continuing to raid.

- 1020 The Good Host, a small cult that believes it can communicate with the dead, forms. While they cause no direct harm, most settlements see them as chaotic troublemakers, and they commence a nomadic lifestyle.
- 1022 The city of Galesios is struck by a volcanic Desolation, monsters of fire and rock raining from the sky. In the chaos, attempting to form Awakened for reinforcements, some of the survivors resort to using runes other than the Rune of Life, creating twisted versions of Awakened that attack them. The city is abandoned, with many refugees fleeing by ship.
- 1024 New Triokh is founded, and the call goes out to all who would aid in its goal.
- 1025 New Triokh survives and defeats a Desolation when a magical storm cuts it off from the rest of the Bay for months.

The Deadlands start rapidly expanding northwards towards Leviathan's Heart, causing much panic. Some of the refugees flee north to New Triokh, expanding its population further. The Expeditionary Company ventures south to meet this threat, and the Deadlands are vanquished. At the same time, all across the Bay, all runic items cease to function for several minutes, and all Awakened collapse, seeming to be dead before reviving unharmed.

## Naming Conventions

Typical names are largely defined by your character's cultural origins. Fixed surnames don't exist - instead, when multiple names are required, people tend to use a descriptor, place of origin, or organisation they are part of.

- Noiartine: First names are mostly Roman, Greek, or Byzantine. Last names are usually a guild, place or origin, or knightly order.
  - Eg: Julia of Kurbellum, Acrisius the Scribe, Ioanno of the Tagmata
- Volhov's Kin: First names are Nordic, Slavic, or Germanic. The name of your kinband is usually used as a surname when dealing with outsiders. Kinbands are usually named in the same languages after geographic features of their original homeland. If multiple people within a kinband share a name, nicknames rather than surnames are usually used to distinguish between them.
  - Eg: Bjorn of the Jarnvidr, Svetlana of the Ostar, Eberhard of the Gora
- Ergaliasi: First names are usually virtue names, frequently consisting of entire phrases or sentences on topics important to the parents, though usually one word will be used in informal environments. Surnames are traditionally either the name of the ship you sail, or the island on which you live. Noiartine style surnames are also quite common.
  - Eg: Look-Forward-To-The-Future of the Wave Serpent, Justice of the Metropol, Compassion-Frees-The-Heart of the Puffin

- Hatteshpur: With a cultural link to pre-Coalition times, Ancient Egyptian first names are common here, in addition to more standard Noiartine ones.
  - Eg: Tentamun of Hatteshpur, Kheti the Paladin
- Leviathan's Heart: This city changed how it names its citizens as a deliberate departure from Coalition culture. You have a first name you choose for yourself based on your role in the city, which can be plain or more extravagant ('Hammer' and 'Blazeheart' might both suit a forge worker); then the name of your favoured political arm (Skull, Fin, Rib or Spine), which some choose based on political convictions while others are simply drawn to the symbolism; and lastly, your collective name, a tradition adopted from the Yug kinband, which could be Yug or a Noiartine name adopted for the purpose, depending on your origin. Before you take your first name, your parents give you a Noiartine name to use until you are ready to move on from it.
  - Eg: Blazeheart Spine Kabasilas, Bandage Skull Yug

## People of the World

Before the Calamities, only humans lived in the Noiartine Bay. While they are still the majority, magic has created and warped others, who now live among them.

### The Awakened



The Awakened are created when the Rune of Life is applied to a freshly-killed body filled with chaos magic. Rather than rise as a mindless undead, one of the Accursed, as such bodies are wont to do, the rune stabilises the connection between magic and body. No one living has the knowledge of rune magic to understand exactly how it works, but a new person is created. They arise with a fully adult mind, a new personality, but they do keep some of the deceased's memories. How much varies, but there are some general patterns. Language and an understanding of the world are almost always present. Memories of people are usually patchy or absent, and memories of specific events tend to be occasional flashes at best.

While the Awakened are undead in some senses, and filled with magic, their bodies are fully biological - they need food and water, they age, can fall ill, although they cannot create children. But the magic within does affect abilities - most forms of magic available to humans do not work for an Awakened. But they are able to channel their own energies in unique ways, often through runes, though they incorporate them directly into their own body, requiring no implements.

Their method of creation was first discovered by the last runecarvers of Galesios, in a failed attempt to cure the plague ravaging the city. The citizens discovered their notes alongside their dead body when they entered the Runecarvers' Guildhall to discover what had befallen them. An abundance of corpses, many of whom were beginning to rise and attack, led to the few survivors creating as many Awakened as they could, and the living and the risen fought side by side to save their city. In the aftermath, there were almost as many Awakened as living, and in the following century, they continued to live side by side.

The knowledge of how to create the Awakened was spread to all the known world, but its practice has always been sporadic outside of Galesios. Many would prefer to burn their dead if they were exposed to chaos magic, rather than live with a new person in the body of their loved one, not to mention the permanent loss of a valuable rune. But there are a few exceptions, and small communities consisting partially or entirely of the Awakened have sprung up in several places. Often such communities will make it known to others nearby they will gladly take in new Awakened, and help create them, for they cannot have offspring of their own. This has led to some seeing them as vultures, benefiting off of the deaths of others, and such prejudice can further isolate these places.

Galesios was always home to the largest community of Awakened, but the city has recently fallen. A Desolation struck, and the people, having run out of Runes of Life, resorted in panic to trying to use other runes. The resultant beings were intelligent, yes, but not friendly, and in the chaos this turned to violence, though none who witnessed the start of this survived. The living and the Awakened alike were chased out, fleeing mostly via ship. They have formed scattered refugee communities, finding sanctuary wherever they can, their future uncertain.

The Awakened are usually easily recognised by the Rune of Life, which must be placed on their head for the creation ritual to work. They also have currents of magic flowing beneath their skin, often creating swirling patterns of colours visible on the surface. As deaths around wild, chaotic magic tend to be violent, many Awakened have visible scars from their body's first death, sometimes in natural colours, other times infused by the vibrant magic within.

## Druse-Struck



The curse of Druse struck overnight, manifesting in people across the Coalition's domain as veins of gold ore grew in their bodies. After a great deal of initial confusion and panic its consistent effect on people was more or less understood: the afflicted now suffered perpetual hunger, needing to drain the very essence of life from other creatures to sustain themselves. The severity of this condition varied, with those unable to contain their newfound impulse either dead or exiled from their former communities. Now, more than a century later, the Druse-struck are known to pose no inherent danger to their neighbours and their struggle to find sustenance is not greater than that of regular folks- simply different and only occasionally sinister.

There is no definitive answer as to the curse's origins. Its severity was initially ascribed to age, but now- several generations later- it's clear that the issue has little to do with an individual's age, and the Druse is becoming less pronounced in the descendants of those originally struck by it. A child of a "lifeless" parent is not guaranteed to be affected, but those who experience the supernatural famine have inherited it from some relative, however distant.

The Druse-struck have an average lifespan, and can rest and eat as others do- although both are less restorative. Their need to consume some unseen vital essence in order to survive can be controlled as much as mundane (if strong) hunger, and does not make a distinction between animals and people. This syphoning leaves the target increasingly more lethargic and anaemic, but does not have to be lethal. The name "Druse-struck" refers to

crystalline formations and metallic veins - both always in shades of gold - appearing on their skin, and many find that the curse has altered their physical features to appear more gaunt and pallid. Unscrupulous minds have established that while the trappings of the Druse-struck resemble gold, they are not in fact made of precious metals and cannot be extracted from bodies, crumbling to dust upon separation.

Some Druse-struck choose to simply live their lives, making their changed nature as minor and incidental to their day to day existence as possible. Others have adjusted to make use of it- they are often good hunters and great butchers, as their feeding is quiet, painless and leaves the meat somewhat bland but still very much edible. There are a host of superstitions- both positive (can they ward off beasts of the wilderness with their lifeless presence?) and negative (they will drain the life out of you if you so much as spend a day near one) associated with the Druse-struck- but no settlement turns them away, even though they are noticeably less present amongst Volhov's Kin and the Ergaliasi.

## Mutants



Ever since wild magic began to twist the world, it has twisted humans too. People have been changed in a myriad of ways, from animalistic features, to elemental affinities, to yet stranger things. Mutants are usually easily recognised - metallic skin, horns, or plants growing amongst their hair are hard to miss. But the magic alters people in such ways is unpredictable - sometimes a mutation can take a while to manifest overtly, or simply takes a form that is easily hidden. This does not help the suspicion and fear that some feel towards mutation, for most see it as an affliction to be avoided.

This is because too much mutation can break the mind and turn a person feral. They become a ferocious, ravening creature, and once they have reached that point there is no known cure. For this reason, mutants can often face hostility and fear from others. But mutants who are not exposed to further wild magic usually manage to survive, or even thrive. Individual mutations can run the gamut from harmful to beneficial in isolation, and so some embrace their new self. The Wake of the Butterfly in particular is a spiritual movement that embraces change in all things, including mutation.

Wild magic can change a person exposed to it at any time, and there are ways to cleanse oneself of such alterations as well. Desolations, and the monsters created by them, are the most common cause, and after a century of such disasters, the land is dotted with areas to be avoided if you wish to stay the same as when you entered. There is no easy way to undo the effects of wild magic on oneself, but it is public knowledge that some alchemists and Primordial priests have ways of doing so, though they will usually require something in return, be it wealth or a task. The Wake of the Butterfly also has means of dealing with the dangers of too much mutation, though given their beliefs, it is rare for non-followers to seek them out for it. Other methods may exist, but sifting fact from rumour can be difficult.

Not all mutations are potentially ephemeral, however. Once a person has had a mutation for a lengthy period of time, it can begin to settle. Such a mutation becomes fundamentally a part of the person, and no method of removal will work. But the acclimation between human and magic seems to stabilise things, and the threat of going feral is gone - though this does not provide any protection against further exposure and mutation.

While mutations are usually wild and unpredictable, even when coming from the same source, there is one exception. Many people of Leviathan's Heart have developed fishlike mutations, often including scales and gills. To the people of this city, people like this have become an everyday sight, even if most others still see it as strange.

## Major Locations

### Petriokheia and New Triokh

The city state of Petriokheia used to be a thriving capital, hosting the headquarters of the esteemed Guild of Runecarvers itself and was the first city to be formally acknowledged by the treaty establishing the Noiartine Coalition. It held a position of importance, often serving as an adjudicator of major conflicts rather than its direct participant. Hosting the first Guild among equals required a careful balance to make sure that the city's government was not taken over altogether. This meant that the internal laws and restrictions grew perpetually more complex- in its later years only dedicated Knights-Judicial of the local Scolii would have a full grasp of the intricate machinery of its function.

Petriokheia was favourably positioned on the coast, functioning as a natural middle ground and trading port between the other members of the Coalition. While not having a vast supply of natural resources- the most notable export product being the runes themselves- the city was rich enough to boast highly advanced runic technology employed both in its defences

and in everyday practical lives of its citizens. The wide River Axis running through the city itself was its busiest thoroughfare, with most buildings on its banks having some form of waterfront access. Attempts to use space within the city's walls practically led to its more residential areas becoming a complex hive of smaller buildings.

The Calamities and the decline of the Noiartine Coalition saw Petriokheia rapidly falling into disrepair. While it survived the initial wave of Desolations, the reduced trade left its resources scarce and it did not benefit from the project of land transposition as much as some of the other cities did. Records show that the last members of the Guild of Runecarvers, faced with slow erosion of their organisation and the Coalition at large, assembled in an effort to create a solution that would negate the effects of the Calamities - which led to further infighting and a violent schism within the Guild. Shortly after, Petriokheia was assaulted by the amassed forces of Volhov and the first kinbands to launch a full scale invasion into the Coalition's territory. Eventually, Petriokheia, starved of resources and lacking leadership from its Runecavers, was breached. No one knows what happened after, for no one within the walls survived.

The establishment of New Triokh started as a small and ambitious project begun by a merchant named Hortensia and those she hired to help her. The project had two purposes: firstly, researching the ruins to discover lost secrets which could help put the world to rights and help civilisation thrive once more, and secondly, re-establishing a permanent settlement here. While the project began about a year and a half ago, real progress has only really been made in the last year due to the efforts of the New Triokh Expeditionary Company: a diverse group of individuals who have specialised in solving the unique problems posed to New Triokh. They have expanded the habitable part of the city by driving back the monsters that roam the ruins, rediscovered pieces of long-lost magical knowledge, welcomed refugees, brokered diplomatic and trade agreements with most of the major cities in the Bay, and drawn significant attention to New Triokh as a new yet powerful settlement.

Most widely-known is that New Triokh survived and somehow defeated a desolation - an unprecedented accomplishment. More recently, it is known particularly around Leviathan's Heart, Eloivos and New Haven that the Expeditionary Company was sent south to halt the expansion of the Deadlands before it could reach the city of Leviathan's Heart. They achieved this goal, saving countless lives. The people of New Triokh are justifiably proud of the Expeditionary Company, and their reputation continues to spread across the Bay. A call recently went out for new members to join and bolster the Expeditionary Company's numbers.

The geography of New Triokh has changed significantly over the past year, thanks to the settlement efforts. The habitable part of the city is built upon the old ruins and covers the small island within the River Axis that bisects the city, as well as most of the old city south of the river. The north bank poses numerous dangers still and is yet to be settled. The island in the river is the heart of the settlement, and is where most of the new landmarks of New Triokh can be found, including:

- The council offices, in the old stone Citadel
- The Goose tavern, where the Expeditionary Company meets weekly
- The hospital
- The library

- The Scavengers Guildhouse and warehouse
- The water purifier and salt refinery
- The Morticians Guildhouse
- The Company Square, an amphitheatre/arena of sorts
- The Awakened Clubhouse
- The Agrias Refuge
- The Sleep Inn
- The Emberglade Emporium, a collection of buildings which includes a cafe and a magical oddities shop named "Loke's Loot"
- The shrine to Hatteshpa
- The Primordial church
- The Church to the Lightning
- The Church to the Wildfire
- The Forge, powered by a salvaged runic heating device

Within the city on the south side of the river, there are only a handful of landmarks important to the general populace. These include the area where the Postva Kinband reside, who form a large part of the city's defensive force, a public bathhouse with hot running water, the Patchwork Knights meeting house, and the large defensive barricade which stretches through the streets, keeping the last few hostile creatures from attacking civilians. Due to the recent influx of refugees and the relative scarcity of intact buildings, some brave folk are already choosing to live just outside of this area, trusting that the rest of the south side of the city will be fully re-taken soon.

Sandwiched between the city walls and the sea on the south side of the river mouth is a stretch of well-tended farmland. All who venture there must be wary of the large and aggressive Ippian goats which occupy the area, keeping the wild vegetation under control and seeing off trespassers.

Not far outside New Triokh is the Tagmata lodge, accessible by taking a boat up the Axis and over the shallow debris of the old city's defenses, then traversing the well-maintained road away from the city. From there a road stretches south, passing the villages of Upper Clayton and Doggleby before reaching Eloivos, about a week's steady travel from New Triokh. Along the way are several Tagmata waystations which offer safe shelter for the night.

## Ippios



Before the Calamities Ippios was a relatively minor city state, primarily known for its shipbuilding and operating as a waypoint for sea trade, both between the other cities and for the hazardous trade across the ocean. Most of the early Calamities passed the isolated island city by, even the agricultural decline was a minor threat to the city's seafood heavy diet. This sheltered period ended dramatically when a magical cataclysm tore out massive chunks of the city, with much of the central island vanishing in an instant. Instead massive voids or towering pillars of rock were left behind, and the resulting waves added another layer to the catastrophe.

The cause of Ippios' rapid recovery from these disasters came from an unexpected source: the sudden arrival of a vast fleet from across the seas known as the Ergaliasi. These refugees and their ships, were welcomed eagerly by the badly depleted city, despite their reticence to discuss their past. This sudden influx of population, along with ships and skilled sailors pulled Ippios rapidly out of its decline. The result of this overwhelming naval force, and the political chaos that came from the devastation, was the fateful decision that set Ippios' place in the post-Calamity world.

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Ergaliasi the newly reinforced Ippian navy set out on a sudden and overwhelming naval offensive against every port city along the coast. The attacks came without warning but were extremely targeted, burning ships at anchor and destroying harbours and drydocks, while leaving the ports otherwise unsacked. The result of this sudden offensive was that, once the dust settled, the city of Ippios was left as the only city with any significant nautical capacity, either military or mercantile, a status it has maintained to this day.

While this apparently unprovoked attack did irreparable harm to Ippios' diplomatic standing with the other cities, the nautical monopoly it gave them was impossible to ignore and saw the city grow from a forgotten backwater to one of the richest and most powerful cities in the world. This newfound power has led the Ippian government to declare itself the new capital

of the Coalition, as the last great centre of power that has not fallen into superstitious idolatry, an unsubtle reference to Hatteshpur's theocratic monarchy. This claim has gained little support outside Ippios, and has added to the ongoing tensions with Hatteshpur.

Since the Calamities the city has been governed by a highly distributed mixed government, with power split between a senate elected from among the ships captains and guild leaders, and four tetrarchs that serve for life. This mixed system of government was made with the intention that the government has no single point of vulnerability to be exploited, or lost to further Calamities. Over time the city's politics has calcified into two primary political factions, which then aligned themselves with two of the sporting demes, allowing the arena to serve as a political proxy war. The outward looking and militaristic Blue deme converge around the Tetrarchs of the Sword, who hold command of the navy. Meanwhile the more traditionalist Greens are affiliated with the Tetrarchs of the Sceptre, who have broad authority over civilian administration.

The City itself is unusual, distributed as it is among many smaller islands, and is typified by both a deep seated paranoia that results in constant preparation and redundancy, and the grandiose exuberance that stems from its newfound wealth and power. A visitor to the city could expect to admire the tangle of brightly painted buildings that cover the liveable islands, the numerous dockyards and naval fortifications, the web of semaphore flags and signal towers that allow the islands to communicate, and the colossal form of the Machynerou, the flooded crater turned amphitheatre in which the Ippians host their famed public entertainments.

## The Ergaliasi

The arrival of the Ergaliasi has always been something of an enigma. While there were always some distant trading links, they were still hardly known to those in the Bay before their fleet arrived. Little more has been learned since, as they have been notoriously reluctant to share any more details of their past or what they were running from. As the generations passed, they committed the secrets of their history only to a select group known as the Remembrancers. When they first sailed into Ippios's waters, their fleet was in dire straits, long since having run through their supplies and having suffered severe damage. Despite this, their fleet was both vast and diverse, carrying what seemed to be the entire population of a large settlement, not just its sailors. The Ergaliasi also refuse to speak of what they encountered on the journey, though it is no secret that, despite its size, the fleet represented only a fraction of those that departed.

The Ergaliasi arrived in the midst of the Calamities, at a time when the city state of Ippios was still reeling from the damage to the islands and depopulated by the resulting devastation. As a result they were enthusiastically welcomed by Ippios, and in turn were keen to integrate into the city, determinedly picking up the stylings and manners of the Ippian population, as if in an effort to overwrite their past. As a result it is very difficult for anyone not familiar with Ippian society to distinguish between the Noiartine and Ergaliasi populations, as there is typically little marking such a difference. The only overtly noticeable distinction being found in their names, with Ergaliasi names resembling phrases or aphorisms.

Outside of Ippios the Ergaliasi are rarely encountered other than as seaborne traders, as any real possibility of them settling anywhere else in the bay was burned along with the ports. As a result, as far as the rest of the bay is concerned the Ergaliasi and the city of Ippios are practically synonymous.

## Hatteshpur



Hatteshpur is one of the wealthiest and most powerful surviving city states, as well as the oldest. The city and its royal family proudly trace their history back to the pre-Coalition God-Queen Hatteshpa, who is still worshipped by most of the populace. Her followers believe that all who show true bravery and dedication may gain power and possibly even ascend as she did, and those who follow that path call themselves paladins. While they venture out, the city itself is defended by the largest army in the known world. The city spreads along the extremely fertile banks of the river Iteru, supporting a large population, many of whom take extra pay to train and drill during the flooding season. In addition, the royal family has kept a mercenary kinband on contract for generations - the Iteru kinband, who renamed themselves after the river Hatteshpur is built around - forming an elite, always active core, for the rest of the army to rally around.

Geographically, Hatteshpur is a long city spread along the banks of the river Iteru, with riverboats being the main means of transportation. Farms are mixed in with the sprawling city, along the fertile riverbanks, with the more urban districts usually situated on higher rocky promontories overlooking the rest, safe from the seasonal floods that keep the land fertile. Between farming and trade, the city supports a thriving merchant class and a wealthy

elite, most of which tend to live near where the river Iteru meets the ocean. As one travels further inland, the city slowly becomes less well maintained, until one eventually reaches ruins inhabited by monsters and mutants, once proud parts of the city, now lost.

Due to the influence of the Church of Hatteshpa, there is a strong tradition of venerating heroic ancestors. The God-Queen herself is the symbol all aspire to but each family remembers and tells tales of their great ancestors, venerating them like personal saints. Becoming such a figure is seen as the greatest honour one can have. Martial might is the most common path, but great achievements in arts, scholarship, commerce, and so on are all venerated. The more wealthy pay for carved statues of their honoured ancestors, traditionally placed near the great mausoleum of Hatteshpa herself, and even the poorest of families tend to have a shrine with representations. Shortly after the collapse of the Coalition, and on two separate occasions in the century since, when the city was beset by Desolations, large crowds gathered to pray to Hatteshpa, and these memorials, led by the statue of the God-Queen herself, came to life and fended off attacking monsters, in what are now called the Three Miracles.

Day to day, however, the city is kept safe by its armies, as Hatteshpur has developed a strong martial tradition since the Calamities. Each year, for several months, the river Iteru floods the fields and pay is offered in this time for any who would join the military. These soldiers are expected to drop the farming and march to war at any season when attacked, leading to a massive potential army, though any true extended campaign would risk famine. In more peaceful flooding seasons, the army marches upriver, attempting to reconquer lost ground. Some campaigns have met with success, but none can deny that over the years, the livable parts of the city are slowly shrinking overall. This army is frequently aided by warrior priests and paladins, although they are not formally part of it. There is also a generations long contract between the royal family and the Iteru kinband who act as a combination of personal guard and military force when needed. Having been first hired shortly after the Calamities, they have become enmeshed in Hatteshpur's culture and are a wealthy political force in their own right, rivalling even the most influential guilds.

Politically, the city is divided. Hatteshpur is a constitutional monarchy, with the citizenry and the church both having rights the monarch cannot break, but after a century of constant danger and war, power has become more and more centralised. Queen Serethor, the current monarch, is attempting to consolidate even further power, and the political landscape is dominated by the question of supporting her, or opposing her. The Iteru kinband are a major pro-royalty force, but the church openly opposes the queen's politics, citing that Hatteshpa herself made the laws to ensure her descendants would not be tyrants. The only thing both factions can widely agree on is opposing Ippios. Ever since the burning of the fleets, Hatteshpur has seen itself as the lone defender strong enough to oppose this aggressive invader, and to champion the peaceful ideals of the Coalition.

## Leviathan's Heart



Leviathan's Heart is a city known both for cohesion and for erratic change. It is one of the most organised settlements to endure in this post-Calamity era, but the nature of its political system drags it in all sorts of (sometimes conflicting) directions. Nevertheless, most cannot help but admire what its people have achieved. A visitor might feel anything from apprehension to awe as they move past buildings of mottled terracotta clay and white bone, surrounded always by a tide of bustling citizens who only recede to make way for a bone-armour-clad regiment of the Scolii. Where other settlements might leave some edifices in ruins, by choice or by necessity, repairs never cease in this bastion of resilience. Of course, none of this would be possible if not for the structure which gives the city its name: near the centre of Leviathan's Heart lies the skeleton of a vast sea monster, a skeleton which has given life to this place for over a hundred years. Until recently, it was believed to be dead, but a few weeks ago it began to sing, an intermittent, inhuman, but beautiful sound. Most of the city is tense, awaiting to see what this means, but a number of new superstitions and beliefs have begun to grow around the bones.

When asked about the first thing one associates with Leviathan's Heart, most would answer, "bones". The city uses bone from the skeleton as its primary material for everything which needs to be durable or sharp, replacing building materials like brick, metals used to forge weapons and armour, and so forth. Given the collapse of society made such materials far harder to acquire, one can easily understand why the city jumped to employ this alternative. The bone makes a fine substitute: none dispute the effectiveness of the Scolii, who often settle matters through sheer intimidation rather than force thanks to their imposing

appearance, and repairs made with the substance have lasted since the leviathan's death more than a century ago. To the frustration of many outsiders, the city has always kept the techniques of boneworking a secret, to be taught only with the permission of the relevant authorities. Proving oneself worthy of the knowledge can take years, requiring pre-existing skill in an applicable trade, approval by the city, and then a long period of dedicated training in the craft.

Once, this city was part of the Noiartine Coalition, with its origins as a successful mining outpost leading it to become a prominent centre for metalworkers. That changed during the Calamities, when a section of the city's centre was replaced with a vast, writhing sea monster: the leviathan. The story goes that the city would surely have been doomed if not for the intervention of a figure known only as the Strategist. An unparalleled tactician, they devised a grand plan to kill the beast, then organised the city's people to make it happen. Though they vanished, they live forever in the hearts and minds of all Leviathan's Heart's citizens. It is thanks to them that the city has access to its most valuable resource. In the aftermath, people picked clean the leviathan's carcass, then began to cut and use the bones for repairs. This would be the start of the long tradition of boneworking that earned the city its new name.

Leviathan's Heart runs, at its best, like an ant colony, and it owes much of that to the quality of its leaders. Indeed, though the members of the city's political parties may have wildly different goals, they have frequently cooperated across party lines to make meaningful improvements to infrastructure, security, and more. Recently, one party, the Spine, successfully established a functional courier service across Leviathan's Heart. However, at its worst, the settlement grinds to a screeching halt as competing council members struggle to secure the two-thirds majority of votes they need to pass any changes they wish to make. Responsibility for this issue falls upon the city's large Volhov's Kin population. Having integrated into the city soon after its founding, every member of the Yug kinband possesses the right to vote. Mercenaries at heart, they sell this 'service' to the highest bidder, meaning anyone with the resources can pay them to disproportionately sway a vote. Opinion is divided on whether anything should be done to change this part of the system, but last time someone tried, the kinband voted it down.

There are four major parties vying to shape Leviathan's Heart according to their designs. Each 'arm', as they are called, prioritises a different aspect of civic improvement, believing it to be most pressing for the city to pursue. The arms are as follows: the Skulls, the Fins, the Ribs, and the Spine. The Skulls push for the city to invent new technologies which might benefit its citizens, often in the field of boneworking. The Fins would employ the city's resources in the name of expanding its borders, turning the magic-warped lands and abandoned ruins into inhabitable land that people can use. The Ribs maintain that, rather than spreading itself thin, Leviathan's Heart should consolidate its military power so that none may destroy it. The Spine also looks inwards, but emphasises the development of infrastructure, strengthening the city's resilience to environmental disasters, resource theft, and other similar circumstances. As each arm is similarly popular among the people, their laws and projects tend to pass with similar frequency. Many believe that this balance benefits the city-state more than any one party dominating the rest.

The city's relative prosperity does have its cost. Leviathan's Heart finds itself the target of more attacks than other cities, both from bandits and feral mutants. The arms attribute this to the high quantity of resources within the city, along with its monopoly on leviathan bone, and few are inclined to disagree. Whatever their reasons, no raiders have found success; any who threaten the city find themselves swiftly and mercilessly put to bleached-white blades at the hands of the pale-clad and resolute Scolii. Criminals within the city receive somewhat less final treatment, with punishments varying from mandatory labour to permanent exile. Execution is reserved for those who would betray Leviathan's Heart and its secrets to the unworthy and maleficent.

Another unique feature of Leviathan's Heart citizens is that many possess an aquatic mutation, such as gills, a patch of scales, or small fins. Some of them can even breathe salt water - ironic, considering the city is not on the coast. Outsiders may find this disconcerting, but the city's people know it to be normal, as innocuous as leviathan bone.

## Kurbellum



Settlements have existed on the site of Kurbellum for at least several centuries before the Noiartine Coalition. Not much is remembered about them in the modern day, but one detail has constantly remained in the collective memory of the world - Kurbellum was always a fortified city. Many of the physical fortifications date back to pre-Coalition times; most notably, the city walls and the fortified keep of the city, which would later become the home of the Runecarvers' Guild in Kurbellum. The Guild further enhanced the walls with an intricate runic defensive network that made the city unassailable.

During the Calamities, the runecarvers of Kurbellum famously defied Guild orders to return to Petriokheia, and embarked on their own project. It was they who moved sections of the world itself about, at first depositing fertile jungle land from far away to stave off famine, but later wreaking havoc as they lost control, eventually replacing a large chunk of the city, including their own keep, with a jungle full of ferocious creatures.

In the run up to this, with its state of the art runic defences, well trained Scolii, and plentiful food, Kurbellum saw an influx of refugees. The rulers of the city were soon 'forced' to shut the gates. Around the same time the centre of the city was lost, the Runic defences of the city began to fail, sometimes crumbling the physical walls they were built on, and the various knights of the city were forced to hold the gaps in the walls against invading Volhov's Kin. But when they were ordered to attack the refugees as well, Knight-Palatine Paulus of the Scolii instead declared martial law. He let the refugees in, seized the food supplies from the city council, and led the defenders against the invaders without and the creatures within. Once the crisis was over, he voluntarily surrendered himself for his crimes and was banished - but to this day, he is remembered as a hero. The clear willingness of the populace to follow his example should it be necessary has reversed multiple unpopular council decisions in the century since, and has kept Kurbellum as a welcoming haven for all refugees.

Today, most of the population of Kurbellum lives in and around the city walls. Even those parts of the city centre not replaced by jungle have mostly been lost to the creatures and monsters from it, for this patch of jungle, along with several outside the walls, has been influenced by some unknown mutative magic that keeps it eternally dangerous.

While most cities would consider this an issue the people of Kurbellum have long since learned to live with it. The Guild of Scavengers was founded here, and looting the ruins has become a significant part of the economy. Mutated plants are a vital food source, and as a result, mutants are much more accepted and common in Kurbellum than in most places, to the point that members of the Wake of the Butterfly are among those accepted into the city.

## New Haven



New Haven, unlike most of the surviving settlements in the Noiartine Bay, is not a singular settlement. The fertile land known as the Valleys was home to multiple cities, none of which survived the Calamities. The refugees from these cities founded multiple smaller settlements, and joined with the pre-existing farming villages to form New Haven. To this day they produce a disproportionate quantity of the crops for the surviving world.

While most of the farming was done by the Blessed during the Coalition, there were still people who had a role in farming in these villages- either as supervisors, or tending to their own small personal gardens while the Blessed took care of the larger fields. So when the Blessed began to fail, the people of these villages were able to take over tending the crops while messages were sent to the cities to ask for assistance. But replies from the cities contained only empty platitudes. Soon, they stopped coming altogether.

One by one, the cities fell: Eloivos and Barjaka to attacks by Volhov's Kin, Dellozeh to plague, Majiyah and Sugane to the Deadlands, Ruweiha to a Desolation that poisoned the land around it. And The Chasm... well, nobody knows for certain what happened to The Chasm. Today, all that remains of those cities are ruins and wasteland, populated only by mutated monsters and the odd bandit group.

As the years went by, the villages began to realise that no help was coming, that the cities they were attached to had well and truly fallen, and that the rest of the Coalition had forgotten or abandoned them. People began to venture from the relative safety of their

villages, in an attempt to contact neighbouring ones. Not all of them came back. But many did, and the small communities began to band together and share resources to survive.

For a while, the new coalition of leaders that formed amongst the villages were unofficial. There was no big moment that led to them declaring themselves a power unto themselves- simply years of being ignored and coping on their own. They declared the villages were now the 'city' of New Haven. Though only Leviathan's Heart has recognised them as such, New Haven itself insists to this day that this is a title they have truly earned, and it is a point of pride and contention for its people.

The leaders who declared New Haven a city- originally simply the most organised and charismatic individuals of the various villages who took it upon themselves to take command of their frightened and confused neighbours- became the first leaders of New Haven. Each chose a successor from their village, and formed the New Haven Assembly. New Haven is still led by the Assembly today. They have the odd Scolii, who are still arguing amongst themselves whether they are village Scolii or city Scolii.

The Valleys remain one of the more fertile areas in the Bay, and most surviving cities rely at least partially on food imports from New Haven. On the opposite end of the spectrum, New Haven's rivalry with Eloivos is fierce. New Haveners are, perhaps understandably, rather bitter that a city whose population amounts to one crumbling guild and a handful of retainers retain their official city status, while New Haven, with more land, a larger population and a vital role in keeping the known world fed, is denied this. Reminding a New Havener of this state of affairs is a pretty good way to start a furious argument.

Despite how widespread the population of New Haven is across the Valleys, they remain a tight knit community. There may be near constant debates amongst the villages and members of the Assembly over just what shape this new city will take in the coming years, but most New Haveners are proud of how far they've come and place a great importance on the overall community- though this can result in a bit of an 'us against the world' attitude from some. New Haveners are often stereotyped as the kind of people who will argue vehemently and unrelentingly for years with a neighbour over what the city colours should be, but would defend that same neighbour against bandits in a heartbeat. The stereotype is not entirely inaccurate.

## Galesios

The people of Galesios are now refugees, victims of the most recent Desolation to claim a city. Three years ago, a nearby mountain erupted, spewing rock and lava. Wherever they landed, they animated, and creatures of rock and flame emerged from the craters, killing any survivors they found. As they were pushed back, the defenders made their own reinforcements, creating many Awakened during the battle from their own dead. But when they ran out of Runes of Life, in their desperation they resorted to using others, not knowing what would happen. The resultant beings fought off the monsters, but also turned on their creators. Those that survived were those who fled to the ships, for neither human nor Awakened may return to Galesios now, lest they be killed by the strange beings inhabiting the bodies of their dead kin. Many of these people who had yet to truly find a new home have now come to New Triokh, looking to start anew.

Scattered as they are across the Noiartine Bay, the people of Galesios cling to their culture to keep their people and identity alive. For the last century, the outlook of Galesios has always been that life is hard, and that is why it needs to be celebrated. They are often seen by others as a dour and serious people, except for during their numerous festivals throughout the year, where they go all out. Likewise, their clothing tends towards the practical, but there is always at least one splash of colour or artistic decoration.



The Awakened have always been more numerous and accepted in Galesios than elsewhere, for that is where they were first created. During the collapse of the Coalition, Galesios had isolated itself due to plague, the Scolii of the city having locked the gates and sunk ships to blockade the river. The runecarvers of the city locked themselves away, seeking a cure. When, after the plague eventually ran its course, the survivors dared to enter the Guildhall, they found only bodies, dead from the plague, and notes on how to create the Awakened. As the plague had been partially magical in nature, many of the bodies could be used, and this new influx of people was why the city had enough of a population to sustain itself afterwards. In the century since, the Awakened have always been a core part of Galesios.

Nestled at the foot of the Bulwark Mountains, Galesios used to be a thriving city, exporting large amounts of ore from its mines. When the wind blew from the west, it would sometimes bring volcanic ash that made their farmlands fertile. Once, they had thought this good luck - close enough to the mountains of fire to benefit, far enough away to be safe. Now, the refugees are struggling to make new lives wherever they can. Some have succeeded, but for most, the future is still uncertain.

## Minor Locations

### Eloivos

While Eloivos still retains its title of city, in the present day it has little left that would justify that claim. For one reason or another, attempts to settle within its ruins have met with little success compared to places like Ippios and Kurbellum. It is by no means a worse candidate for such efforts. At least, it wasn't, back when the Calamities were still fresh wounds on history's corpus: in the decades since, more monsters than people have moved into the desolate streets, and the small human outpost near the old city's heart cannot afford to try to drive them out. So, the wreckage lies, awaiting disturbance by those who seek what scraps of history may yet remain untouched below crumbled masonry and bones.

The encampment within Eloivos boasts a population of no more than three-hundred, most of whom are permanent residents. At any given time there might be a dozen or so treasure hunters based there, intending to find plunder in the past. Half of them might survive long enough to realise that no fabulous treasures await them out in the ruins, and resolve to leave, but the encampment rarely ever has the supplies to spare for anyone to make the trip to the nearest city, and trading convoys almost never pass through. The only one who makes regular visits is death, keeping accounts, taking its toll to balance out the new surplus.

Plagued by such misery, one might wonder what holds the settlement together. The answer is the Eloivos Poets' Guild, a pompous, eccentric lot who hole themselves up in an astonishingly intact manor they say belonged to their guild back in the Coalition's glory days. Indeed, they claim the mantle of Eloivos' former rulers, determined to 'succeed' them - an absurd fantasy, given the state of things - and everyone knows how futile it is to try to debate them about it. What matters to the encampment's inhabitants is that the Eloivos Poets possess fantastical wealth: they regularly boast of their gold, silver, jewels, art, and even preserved historical records from the Coalition's height. Unfortunately, nobody outside the Guild can access these resources. People have attempted to raid the manor, but have so far failed to get past its surprisingly plentiful runic defences. Until the building is breached, the only way in is to join the Guild.

There is a way to become a Poet: the Guild maintains a tavern called 'Fortune's Rest' to which they invite aspiring artists of their craft to try out for guild membership. They do, however, charge an entry fee few can afford, especially not in Eloivos. Occasionally, someone from the encampment will scrape enough together to enter Fortune's Rest. They almost always leave poorer for it. More often, it is outsiders who are let into the Poets, the Guild understanding that most people in Eloivos have a deep desire to redistribute their wealth. Those few from Eloivos who were accepted never gave anything back to their community and are still held in infamy long after their deaths. So, the people outside remain desperate, ravenous and resentful of the Poets, united against them in spiteful need. Those merchants seeking to benefit from the high prices the Poets will pay for food and other necessities must often defend themselves from this desperate group.

This former city, then, is a site of extremes: extreme suffering contrasted with extreme safety, extreme poverty contrasted with extreme wealth. The majority of its people seek only

to survive its present moment, while its most powerful few obsess over the prestige of the past. Upon only one matter can everyone agree: Eloivos, at present, slumbers, awaiting those with the strength to deliver it from peril and into greatness.

## The Swamp and the Roaming Island

For most of history, the swamp at the northeast of the Noiartine Bay has been uninhabited, save for the occasional hermit. But when the land to the south began to swarm with monsters, many took to boats to escape into the marsh. They learned to distinguish which parts of the lush vegetation were edible, and to catch the fish that dwelled beneath the waters.

For the first few decades, it was but a few people living this way, the refugees from several scattered villages. Then Martahun was struck by a desolation, most of it sliding into the sea, and a great many of the survivors fled into the swamp to evade the monsters of brine and mud that pursued them. The existing swamp folk took them in, and taught them the ways they had learned. Over seventy years on from that event, the swamp folk continue to survive, interacting little with the outside world.

Most of the time, they live on their boats, keeping a nomadic lifestyle, staying on the move to avoid the dangers of the swamp. But each year, when the depth of winter arrives, they will meet at a predetermined island, one of the many hills that emerges from the swamp to create solid land, and here a temporary small town emerges. It is called the Roaming Island, for it is in a different place every year, though in truth it is the people, not the land, that moves.

Throughout the coldest months, the swamp folk exchange news of the outside world, tales of the swamp, and the goods they have foraged. Traditionally, those who have been fortunate, and found much, will donate to those that haven't. In practice, not all do so willingly, but those who can clearly afford to give to those in need and refuse are likely to face an angry mob ready to enforce the custom. For while many outsiders see them as cowards who only run and hide, the swamp folk are willing to defend themselves with violence when need be - there are fewer monsters in the swamp, true, but unnatural aquatic killers stalk the waters, and many a small battle for this land has gone unnoticed by the outside world.

## The Chasm

The Chasm is cursed, as everyone knows. An empty canyon, scorched to the bone and fundament, where nothing living or dead wishes to linger. No crops can grow here, no animal dares to build a den in the ruins, and no mind can rest in this place without feeling the oppressive weight of a great, violent echo.

While the reality of this place has been lost to time, there is a legend of a great act of magical scouring, enacted by the runecarvers as a punishment against an unspeakable transgression. According to the story, the inhabitants of the city no longer bearing a name had rejected their order and teachings, betraying the great sages in their moment of weakness. They chose to reject the chance for survival, the hope others retained by clinging

to rote and careful use of the precious resources left. The legend speaks of the city growing from arrogant to wrathful to, finally, inhumanely cruel. Runecarvers and loyal knights were tormented in gruesome public executions, their bodies displayed in the streets as an act of rebellion and a tribute in a horrifying ritualistic sacrifice. What started as simply an act of hubris reduced the populus to an animalistic state, seeking salvation in every crime against humanity and magic itself. After the numerous envoys sent by the other cities never returned, the runecarvers were forced to act and cauterise the spreading madness at its root. The city and surrounding villages were destroyed in the ensuing Calamity, ensuring that none will dare turn to unspeakable means of survival as long as the sages were present to keep the peace. Wards were placed on the empty Chasm to prevent anyone taking residence and falling prey to its former monstrous influence.

## Factions

### The Guilds

With their knowledge, influence, and wealth, the various guilds of the Noiartine Bay are some of the most influential organisations within the cities. Modelled after the now extinct Guild of Runecarvers, many can trace their origins back almost as far, though none ever approached their power. Since the fall of the Coalition, many have become more fragmented - in some cases, the guild members within each city have become almost separate organisations, only tenuously linked and allied with their fellow guild members elsewhere. Most, however, still largely cooperate, if less closely than before.

The guilds are extremely numerous. Those not listed here can be assumed to be mundane organisations based around professions, for most are like that - the masons, cobblers, wainwrights, etc. The ones below are unusual or notable in some way.

**Guild of Scribes:** Since the Calamities much of what was once known has been lost, and much of what had been recorded has been destroyed, but what recorded knowledge remains is largely in the hands of the Guild of Scribes. The ancient guild was once a relatively minor entity, too closely associated with magic and the written word to be allowed much independence, but without the prestige of the magical guilds. The Scribes were mostly relegated to copying out texts and maintaining the runecarvers' libraries. This obscure but valuable role was completely upturned as the magical guilds were sundered and the great libraries were lost. Left to their own devices the Scribes gathered up what written knowledge remained and dedicated themselves to preserving what was left and recreating what was lost.

The years since the Calamities hit the leadership of the scribes particularly hard, which has resulted in a drastic decentralisation of the organisation. The great intercity conclaves that were common immediately post-Calamity are long passed, replaced by a scattered organisation with every scribe hoarding what secrets they can and sharing them only sparingly. Without organisation and collaboration each scribe is left to compete for the few safe and lucrative roles in the courts and cities, with those too inexperienced forced into a nomadic existence, gathering valuable experience and seeking out stashes of lost knowledge. As a result of this competitive secrecy, much of a scribe's accumulated

knowledge is kept only within their own head, or locked inside encoded journals, the secrets of which are shared only with their apprentices and perhaps a few trusted colleagues. Some, however, seek to reverse this course - New Triokh has recently called a new Conclave, and scribes from across the Bay are venturing there.

The greatest discovery of the Guild since the Calamities has been the newly discovered art of alchemy, the secret of crafting potions that can cause dramatic changes in those that consume them. The origins and techniques of alchemy are known only to the scribes themselves, and not all of them at that, but the efficacy of their potions are now widely known. Alchemists are still rare, even amongst the scribes, but there are enough for most cities to keep a few employed, and others have set up independent shops in many settlements. Other, more adventurous, alchemists can be found on the road, seeking out rare ingredients or field testing their creations.



**Guild of Runesmiths:** The art of making new runes is lost. The art of combining them into magical objects is not, although the secrets to the truly grand creations never left the Runecarvers' Guild proper. With the chaos of the calamities, many secrets were lost, and there are now many Runesmiths who do not pay the guild their dues or who otherwise exist outside its authority. The guild still has power though - they maintain the largest collection of knowledge of the craft, not to mention considerable wealth. Their need for runes is one of the main reasons runes have become the de facto currency for large dealings.

**Guild of Scavengers:** Established since the Calamities, this is the Guild for those who make a living out of hunting through ancient ruins. They were founded in Kurbellum, where most are still based, as they form a major part of the city's income. Given the opportunities presented by Petriokheia, it is no secret that several have set course for New Triokh. Most guild members operate in safer areas when they can, hiring guards if they cannot, but there

are always some who venture into dangerous locations, seeking great wealth in places no others dare tread.

**Guild of Merchants:** Travel may have become more dangerous since the Calamities, but there is always a market for far off goods, and profit to be made from them. Despite the increased risk, merchant vessels still sail the Shallow Sea, and large heavily guarded caravans are the main source of food exported from Hatteshpur and New Haven to many less fertile areas. Politics may make trade between some cities difficult, but the Guild still has enough wealth and influence they can usually go wherever they want, and the merchants have thus unexpectedly found themselves one of the few stabilising influences between Hatteshpur and Ippios. In the latter, they have strong ties to the Green Deme and the Tetrarchs of the Sceptre.

**Guild of Poets:** Prior to the Calamities, Eloivos was a great centre for art and culture. At the time of the invasion and sack of the city by Volhov's kin, the Poets' Guild was politically dominant, and much of its leadership survived in their strongly fortified guildhouse, which still stands today amongst an otherwise ruined city. Any traveller who makes a sufficient donation can visit, and be regaled by their poetry. Those who impress them enough with their own talents may even be invited to stay as a member - a coveted position, as the hoarded wealth of the city's treasury means it is one of the few lives of ease and luxury remaining in the Bay.

**Guild of Shipwrights:** Since the burning of the fleets, this guild is based exclusively in Ippios, producing both the traditional triremes, and the longships of the Ergaliasi. Small boats for fishing and the like are still constructed elsewhere, but these craftsmen are rarely part of the guild.

**Guild of Miners:** They were based mostly in Leviathan's Heart and Galesios, due to the abundance of ore in both locations. With the very recent destruction of Galesios, the guild is in disarray, many of its members seeking employment elsewhere.

**Guild of Morticians:** Once an extremely wealthy and influential guild, the Morticians created the Blessed, the animated dead used for most menial labour during the days of the Coalition, and oversaw most of their work. Since the Calamities, the Guild has only been able to make a very small number of Blessed, and those that exist are slowly deteriorating, both physically and in their ability to follow orders. While they will get the occasional commission from someone wealthy willing to pay exorbitant fees for an animated servant, for the most part all they do now is prepare the dead for burial. The Guild is now a shadow of its former self, but it stubbornly continues on, caring for the dead in overly opulent guildhalls which serve as a constant reminder of the influence their predecessors once had.

### **Collapsed or failed guilds:**

The Guild of Runemages collapsed during the Calamities. Their need to teach the Knightly Orders meant they had no true guild secrets, unlike the other guilds, but they had always been propped up by the Runecarvers' Guild. Now this knowledge is handed down haphazardly, each mage passing on the bits and pieces they know to whoever they wish.

With the increased need for soldiers since the Calamities, many mercenary companies have sprung up, and there have been attempts to form a unified guild. None have succeeded however, in large part due to the fact that many mercenary groups are composed largely of Volhov's kin, who have no cultural tradition of guilds, and thus frequently do not wish to be part of one.

In recent years, there has been a push by New Haven to form a Guild of Farmers, though it is struggling elsewhere, as few other cities recognise New Haven. Traditionally, the vast majority of farm work was done by the Blessed, who were overseen by the Guild of Morticians, and there was thus little need for a dedicated guild. These days, almost all farm labour is done by the living once more, but the demands of the work means few farmers are able or willing to devote time to organisation.

Given the influence of the guilds, the term 'Thieves' Guild' is often used to refer to organised criminal activity. A few groups have even used the term to describe themselves. They are not, however, a recognised guild, and do not act as one.

## The Knightly Orders

The three knightly orders are martial and administrative organisations with a history that goes nearly as far back as that of the Guilds, and who served as both the core of the Noiartine Coalition's military and civil administration. They originally consisted of three orders; the Scolii who are responsible for the administration and defence of the city states; the Tagmata tasked with protecting the roadways and guarding travellers; and the Excubitors, the personal guards of the Runecarvers' Guild. The first two orders managed to survive the Calamities with their powers and social roles intact, albeit rather more complicated, but the Excubitors collapsed alongside the Guild they were created to protect, with some of the survivors forming the Patchwork Knights in response to the Calamities.



## The Scolii

*aka. knights of the watch, knights of the polis*



The largest and most organised of the knightly orders, the order of the Scolii are tasked with the protection and administration of the city states and other settlements. This role includes serving as a city's watch, as the core of its military in times of war, and also in most of the administrative and judicial roles required to keep a city functioning. The one major check on this substantial power within a city is the restriction barring knights from serving in any leadership or governmental roles, at least theoretically keeping a city's civilian government independent of its Scolii.

The Scolii is by far the most hierarchical of the orders, with a consistent organisational structure between cities. The knights of each city are commanded by a single Domestic of the Scolii, who holds full authority and acts as the voice of the order when speaking with other civic bodies. The work of running a city is then divided into a number of Themes, such as architecture, justice, defence or information, each led by a Palatine, e.g. the Palatine of Architecture. Under each Palatine are numerous knights, most of which will hold one or more specialisms, such as Knights-Steward, dealing with provisioning, and Knights-Castellan, who maintain the city's infrastructure. Additionally, a city will frequently send groups of their knights to nearby cities, and receive knights in return, in order to share experience and keep the order united. A typical knight would expect to serve in at least two or three cities over the course of their service.

Ideologically speaking the Scolii are defined by loyalty to the city they are sworn to protect, and officially the wellbeing of the city must always be their highest priority. In practice the situation is rather more complicated, and in cases where the government of a city ends up at odds with the majority of its population the local Scolii can be left in a difficult situation. An additional complication comes from the question of what qualifies as a city, with knights in outlying villages needing to balance the interests of the village with those of the city they answer to, with ambiguous cases like New Haven adding further complexity. Finally, the routine movement of knights from city to city, while vital to keeping the order unified, can leave knights with divided loyalties should a former home end up at odds with their new posting.

The training of a Scolii squire is relatively uniform between cities, with standardised training for administrative work and regular formation drills for those able to fight. Beyond this basic training, however, most knights will be expected to pick up one or more specialist roles, with accompanying honorifics, for example Knights-Judicial specialise in arbitrating legal disputes whilst Knights-Arcanist and Knights-Martial see to the cities' defence. The uniform of the Scolii is traditionally a split or quartered tabard or sash, in the colours of their city, along with the city's badge, though in these more chaotic times it is not uncommon for the uniform to be more informal, though both the city's colours are always a prominent feature.

## Tagmata

(Tàk-Ma-Ta)

*aka. Hedge knights, wandering knights, knights of the road*

The Tagmata are the Knights tasked with protecting the roadways, defending travellers and patrolling the wilderness. This role has stayed consistent in spite of the changes wrought by the Calamities, though the complexity of the task has increased substantially, given the new threats and barriers to travel, and the limited infrastructure available to support them. Beyond patrolling the roads, the Tagmata also maintains numerous lodges along the highways, many of which provide food and shelter to travellers. Their duties also include basic maintenance of the routes they guard, clearing paths and maintaining bridges, as well as upkeeping the runic roadside lights where they still exist.



The organisation of the Tagmata is as straightforward as their assigned role, with the vast majority of the order simply being knights and their squires, with Lodgekeepers and Knight-Captains serving as leadership in their specific fields. Lodgekeepers are the knights tasked with maintaining a particular Tagmata Lodge, which provide shelter for other knights on the road, and within their lodge a keeper has absolute authority, though that authority does not extend outside of their walls. When a company reaches sufficient size that it requires formal leadership they elect a Knight-Captain to command the company. In cases where multiple companies temporarily combine to form a larger force the senior captain takes command of the others.

The ideology of the Tagmata is theoretically very simple, with the order still trying to maintain the core mandate it was given at its creation: protect travellers, maintain the highways and enforce the laws of the road. In practice, however, the practical limitations of the world post-Calamities significantly complicates this picture. To begin with there is simply only so much the order can realistically achieve - they are now far too few in number to upkeep more than a fraction of the roads and lodges they once did, and even those are much more dangerous to traverse. In addition their order traditionally had no way to fund itself, receiving all its resources directly from the city states. With this funding cut off in all but a few areas the Tagmata have been forced to improvise, with many selling food and supplies at their lodges, charging tolls at bridges or simply seeking donations from those who use their roads. Unfortunately this reliance on self-financing has led a number of more isolated bands or lodges into demanding protection money, looting and banditry, and it is now not unheard of for one band of Tagmata to hunt down another for violating their own laws.

The training of squires in the Tagmata was once fairly consistent, mostly being the skills required to traverse the roads, some basic maintenance training, and the martial skills required to keep the peace on them, but since the Calamities their role has diversified and so training varies accordingly. Now the skills imparted on a new squire depend predominantly on the skills and temperament of the knight initiating them, with some still being trained as wandering warriors while others may be trained as healers, cartographers or Lodgekeepers. The uniform of the Tagmata is practical and informal, but they tend to dress in shades of green and brown and all knights wear their insignia, depicting the open road, to identify themselves.

## The Patchwork Knights

*aka. nameless knights, the knights of the Calamities*



The third and smallest of the knightly orders, the Patchwork Knights, dedicate themselves to rebuilding and reforming society in the wake of the Calamities, trying to build a new world from the ashes of the old. Formed by a few surviving members of the Excubitors, the now destroyed guards of the Runecarvers' Guild, the Patchwork Knights renounced their old name and Sigil and set about trying to fix the crisis they believe their former rulers created. Since then the Patchwork Knights have wandered the world, either alone or in small bands, helping settlements rebuild and attempting to understand and overcome the many strange hazards left in the Calamities' wake.

Organisationally the Patchwork Knights are the least structured of the knightly orders, typically acting in small bands or even as individuals. Occasionally a great crisis will require larger numbers of the order to act in concert, but this is only ever a temporary expedient, as such large groups tend to splinter along ideological lines and have significant difficulty keeping themselves supplied. The order also lacks the support from the surviving city states that the other knightly orders enjoy, with their members being frequently unwelcome in major cities, particularly those that envision themselves as the successors to the runecarvers. Smaller settlements on the other hand tend to be much more welcoming, as the knights will frequently assist in times of crisis and the order's accumulated knowledge of threats both magical and mundane are much more valued out in the wilderness.

Ideologically the Patchwork Knights are unavoidably shaped by the calamities they witnessed, and their order's close connection to the runecarvers. In the eyes of the order the Calamities were a direct result of the hubris of the Runecarvers' Guild, whose responses to the early Calamities were both grandiose and catastrophic. As a result, the Patchwork Knights have a determined belief in abandoning what is left of the old world and building anew, though exactly what that means can vary from knight to knight. For many that means creating a new kind of stability after the Calamities; such knights may become protectors of those endangered by their consequences or scholars of the new magical threats. For others the first priority remains removing the threat of the runecarvers' legacy and traditionalist institutions. These knights may work to undermine guild monopolies, delegitimize traditional institutions or foster revolution in the city states. Other knights prioritise the creation of new ways to survive or rebuild and they become advocates of the new and novel, be it technological developments, adaptation to hostile environments, innovative cultural movements or new systems of government.

Training and education varies widely between knights, with a squire's training and the requirements for knighthood being at the discretion of the knight initiating them. As a result Patchwork Knights vary substantially in skills and disposition. Any given knight could be a skilled warrior, an intrepid explorer, a zealous orator or a jack of all trades. However life on the road is dangerous, and Patchwork Knights are seldom welcome in cities, so every knight will have learned to survive under adverse conditions, though the skills they develop may vary. In addition, as they lack the traditional prejudices and face frequent exposure to wild magic, the Patchwork Knights are more likely than most to exhibit mutations and wild magic. Similarly, a group of knights could be made up of diverse specialists drawn together to cover each other's weaknesses or a group with matched skills drawn together by shared interests. The Patchwork Knights are distinctive for their colourful and mismatched attire, with bright patchwork cloaks or tabards being common and serving as a rebellion against traditional knightly attire. In addition knights also bear a plain black or grey badge to represent their renounced heraldry.

## Volhov's Kin



A long time ago, many rival families lived beyond the mountains. Their interactions with the Noiartine coalition began as a series of small raids that graduated to large-scale conflicts known as the Scourings. While these events transpired centuries ago, relationships between the two peoples remained strained. For the most part, however, the families seemed infinitely more interested in besting each other, carving out small victories and elevating themselves in the eyes of venerated Ancestors.

Volhov himself was a respected priest, who had spent most of his known life participating in these struggles alongside others. It is not widely known to those not of the Kindred what prompted the passion that consumed the rest of his days, but he has set out on a holy quest to unite as many families as he could with a single intention: crossing the mountain pass and launching an invasion into the lands of the Noiartine Coalition. These families and their descendants became Volhov's Kin, and their violence has greatly contributed to the great civilisations' eventual collapse.

Initially, Volhov's Kin were universally regarded as nothing but a threat. They were raiders and killers, moving between towns to slaughter knights and runecarvers. This onslaught rapidly depleted both fighting forces and supplies, already diminishing in the Noiartine Coalition, until the spoils became too sparse to sustain the invaders themselves. No conquest lasts forever, and as their momentum stalled Volhov's Kin were left to face the famine and extinction alongside their enemy. Upon Volhov's death the Kindred, cut off from

their home by the suddenly transported glacier, have once again scattered into smaller kinbands in hopes of survival.

To this day Volhov's Kin have not truly assimilated with the descendants of the Noiartine Coalition, nor did their tradition of inflicting violence in the name of their Ancestors truly die. They still value their family, however big, above everything else, and they often prefer roaming the inhospitable wilderness over settling in a single place. Enough time has passed, however, that they have become neighbours rather than foreigners. Many settlements hire them as mercenaries to fight their wars or keep the borders safe, and some Great Cities even have small enclaves of Kindred whose loyalty is conflicted between the traditions of their Ancestors and ties forged in the name of longterm survival.

Culturally, there is a common tendency to take pride in the deeds of both oneself and one's kinband. Many will keep tallies of their own 'victories' - which can range from the martial to the more peaceful, such as crafting something intricate or raising a child. Competitions within a kinband are almost always good-natured. Between kinbands, it varies - some have bitter enmities, but others are very much rivalries between friends. Most marriages are between kinbands after all, so a meeting of kinbands is often a reunion of distant families. As well as joining another kinband for romantic reasons, it is also perfectly acceptable to spend some time, from a few months to even a few years, either travelling with another kinband or even engaging in an entirely separate task. Temporary departures such as this will usually be welcomed back with open arms once they return, though some kinbands will be more disapproving.

## Religions and Philosophies

The Guild of Runecarvers suppressed religion, claiming that humanity had risen above such needs. Since their failure and collapse, however, various religions have flourished. For those seeking such answers, the question is not what exists, but what is divine. In a world filled with magic, even nonbelievers do not usually question that there is something supernatural at the heart of most faiths.

### Layperson's Guide to Religion

Faith in the Noiartine Bay proves difficult to summarise, since many different practices coexist within and without the Cities. Simultaneously, no faith occupies such a large position in the Bay's culture that it would be considered the default for people to hold. As a result, members of different groups have varying levels of knowledge, and divergent opinions, on each religion and philosophy. There is no 'average' perspective. However, a person is unlikely to know much or care deeply for any group they aren't connected to, so the layperson's perspective is one of uninformed indifference.

The most ambivalent perspective - the 'layperson' - is likely a common resident of a Great City with no factional orientation. They would know of the Primordial Churches, and perhaps attend services from time to time, but might not consider the Primordials to be more than ethereal magical beings who sometimes help out their priests - notably excluding the Lightning, which they would know to steer clear of. They would know that Volhov's Kin revere their ancestors, but probably not understand what that means. Their familiarity with the Path of the Butterfly would likely extend no further than a basic understanding that the

philosophy values change in all things, and tales of Callistrate's Emergents mean they would likely regard Butterfly Walkers (or, mutants, as they might call them) with suspicion and worry. They might not know of the Church of Hatteshpa, or only know that it centres miracles and the eponymous God-Queen Hatteshpa in its faith. Lastly, they might never have heard of the Good Host, and, if they have heard anything about the travelling spirit-talkers, may not feel sure about what is fact and what is fiction.

## The Primordial Churches

The Primordials are eternal, intangible beings, who provide wisdom and blessings, especially to those who seek their aid. The Primordial Churches are those who recognise and worship them as gods. The churches are numerous scattered groups, many as small as a single priest and their congregation. They have no central organisation, and are each usually dedicated to a single Primordial, but they cooperate and work together when they can. Laypeople usually attend multiple churches, and even priests of one Primordial are likely to attend services dedicated to the others, for they see the Primordials as their pantheon - though even most of the faithful will look askance at anyone who has joined a church to the Lightning.

There are five Primordials, two pairs and a fifth who stands alone. They each have many names, but are most commonly known as the Wind and the Sky, the Wave and the Shore, and the Lightning. The Wind is the most interested in humanity's personal lives - it embodies the ephemeral moment, the now, and cares about any problem, no matter how small. The Sky, on the other hand, is all encompassing. Its focus is always on the larger picture. Worshippers faced with grand dilemmas that encompass an entire settlement might seek its aid. The Wave flows ever forwards, a constant change and growth. It seeks to aid those of humanity who wish to improve themselves or the world around them. Its partner, the Shore, holds firm and steady. It often provides succour to those seeking to protect and maintain that which they hold dear. Finally, the Lightning, controversially, aids those who would seek power and make the world their own. More detailed information on them can be found in the Primordials section of this guide.

In the century since the Calamities, the churches have become the most widespread religion in the Noiartine Bay, but for several hundred years their worship was banned by the Coalition at the behest of the runecarvers. They claimed that humanity should stand by itself and put no trust in such beings, and this oppression has left a mark on the culture of the churches. For a long time, they were a hidden underground movement, existing mostly in the countryside where it was easier to avoid the law. Now that warnings from the Primordials are the only way to know of a Desolation before it happens, worship has expanded massively, but some traditions have been kept. Believers, and even priests, tend not to openly indicate their faith, preferring symbols and amulets that may be hidden, shown only to the trusted. Services and worship often happen in mundane places, and dedicated buildings are rare. There is a growing movement in some places to change this culture, and to worship more openly, but traditions are slow to change.

How the churches are seen varies considerably from place to place. The two extreme ends of the spectrum are Leviathan's Heart and Ippios. Rejecting, as it does, the ideas of the runecarvers, Leviathan's Heart is home to numerous, openly worshipping churches. All the

Primordials, bar the Lightning, have at least one temple dedicated to them. The temple to the Sky is famous, a vast sprawling edifice and grounds made from both bone and more traditional materials, carved with images and symbols. Ippios, however, still officially bans worship of the Primordials, forcing any faithful to make at least a token effort to keep themselves hidden. In most other cities, the churches are allowed, and worship is becoming quite widespread, though churches to the Lightning are still banned. The only exception to this is Hatteshpur, where all worship is allowed, although belief in anything but their own, entirely unrelated religion is rare.

With each church existing separately, small differences of belief and doctrine are frequent, but churches to the same Primordial tend to have far more in common than apart. Churches to the Sky preach that all of humanity is sacred, and that its followers have a responsibility to ensure all people's safety and wellbeing in this dangerous world. Worshippers, and even priests, of the Sky are the most likely to seek out non-religious positions of power, where they can do their best to fulfil this holy charge. The churches of the Wind, however, teach that the key to life is the personal connections one makes. They emphasise the importance of friendship and family, and do their best to foster a welcoming community where no individual is forgotten. Priests of the Wind often say that no problem is too small to be brought to them, for what is the value of life if it cannot be made happy?

The churches of the Shore are the most traditional, holding fast against the changes of the world. They teach that each person should identify what is important to oneself, and then safeguard it, eventually to be passed on to those who come after you. While all are welcome, the churches of the Shore have become most popular among two groups - warriors who must fight to protect their homes, and scholars who seek to ensure that knowledge is maintained. The churches of the Waves, on the other hand, embrace change. The world is ever shifting, and they believe that humanity should embrace the beauty of this, seeking out new experiences to live life to its fullest, as well as, more practically, to learn and adapt to new situations and dangers. Because of this, it can be hard to describe the traditions of these churches, as most priests will endeavour to alter them continuously. Despite the seeming contradictions, many churches of the Wave and Shore work closely together. The Primordials may be able to fully embody conceptual ideas, but humans are usually somewhere in between, and there is no shame in this.

While technically part of the Primordial Churches, the worshippers of the Lightning are usually seen as separate. For the Lightning advises its followers to seek power, to claim for themselves whatever can be claimed, regardless of the cost to others. Churches to the Lightning have been known to attempt power grabs of organisations and even governments, sometimes openly, at other times from the shadows, though how many such plots have been actually done by them rather than blamed on them is a matter of debate. Many of the other faithful see the Lightning as a cautionary tale, as a dark mirror held up to the other Primordials, and to be avoided where possible. A few believe that taken in balance, it can be seen as a reminder to look after oneself as well as others. But for the most part, the churches to the Lightning keep to themselves, separate from the rest, with their own, much more secretive, practices and beliefs. Part of this secrecy comes from necessity - even to this day, most cities ban Lightning worship, though these days the penalty is usually banishment. During the days of the runecarvers, Lightning worship was punished with death, with no room for clemency or exceptions, in contrast to the other faithful, who could expect

to get away with fines or imprisonment. But this secrecy has earned them a reputation as a scheming, malevolent cult plotting in the shadows - though how accurate this image is is unknown to most in the Bay.

### The Wake of the Butterfly



To walk in the Wake of the Butterfly is to tread towards harmony with chaos; thus are the philosophy's followers termed 'Butterfly Walkers'. The Wake of the Butterfly is a philosophy of mutation acceptance, a way of living which fosters flexibility of mind and spirit, and a community where outcasts may find that which the rest of society denies them. There was no formal establishment of this philosophy, only a coalescence of ideas, gently guided by those who wished for the mutated to live more happily. That said, people generally consider the Wake of the Butterfly to have appeared around half a century ago, though it was far smaller and less culturally impactful then. In the time since its nascence, its followers have refined its beliefs, built travelling communities, and learned the art of influencing mutations.

Butterfly Walkers come in all shapes and sizes – not just because of their mutations, but because they are disparate followers of shared convictions – and there is no telling how much common ground you might find between two of their communities. However, they do share their philosophy's essential principles: embrace uncertainty and shelter the ostracised. These ideas show up in most, if not all, of the ideas of the Wake of the Butterfly, from its foundational tenets to the most nuanced opinions its followers hold. The acceptance of mutation is one such idea. Mutants make up the majority of Butterfly Walkers, as most other schools of thought cast mutants in the roles of monsters and the defiled. It is rare, however, for a refuge to only contain mutated people, as groups of Butterfly Walkers also attract other

outcasts, friends and family of the newly mutated, and those few who started Walking before becoming mutated. Natural magic (which others might call chaos magic) is, according to the Wake, magic's default state, making mutation a natural occurrence rather than an aberrant one. After all, if everything was meant to stay the same, why did the Noiartine Coalition collapse? No, change is the fundamental way of things, and Butterfly Walkers act in accordance with this reality.

As chaos magic shapes mutants, so does the wilderness shape Butterfly Walker settlements. Driven by necessity, Walkers organise themselves to survive in the mercurial lands they traverse. Their settlements are mobile and defensible, defined by the inhabitants' ability to uproot and move faster than whoever or whatever they need to outrun - or chase down. A travelling group draws little attention and its members carry few to no physical possessions, in alignment with their philosophy of change. To value the material traps one's emotions in objects, fixing them in place and thereby inhibiting one's capacity to shift with the world. More pragmatically, settlements without possessions offer no incentive for hostile wanderers to risk attacking them - especially when many in the settlement have claws, or fangs, or talons. Without quality tools or resource stores, a greater burden rests on mutants' personal ingenuity and supernatural abilities for the group to get by, but they manage.

Though the newly-mutated often join groups of Butterfly Walkers because the rest of society pushes them away, it is ideology which bonds these mutants in community. It can take a long time to adopt the thinking of the Wake of the Butterfly, but most learn to accept their mutations and find peace with themselves. Those who Walk together do not perceive themselves as a family, since many were cast out by their birth families, and individuals may leave one group for another if it feels right. Instead, they understand their communities more loosely, in terms of mutual growth and support. A 'refuge' is a common name for a travelling group of mutants for this reason. Individuals give aid as they can and request it as they need to, and in so doing, sustain themselves together in the face of harsh environments and oppressors.

Mutants - and thus, Butterfly Walkers - are widely feared, if not hated, by the inhabitants of the few surviving cities. Manifestations of raw, unravelling magic are seen as omens of peril or, in some cases, as vectors of further corruption. They are tolerated for brief periods of time, but they have few friends amongst those unaffected by mutations due to being seen as a threat or as an ultimate object of condescending pity. The exception is Kurbellum, where a large number of mutants have taken up permanent residence. Kurbellum accepts all refugees, including mutated people, who often find work gathering food from nearby areas thick with natural magic. Since the philosophy appeals to all mutants, a static variant of the Wake of the Butterfly has emerged, and Walkers there often help Kurbellum citizens who become mutated because of the city's proximity to natural magic. Even in Kurbellum, though, people fear stories of Callistrate's Emergents, a secretive and violent mutant cult often associated with the Wake of the Butterfly. Butterfly Walkers openly denounce the activities of Callistrate's Emergents, but the fear of mutation runs rife across the bay, creating fertile ground for suspicion and doubt.

## The Church of Hatteshpa



The Church of Hatteshpa is based in Hatteshpur, the city that God-Queen herself founded. They preach that all may follow in her footsteps - that if one's heart is true, and one proves oneself with mighty deeds, you will attain power, a fragment of godhood. Those who do so are called paladins, and they venture forth from the city to wherever they are needed, spreading the stories and ways of their faith. Any who are truly worthy, it is said, may one day ascend even as she did, but none have yet achieved it.

Not all of the church's followers are warriors - most are people who simply revere the God-Queen and their own heroic ancestors. Those who have achieved great things in any field are remembered by their descendants. This practice has become so common in Hatteshpur that even many of the non-devout keep it as a custom. Most simply keep a shrine in their house, but those who can afford it often have statues carved, many of which are placed around the grand mausoleum of Hatteshpa herself.

Once, before the runecarvers, almost the entire city of Hatteshpur kept the faith. Before she passed, Hatteshpa ensured her church could not be legally persecuted, but centuries after her death, many had turned away. Then the Calamities came, the Coalition collapsed, and Hatteshpur was struck by a Desolation. As military forces struggled to contain the monsters, a great crowd formed at the grand mausoleum to pray for salvation. In front of their eyes, the statues began to move, and the statue of Hatteshpa herself led the honoured ancestors to battle, and to save the city. Twice more, in the century since the Coalition, Hatteshpur was in

similar danger, and both times, the faithful prayed and Hatteshpa answered. The Three Miracles led to a grand revival of the church, and for the first time in centuries, aspirants set themselves on the path of the paladin.

The church ensures the stories of the ancestors are remembered, most importantly that of Hatteshpa herself. According to them, she first appeared as a mighty, though mortal, warrior, who heroically saved all those she found from horrific monsters and evil tyrants. So great was her courage, her might, and her love for her people that she ascended, becoming divine. She led her people through the wilderness to find the river Iteru where she founded her kingdom. There she ruled for centuries, long beyond any mortal lifespan. When the runecarvers arrived, many expected her to fight them, as she had fought many an encroaching force. Instead, she negotiated, allowing the Guild of Runecarvers a place of great power in the city, but enshrining laws to protect her people and her church from potential oppression, and passed away peacefully a few years later, leaving the throne to one of her many descendants.

While Hatteshpa is the only god, there are other figures from these mythic times still revered by the church. The Oracles were a council of wise seers, who counselled Hatteshpa throughout her reign. Several of them are credited with founding the church itself, though whatever gift of foresight they had has not been passed to their successors. While Hatteshpa had many lovers in her centuries of rule, the most beloved was Benerib, known as The Farmer, who became her wife, a peaceful figure who could make plants sprout wherever she walked. To this day, in her honour, the church takes an active role in Hatteshpur's agriculture, acting as support and aid to any farmers that need it.

While they are not revered, The Assassin is also remembered as a cautionary tale. A warrior who fought in the shadows alongside Hatteshpa in her earliest days, having powers of their own, they eventually grew jealous of her, seeking divinity for themselves. They tried to kill her, but were struck down by the God-Queen, their true name removed from all records. The moral the church preaches from this is that power must be earned. All should strive to be as great as they can be, in whichever way fits their talents; one should not see others as rivals in this, but allies whose own successes should be encouraged and celebrated. Those with a true heart and courage will gain power, and perhaps one day, another will prove worthy enough to ascend as Hatteshpa once did.

## The Good Host



Slow, agonising collapse of a civilisation was accompanied by loss on a scale beyond any person's imagination. Communities were devastated, cities and villages were stripped bare by plague and starvation, and often neither time nor resources could be spared on mourning the dead. The Noiartine Coalition was never too precious about corpses- whatever fate awaited the mind of the deceased, their body had a long career of manual labour ahead of it. After its decline the passage of time has left behind only malfunctioning constructs, and the newly dead were no longer a useful aid but a hazardous burden to be disposed of by the living.

It has not come as a great surprise that some people have developed a new attitude towards death. The idea of a "spirit", some true essence encapsulating a person's nature before their passing, rapidly came to existence and solidified in the mind of those struggling to process their own rapidly encroaching mortality. Combined with the cautious re-emergence of organised religion this idea has taken on a more solid form, with its ultimate goal- as well as at least some core tenets- shared amongst the new faithful. There is a Spirit in everyone and everything, a distillation of identity and intention. No Spirit is truly gone forever- they lurk in the ephemeral, often seeking out new, more fitting forms to inhabit. It is the duty of the living to call them, guide them and communicate on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. They often liaise with the lingering ghosts in hopes of freeing them from reliving a single moment.

Adherents of the movement call themselves "The Good Host", with individuals often being referred to as "Guides". The group in its concept is inherently altruistic, centering itself around helping the Spirits with little reward beyond the assurance that the latter have found a fitting form- or, as they put it, a "host". Guides sing to the dead, stalwart in their belief that music has the capacity to transcend whatever veil separates the material from the ephemeral, and claim that they can hear responses echoing back. They have nothing

resembling a true organisation, with every group following a sufficiently charismatic leader whose leadership can be defined by personal gravitas, outstanding capacity for their strange communion or ability to lead others on a journey across the wilderness. The approach of the ever moving Good Host is never secret, as it is said that the world itself can join in their exalted song.

Regardless of their intention, however, the Good Host are often met with suspicion and hostility wherever they go. Besides the movement itself being only five years old and having a religious nature, few inhabitants of the world feel safe around those openly embracing and even revelling in death as a natural step in a Spirit's journey. Many Guides purposefully frame their way of life as a rejection of hierarchical tradition and treat inhabitants of the city-states with what can be described as "good-natured condescension". They are one of the less harmful groups roaming the uninhabited lands, making a point of being welcoming and giving to guests, but there is an infinite number of dark rumours following in the wake of their travels. It is said that the world reshapes itself around the Good Host, imbued with strange power that makes an already dangerous wilderness a deathtrap for anyone but those who know the right song to soothe it. They are accused of being agitators, dangerous lunatics, blasphemers against the natural order of magic or outright killers by the remnants of polite society, so they have never managed to establish anything resembling a true settlement of their own.

## Runes

Runes as objects represent both the physical embodiment of magic and the building blocks from which magical effects can be created. In their physical form a rune is simply a specific design inscribed on a non-living surface and infused with magic by arcane methods that died along with the Guild of Runecarvers. Without those lost methods no new runes can be created, as simply replicating the physical design of a rune is insufficient to create one. The skill of copying a rune's design onto a new surface is still a valuable one, however, as doing so is required to transfer a rune from one location to another, with a commonly known ritual allowing the rune to pass from its current position into a well-copied version of its form. Uninfused copies of a runic form are incredibly rare outside of the immediate process of transferring runes, as such symbols fade unnaturally quickly.

While most of the population are familiar with runes, and may even keep a few as a medium of exchange, they are of very little use without proper training. The most common use of a rune is to incorporate it into the implement of a runemage. Once this is done it is much harder for anyone else to remove it, but it allows the mage to access its power if they have the training to do so. The other main use is in the creation of magical items through runesmithing, which fully incorporates the runes into the resulting items. This makes them very difficult to recover, but creates a stable magical effect that can be used even by the untrained.

While not in use by a rune mage or incorporated into a work of runesmithing, runes are typically stored on purpose-built blanks made of metal, treated wood or stone. Once infused with runes these blanks are easy to transport or exchange, making them ideal for trade.

Other mediums and storage methods are used, though placing a rune on a fragile or perishable substance is generally considered unconscionably reckless.

There is no exhaustive list of runes - the knowledge of many was lost during the Calamities. There are 8 runes which, if not common everywhere, are at least still found widely across the bay, such that those who study such things would be familiar with them - Growth, Force, Restoration, Strength, Clarity, Escalation, Earth, and Life. There are four more that have recently been found frequently in the ruins of Petriokheia, and have thus become common in New Triokh - Resilience, Stasis, Endurance, and Balance. Finally, there is the Rune of Death - the rune as made by the runecarvers may have been lost, but knowledge of it is still widespread as it adorns the faces of ghosts, marking them.

**Rune of Growth**



**Rune of Force**



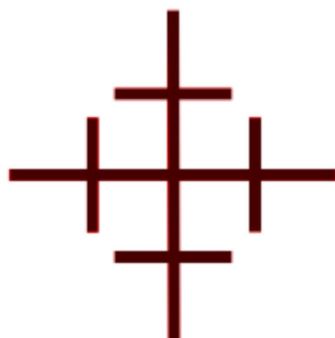
**Rune of Restoration**



**Rune of Strength**



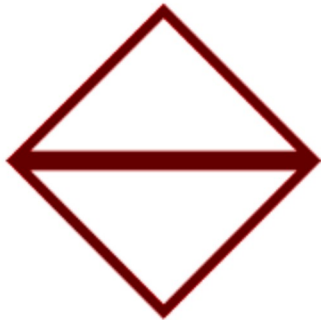
**Rune of Clarity**



**Rune of Escalation**



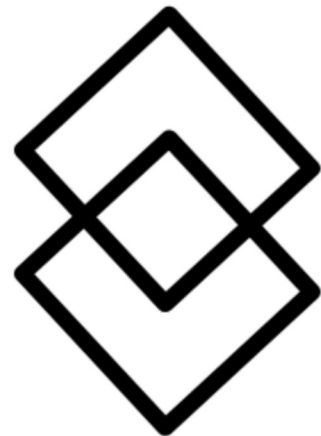
Rune of Earth



Rune of Life



Rune of Resilience



Rune of Stasis



Rune of Endurance



Rune of Balance



Rune of Death



## Magic

At the height of the Noiartine Coalition the arts of magic were the official purview of three guilds, the pre-eminent Guild of Runecarvers and the associated guilds of Runemages and Runesmiths. Each of the guilds had one of three arts of magic, runecarving, runemagic and

runesmithing, as their exclusive domain, at least in theory. In practice, the Guild of Runecarvers was the origin of all three arts, and recruited heavily from the other two guilds, so the exclusivity of the other guilds' secrets was more of a polite fiction than practical reality, something that greatly hampered their ability to survive as institutions post-Calamities. With the runecarvers lost in the Calamities, runemagic and runesmithing are the only traditional magical arts that remain.

The art of runecarving was the art of imbuing magic into base matter to create runes. As the art of creation it was considered the basis of all other magic, as without the runes it created the other two arts would be powerless. The actual method of creating runes was the best kept secret of the Guild of Runecarvers and was lost along with the guild during the Calamities. While numerous attempts have been made to recreate their crafts, none have succeeded in creating a working rune, leaving the world to get by with those stockpiles of runes that survived the Calamities.

The art of runemagic was the most widespread of the magical arts and the guild's membership had a hand in all areas of Noiartine society, as a correctly channelled rune could mend a bone, strengthen an arm or obliterate a foe. While the Runemages' Guild was scattered in the Calamities, and never successfully reformed, the art was far too widespread outside the guild to be lost and its mysteries are still passed down from mage to apprentice scattered all across the known world. Apprentices of the art learn to channel power through individual runes to perform Utterances, the most simple spells, while more advanced practitioners learn to string runes together to create more powerful and complex Phrases or Verses. The collapse of the guild and decreasing supply of runes has left the art in a diminished state, but the utility of runemagic is irreplaceable, leaving its practitioners to make do with the knowledge and runes they can forage from the ruins of their past greatness.

The third and final of the runic arts, runesmithing, was the least influential of the three guilds during the Noiartine Coalition, though its products underpinned much of its greatest work. The art of runesmithing is the art of binding runes into physical objects, allowing a skilled runesmith to create stable magical effects that can be used even by those uninitiated in the art. While the Guild of Runesmiths did survive, it was left in too disordered a state to maintain the secrecy of its arts. This resulted in a significant number of runesmiths operating outside of the guild, particularly amongst the knightly orders and scribes. Despite this blow to their power, the Guild of Runesmiths still carries a lot of prestige as the last surviving magical guild, and still knows a lot of secrets that an independent runesmith might lack. While the number of practising runesmiths is relatively low, their work endures long after they do, so it is common to see the products of their craft in the hands of civic leaders, knights and in the infrastructure of the ancient cities.

Despite the best efforts of the Guild of Runecarvers, even at the height of their power there were rumours of magic that existed outside of the three runic arts. The most widespread of these was amongst the underground cults of the Primordials who defied the laws against worship and claimed to hear the voices of their gods. Meanwhile in the city of Hatteshpur there were reports of miracles that were said to predate the rise of the Guilds, though these were usually thought to be confined to the ancient past. Since the Calamities, the Primordial Churches have grown rapidly, and the reports of their divine revelations have increased

accordingly. Meanwhile the Church of Hatteshpa has grown into a de facto state religion in Hatteshpur, and the reports of miracles by their paladins have only become more frequent and substantiated.

Since the Calamities a plethora of new magical effects and phenomena have been encountered, usually around pockets of residual wild magic. These pockets range from a single affected building to warped areas covering miles and represent a significant natural hazard, though most remain static and are avoided by all sensible folk. Exposure to this wild magic can have strange effects on the body, most commonly in the form of mutations that can radically alter the bodies of those affected. In rare cases an individual exposed to wild magic will absorb the magic into themselves, gaining strange and mysterious powers. Such people are known as chaos mages, and are capable of spells of immense power, though often at cost to themselves. Channelling the raw powers of wild magic is a dangerous task that requires instinct and mental fortitude rather than the intellect and studiousness of rune mages. Most chaos mages are entirely self taught, having no choice but to learn how to control their powers when they developed, lest they be consumed by them - and exposure to large amounts of wild magic rarely leads to learning in a calm and safe environment. Many people are wary of chaos mages, fearing they may bring further wild magic with them, and knowing many are capable of instantly unleashing waves of destructive power.



Wild magic can also make its way into the bodies of the dead creating fickle and dangerous entities, the Accursed, which have sometimes been successfully stabilised to create the sentient magical constructs known as the Awakened. The movement known as the Wake of the Butterfly has also appeared post-Calamities, and they seem to have some unique sway

over the chaotic magic that has mutated them, but they are sufficiently isolated that few know more than that. Much more recently a newer religion known as the Good Host have also emerged with their own miraculous claims, which include communication with the souls of the deceased.

Finally, the Guild of Scribes claims to have created a new magical art named Alchemy in the aftermath of the Calamities. While the art itself is a well kept secret known only to certain specialists within the guild, the products of the art are well known; strange potions that can dramatically alter those who consume them. More recently some scribes have set up alchemists' shops in major cities, while others provide potions to wealthy or powerful patrons and travelling scribes can be persuaded to barter potions for other goods. As a result of this, alchemy is the best known of the non-runic magics to the general population.

## The Primordials

Ask a question of the forest, with will behind your words, and the wind in the trees may speak back to you, or the leaves on the ground may appear as symbols. Focus your mind while inside your house, and you may see letters appear in cracks in your wall, or the ambient noises from the city may come together to form coherent phrases. Anyone, anywhere, may ask a question of the Primordials, but it can take time and familiarity to learn to decipher the response, and to choose which Primordial you speak to, for they are not all alike.

There are five such beings of magic. As far as anyone can tell, they have always existed. Intangible and immaterial, they cannot interact directly with the physical world, and exist either everywhere or nowhere, depending on which scholar you ask. With one notable exception, they are seen as benevolent by most, willing to provide guidance and immortal wisdom to those who seek it. Perhaps most importantly, they often provide warnings ahead of Desolations. These are frequently cryptic, and hard to fully understand, but can often mean the difference between life and death to those who receive them.

Of the five Primordials, there are two pairs, and a fifth who stands alone. They do not have names they give themselves, but as sentient magical forces, they are often given natural names by mortals. They are most commonly referred to as the Wave and the Shore, the Wind and the Sky, and the Lightning, but each has been given many names. The Primordials themselves do not mind what mortals call them - for them, a name is but a tool to make communication easier. Four of the Primordials are in balance, each opposed to and yet intertwined with its partner. Why exactly the fifth is not is much debated by scholars, and the Primordials themselves have never given a clear answer, or at least, not one a mortal would consider clear.

### **The Wave and the Shore / The Moss and the Stone / The Tree and the Earth**

The Waves move ever forward, each slightly different from what came before it. And yet, they are each part of the same sea. The water is constantly shifting and changing, sometimes calm, sometimes raging, but at its core, it keeps its identity. And so it is with the world, and people. The Wave is the Primordial of growth and change, of how one entity can have many forms, many characteristics, over time. People seek the advice of the Wave both

in search of personal growth, and the means to make real change in the world. The Wave is always happy to help, to give advice to improve things whenever it is asked.

As much as some things change, there are others that do not. The sea may crash against it, but the stone endures. The Shore is the Primordial of endurance, of eternity, of the core identity that weathers the world without changing. People seek the advice of the Shore when danger threatens, when things must hold fast in order to survive. The Shore lends its strength in such times, helping keep both people and traditions alive.

As much partners as opposites, the Wave and the Shore are fundamentally linked, both in the world, and in humanity. We each have a core that is us, and yet we are changed throughout our lifetimes. And so are the Wave and the Shore, one providing the unchanging anchor, the other growing, changing with the seasons. While they are frequently at odds, they are also inexorably intertwined, each seeing the value of the other.

### **The Wind and the Sky / The Raindrop and the Storm / The Stream and the Ocean**

The Wind is perhaps the Primordial most easily understandable by mortals, for while it can be anything, it is only ever one thing at a time. It is often seen as the incarnation of the now, the current moment, and it has an undeniable fascination with mortals, finding more meaning in their fleeting lives than in the measureless movements of the world. Those who seek advice from the Wind will find it willing to listen to any problem, especially those most personal to you. Their wisdom will often aid with the problem in front of you, but on its own, can be short-sighted.

The Sky is vast, and encompasses many things. A storm may seem like swirling chaos to a mortal inside it, but is understandable when seen as a whole. While the Wind is anything, the Sky is everything. It encompasses all, and oversees reality. Those who seek advice from the Sky will receive a calm, calculated wisdom. It takes the long view, often even longer than mortal lifespans, and prefers to consider the fate of civilizations rather than the individual. Its advice is always aimed to benefit humanity as a whole, but will sometimes disregard the fate of individuals.

The Wind and the Sky are linked partners, part of each other, bound to each other, and yet opposites at the same time. Many see them as two sides of the same coin, and a few even go so far as to believe them two incarnations of the same being. Their clash is not an enmity as humans would understand it, but the contrast between two opposite parts of reality that need each other.

### **The Lightning / The Earthquake / The Maelstrom**

Sudden, destructive, inexplicable by even the most learned of scholars. And yet, it exists with such force it cannot be ignored. The other Primordials exist in harmony, a linked pair of linked pairs. But the Lightning is aside, its own thing, unapologetic, alone, unafraid. To deal with the Lightning is dangerous, unavoidably so. But it is a force that cannot be ignored. It is willing to aid those who would seek it out, providing guidance to those who would seek power themselves. But it is not, and can never be, safe. It is most commonly sought by the desperate, those willing to take great risks, and the power-hungry.

Even when they disagree, the Primordials, when asked of their brethren, provide reassurances that all are necessary - with one exception. The other Primordials seem confused by the Lightning, though are either unwilling, or unable, to explain why in a way fully understandable by mortals.

Even among those who worship the Primordials, opinion is split - some say that as dangerous as it is, it is as much a part of the world as any of them, while some think mortals should avoid its attention wherever possible. Back when Primordial worship was banned, it was usually punishable only with fines, or in cases of repeated public preaching, temporary imprisonment - but Lightning worship was punished by the Noiartine Coalition with death. While it is no longer outlawed everywhere, worshipping the Lightning, or even dealing with it, will still attract suspicion in most places, and some surviving cities will banish you, ostensibly for everyone's safety. Those who follow the Lightning, however, argue that those in power are simply afraid that someone else will take it from them.

## Known Dangers

Since the Calamities, the world has become a dangerous place. While it is impossible to fully catalogue every threat, there are several that are common enough that many have encountered or heard of them.

**Desolations:** Ever since the Calamities and the collapse of the Coalition, people have feared the ever-present threat of Desolations. Occurring at any time or place, the only potential warnings are messages from the Primordials. The first sign is often a calamitous twist on a natural disaster - a sudden thunderstorm with sparks of fire instead of rain, a flash flood of acidic water that melts flesh from bone, or any number of similar horrors. In the immediate aftermath, monsters appear. Humanoid, made from animated pieces of the surroundings - trees, rocks, twisted wildlife, etc - they move to kill without mercy. With all the ambient wild magic, the bodies of the dead rise up too, joining in mindlessly with the carnage. Those that survive have a high chance of experiencing mutations, or more rarely, an affinity for chaos magic. While the disasters themselves are usually temporary - lasting anywhere from hours to weeks - the monsters and Accursed undead are not, and the wilds are filled with those that have not been slain.

**Accursed:** When there is enough wild magic about, it will fill the bodies of the dead, and cause them to rise up. They mindlessly seek the living to slay, often wielding strange magics of their own. It is these bodies, prior to their animation, that may be used to create the Awakened. But if this is not done, or the body is not destroyed, anyone felled by the Accursed will become one more enemy. These bodies exhibit the same signs of being filled with multicoloured magic as the Awakened, but far less controlled.



**Blessed:** During the Coalition, the honoured dead were animated by Runes, and made to do menial labour so the living would not have to. A century without maintenance means the vast majority no longer function properly. Most are harmless, wandering aimlessly or toiling away at pointless tasks, but occasionally they will turn violent, for reasons entirely unclear to the living, who no longer understand how they work. Traditionally the faces of the Blessed were covered to avoid distress to the living, usually by decorated masks or veils, though it is common for these to have been lost over the years.



**Feral mutants:** When wild magic twists a body, mutation is often the result. Mutants are still people at first, but the more they are exposed to magic, the more twisted they become, and eventually they lose their minds and go feral. Feral mutants attack all those around them, their faculties gone. While uncommon, ways to reverse mutation exist, but no one has ever been brought back from being feral - the only 'cure' is to put them down. The more mutated a person is, the closer they are to going feral, and mutants are thus often treated with fear and hatred.



**Banditry:** While always an issue on the outskirts of the Coalition, the desperate conditions post-Calamities have caused banditry to become much more widespread, albeit less organised. The vast majority of this theft is sporadic and opportunistic, as few trade routes are sufficiently busy to sustain regular predation, but it is far from uncommon for a desperate village to turn to waylaying travellers to survive the winter. In rarer cases dedicated bandit or pirate groups will form, usually near major roads or sea routes, and are typically made up of those exiled from settlements, deserters from defeated armies or the survivors of lost villages. Finally it is not uncommon for bands of Volhov's kin or other mercenary groups to temporarily turn to banditry during periods of unemployment, or as revenge against caravans or settlements that renege on payment.

**Ghosts:** Since the Calamities, the loss of entire communities at once has become depressingly common. Those brave souls who have ventured into these lost places have reported a strange phenomenon - ghosts. Echoes of the dead in their last moments, these spectres appear unable to perceive the living for what they truly are. As ghosts often suffered violent deaths, they may attack any who venture near, treating them as the threat that killed them. There is no known foolproof method, but exorcising a ghost by killing it again often works, though sometimes it will take a few tries. Ghosts may appear like the living at first, but can be recognised by the visible Rune of Death upon them that resembles an X.

**Transported Areas:** A lingering malady of the runecarvers' folly, patches of altered land dot the Noiartine Bay like a pox. Travellers might roam the plains only to discover a withered, isolated rainforest, or meet with a treacherous mire along the coast. Unique dangers call some of these incongruous environments home: large, vicious beasts which are not afraid to prey upon explorers, untrustworthy terrain, poisonous flora, and undoubtedly more which has yet to be documented. Most common are patches of mutated jungle, for the runecarvers wished to use this fertile land to stave off famine. Some of them became infected with some unknown form of magic, and teem with vicious creatures and dangerous plants to this day. The only reason anyone braves these strange places is that some of them hold resources which cannot be found elsewhere. Even then, it is only dedicated groups in need of such items who dare to mount expeditions into transported areas.

**Callistrate's Emergents:** Uniting the dangers of nature and humanity, a cruel cult of mutation works to dominate others with supernatural enhancements. Seven years ago, a group of mutants calling themselves Callistrate's Emergents, led by the eponymous Callistrate, sacked a number of villages and towns near Kurbellum, claiming to have unlocked the secrets of mutant potential and declaring themselves the next step for humanity. Since then, little has been gleaned of their activities, though it is known that the group kidnaps people on the road for reasons that can only be guessed at. Rumours circulate, given life by self-claimed survivors of Emergent attacks, reporting the overwhelming strength Callistrate's cultists bring to bear, fighting with the ferocity of ferals. Their elusivity has made them a recent spectre in the minds of the people across the Bay, the horrors of bedtime stories told to keep children from venturing into the wilds. Nevertheless, knights of all orders know to show no mercy, should they encounter any number of these callous cultists. Though those who walk in the Wake of the Butterfly denounce Callistrate's Emergents for perverting their philosophy, many people have begun to treat the former with greater hostility since the latter's appearance. Efforts continue across

the Bay to learn more about the cult, that it might be stamped out forever, but it proves unsettlingly tenacious; none have ever sighted its leader since he first revealed himself...

**The Borders of the Bay:** Prior to the Calamities, the Noiartine Coalition traded with several more distant civilisations, but contact has been lost. Across the ocean to the east lies the homeland of the Ergaliasi, but any ships who venture beyond the Noiartine Bay do not return. Only the Ergaliasi Remembrancers know for sure what threats lie in the open ocean, though recently, inhuman song has been heard drifting over the water. To the west, beyond the Bulwark Mountains, are the homelands of the ancestors of Volhov's kin. The only overland route was through a pass now blocked by a massive glacier, placed there by the runecarvers during the invasion. To the south lay several civilizations, but all the old trade routes go through what is now known as the Deadlands. Those who venture in report that all plants and animals there are dead. They do not rot, they do not animate. They simply lie there. Until only a few weeks ago, Any who entered the Deadlands risked never returning, though few knew why. Now, life and people can return, and the possibility of settlement and exploration has emerged.

## Economy

Ever since the Calamities, commerce in the Noiartine Bay has been done via bartering. In practice, most people will have long-standing arrangements for food and other regularly needed supplies. In small villages, this will usually be a verbal agreement with neighbours, whereas in the cities, such matters are often handled centrally either by the guilds or the government. Goods are usually exchanged directly for other goods, but frequent or large-scale transactions often include written records of debt or credit. Runes are often used as a pseudo-currency, being valuable and easy to transport, but their value can vary dramatically depending on where you are and how common specific runes are in that location. Even at their lowest, however, a single rune is still enough for at least a week's worth of food and lodging, making them unsuitable for day-to-day business.

People are aware of the concept of currency - the Coalition had Guild Marks, a paper and coin-based system that was backed by the Guild of Runecarvers. They would provide runes and runic artefacts at set exchange rates, but when the guild fell, the currency became worthless. In the century since, some cities' rulers have discussed the creation of their own currency, in an attempt to improve their economy or display how close they are to the lost days of the Coalition, but none have actually reached circulation.

While long-distance trade has drastically reduced since the fall of the Coalition, it does continue. Ippios has an effective monopoly on maritime trade, charging steep tolls on any other merchant ships. Merchant caravans escape this, but must face the dangers of the wilderness - even the most well used roads are not entirely safe. Still, trade continues - Hatteshpur in particular exports large amounts of food via heavily guarded caravan convoys, which return from other cities with metals, textiles, and other valuable goods.

**In play:** The city council of New Triokh is providing the Expeditionary Company with room and board and basic supplies. Player characters are thus assumed to be able to obtain all the day-to-day items they wish. Items of significant value, such as a ship or a building, or items in significant quantities, such as enough weapons and armour to equip a full squad of

soldiers, will need to be bartered for by providing runes or something else of value. Seeking out a merchant willing to make such a trade would usually require a Major Action in Downtime.

## Technology

Most crafts, be they magical or mundane, are still dominated by the system of guilds, in which craftspeople learn trades in an apprenticeship under a guild member. Many of the techniques of any given trade are kept as trade secrets known only to guild members and their apprentices. As such most artisanal production is on the scale of the individual or the workshop, with no mass production. The same is true of written works, with all books having to be written by hand, so while paper is readily available the process of getting a scribe to produce a full book leaves them as a scarce luxury. Since the Calamities, the monopolies held by the guilds have become a lot less absolute, so a lot of traditional guild work is now done by untrained workers or those who acquired their skills unofficially, though such items may be viewed as of lesser or more dubious quality.

The most profound impact of magic on the technology level are the results of runesmithing, which can produce stable magical effects that do not require a mage to operate them. The products of their art are most commonly seen in city infrastructure, where large and unwieldy creations can be easily accommodated. Common uses include irrigation and water purification, meaning that most settlements have reliable access to safe water, as well as runic lighting, heating and cooling used in some areas. Some important civic buildings also have runic reinforcement, which helped them survive the Calamities, and city walls and other fortifications frequently have additional defences. Some smaller elements of the runesmith's art have made their way into the home. Most families have one or two runic lights, though post-Calamities many now use scavenged streetlights. Runic stoves, which unfailingly maintain a constant temperature, are frequently family heirlooms.

Agricultural development is extremely limited. Before the Calamities almost all food production came from large-scale farms worked by the Blessed, and their output has proved all but impossible to replace. Presently the most common form of agriculture is scattered subsistence farms worked by individuals, families or small groups. Most city states have some amount of larger scale farming to supply the city, typically worked by wage labourers and the few remaining Blessed. Crop yields are notably poor in most of the known world and crops are chosen largely based on what is available locally, with techniques more complex than basic crop rotation being unknown. The diet of most of the population is supplemented by hunting, fishing and foraging but it is a struggle for most settlements to feed their population, despite that population being vastly reduced.

Both travel and communication have been severely limited in the aftermath of the Calamities, with new dangers accompanying transport on both land and sea, and much of the pre-Calamities communications infrastructure in ruins. On land the most common form of transportation, besides walking, is the oxcart. These usually travel in large caravan trains for protection. Horses, donkeys and mules are also sometimes used as beasts of burden but no horse breeds exist large enough to carry an adult long distances. Before the Calamities horse-drawn chariots were used occasionally but declining road maintenance no longer allows for widespread use. For nautical voyages most traders use square-sailed galleys,

biremes and triremes, powered by decks of oars, with the larger vessels being seen only in the Ippian navy. In recent years the smaller, triangle-sailed Ergaliasi longships have become a more and more common sight. For short-distance communication messengers on foot are typically used, and some news can be heard whenever travellers pass through a settlement. For more critical information the cities still maintain some infrastructure for runic projection, allowing a few civic dignitaries to visit other cities remotely to share news or engage in diplomacy.

Civil defence is still organised in a similar way to before the Calamities, although the average citizen is much better versed in the basics of self defence. Should a settlement need to raise a force they will call upon the local Scolii to form the core of that force, then raise a militia to support them, with local Tagmata and occasionally Patchwork Knights being called upon to bolster these efforts. Most forces will have at least a few runemages for healing, support and covering fire, and some knights may wield runesmithed weapons and armour to supplement their martial capabilities.

## Medicine

Medical practices are heavily affected by the existence of magic. With sufficient preparation, a caster proficient with appropriate runes can treat the vast majority of physical injuries, however complex. Even in the heat of battle, magic can repair a broken bone or knit together a grievous wound. It is a race against time- there is no set threshold for damage to become irreversible but a delay in treatment makes healing magic less effective or, in worst cases, negates it altogether. Surgery is the second best option in the absence of runic healing and is becoming more widespread in the wake of the Noiartine Coalition's collapse, but there is no formal standard of education and the practice relies heavily on an individual's personal experience.

Illness and disease are much more resistant to restorative magic. There is a limited understanding of germ theory- disease is caused by pathogens, but their exact nature and mechanisms of action are not known. Treatment can include preventative measures and relief of symptoms, but weeding out the root cause of any given sickness is an arduous and unreliable task. Chronic illness is known, and cannot be cured through magical means. It is well known that wounds should be sterilised, and that personal hygiene can limit the spread of disease.

Superstition and medicine overlap in several communities. Volhov's Kin share an understanding that a great variety of practices and rituals are curative, although the exact processes differ between families. It is not uncommon to have a heated debate over whether wearing a cilice inside-out can alleviate effects of somnambulism, how long to wear it for or whether one has to sleep on the ground for greatest effect. The Good Host supplement any medical treatment with entreatment of one's Spirit, believing that its strength and attunement to the corporeal form is directly related to that form's health. Healing can interact oddly with mutations, so Butterfly Walkers take great care to catalogue and share relevant information to capitalise on any beneficial side effects and avoid the known pitfalls.

Out of character, topics of illness and injury should always be approached with reasonable caution. We want to create roleplay opportunities around medicine and research but we are

going to do our best to keep the more graphic elements of it opt-in, and encourage you to do the same by being conscious of other people's comfort levels. It is also important to recognise that people may wish to incorporate aspects of their own experience into their character- we are more than happy to put in the work to facilitate that on a personal level, but many of the complex aspects of real world healthcare are beyond the larger scope of the game.

## Law and Order

(OC note- this is not an exhaustive list of every crime it is possible to commit in setting, just an overview. We encourage players to use a 'common sense' approach when it comes to the legalities of their characters' actions. If you have a specific query, please contact the refs.)

In the days of the Noiartine Coalition, the legal system was as thorough and complex as one would expect from a political power near a thousand years old. But as the Calamities mounted in severity, this legal system, like so many things in those days, began to collapse. As the world became more dangerous and survival became harder a period of legal chaos erupted as more and more people were driven to take desperate measures to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. With land itself changing and cities falling seemingly by the day, enforcing even the most basic laws became a struggle.

These days, this survival of the fittest situation is over, and basic order has largely been restored. In any given city in the bay, one can expect law and order to be enforced and crimes to be swiftly punished, though the legal system these days has undergone a 'back to basics' reform out of sheer necessity.

Enforcement of the law is the responsibility of the Scolii in cities or villages, and the Tagmata on the road. Legal disputes and punishments are the final decision of the highest-ranking knight in the area- usually a Domestic or a Lodgekeeper but can it be a lower-ranking knight in a pinch. How much the letter of the law versus the spirit is upheld is down to the knight in question. While biased or corrupt officials are rare, they do exist.

The laws of the Noiartine Bay vary between cities, but the following are considered crimes almost anywhere, with all but the last being illegal in the recently founded settlement of New Triokh:

- Murder
- Theft and Banditry
- Damage to another's property
- Kidnapping and Enslavement
- Reckless Endangerment- the act of directly or indirectly putting another person in danger (potentially fatal or not) without due cause
- Doing the bidding of Lightning- in some places this is enforced as a total ban on any communication with or worship of Lightning. In other's, more leeway is applied and only outright damaging actions in Lightning's name (such as defacing a building) will actually be punished. New Triokh is a notable exception here, having an openly established Church to the Lightning.

Technically, these laws apply just as much on the road. However, the wilderness of the bay is vast and the Tagmata's numbers are finite. It is widely accepted that travelling alone or in too small a group is a very risky business, with bandits and mutant wildlife accepted hazards on the road, and travellers understand that being unlucky enough to go through an unpatrolled area is likely to happen at least once on a long journey.

Common punishments for lawbreakers can include imprisonment (in cities large enough to support prisoners), mandatory labour (e.g. fixing the building you vandalised), fines (any sum from covering what was taken by a thief to larger sums in serious cases) and executions (for more serious crimes such as murder, banditry, and particularly egregious cases of reckless endangerment). This is not an exhaustive list, and the final decision on punishment is down to the city administration, Scolii or Tagmata handling the case.

In smaller settlements, the above list of laws can be pretty much exhaustive when it comes to what will get you charged for a crime. In other, usually larger settlements, additional laws are enforced. Ippios for example has laws on not interfering with Deme business, and Hatteshpur has laws protecting their right to religious worship.

The most recent settlement to bring in extra laws is New Triokh itself, which has declared that all salvage is property of the city until distributed by the proper authorities. The Expeditionary Company and the Scavengers Guild are the two organisations with standing permission to loot the ruins on the council's behalf. New Triokh has also recently passed legislation regulating the usage of a newly rediscovered form of magic called ritualism, including making it illegal for others to interfere with a sanctioned ritual without permission from the relevant authorities.

## Relationships, Sexuality, Gender

The people of the Noiartine Bay engage in all sorts of different relationships. It isn't just romantic relationships that vary (though they do) - parental/guardian relationships, friendships, and more take on unique shapes depending on who is involved. Monogamous romantic relationships are common enough; that said, ideas of exclusivity do not hold any cultural weight. People might feel like their monogamous connection with a partner is unique and thus uniquely meaningful, but it would seem both cruel and strange to assert that monogamous romantic relationships are inherently more meaningful than non-monogamous ones. It is known and accepted for people to live with one partner and see others regularly, to exclusively engage in casual romantic and/or sexual relationships, and to eschew ideas of romance altogether. Among Butterfly Walkers, for example, people's relationships change relatively frequently, as individuals engage with each other in ways that feel right for them at the time.

It takes a village, or, perhaps, a kinband, to raise a child. Nurturing children takes a lot of work and can prove exhausting, so parents will frequently share the effort of childcare with family and friends. This shows up differently among different peoples. In the city-states, where family units are smaller, parents might seek assistance from their friends (who oftentimes live nearby). The bulk of childcare does default to the parents, though, and family is culturally thought of in terms of parentage. Among some nomadic peoples, like Volhov's Kin, your family is much broader, and includes everyone who raises you rather than just your

immediate parents. A kinband is a large group who all consider each other family, regardless of whether they were born into it, married in, or just started travelling with friends they made. Ultimately, family is like an intricate web, delicate and unique - any particular family situation might exist anywhere in the Bay, whichever group one is born into.

This is a dangerous world, and sometimes children lose their parents. Such events necessitate adoption, but no formalised systems of adoption exist. People take in orphaned children on an individual basis, out of compassion. Cases of unwanted children are exceedingly rare, as safe, effective forms of contraception and abortifacients both exist and are readily available, with no stigma around their use.

People need each other to survive in the post-Calamities landscape of the Bay, and so friendships prove essential. Within the city-states, where safety is more (but never completely) assured, social bonds bring life meaning. Outside city walls, such relationships literally bind small communities together. Experience has taught people just how vital their friendships are in these times. As a result, unique platonic and third-kind relationship conventions have emerged, reflecting people's new perspectives on how they relate to each other. Below are some examples, but players are also free to invent and roleplay their own kinds of interpersonal relationships, whether culturally inspired or wholly unique to the individuals.

Some Guides of the Good Host have started referring to beloved companions as 'heart-hosts', referring to an intense emotional connection which can neither be described as romantic nor platonic (the idea of connection on a level where people have meaningfully altered each other's Spirit; some Guides believe that such Spirits will seek their companions after death and may merge into a single entity after they both lose material form). Close friends in the Guild of Scribes, a group known for keeping many secrets, sometimes entrust magical or personal secrets to each other, forging a lifelong connection. Within Noiartine culture, close platonic relationships based on a similarity of personality and interests are sometimes referred to as Marcellian friendships, based on the folk tale of Timaeus and Marcella. The details of the story vary between each telling, but every version agrees that Timaeus was a talented artist who died before he could finish his masterpiece, and his best friend Marcella picked up Timaeus' paintbrush and completed the work with such mastery that none could tell the difference. Marcellian friendships often happen between individuals who have known each other a long time, and friends may refer to each other as their "other self", among other platonic terms of endearment. Culturally, it is generally expected that Marcellian friends may speak on behalf of each other, take on each other's responsibilities, and put each other's affairs in order on the occasion of either one's death.

Sexuality and gender show up in myriad forms across the Bay. There are no social pressures or expectations around these facets of identity. Characters are free to identify however they wish; to that end, all OC language used to describe sexuality and gender can be assumed to exist IC, with the same meanings. The capacity to alter one's physiology to be in line with one's gender is possible via magic, the specifics of which are below the abstraction layer. This is to avoid drawing IC attention to an OC transition. Gendered ideas exist only to the extent that they serve authentic gender expression; certain ways of presenting are associated with masculinity or femininity, to enable people to present in these ways, but nobody in the Bay would prescribe or assume gender identity on the basis of such

things. There are certainly no objects or behaviours arbitrarily associated with particular genders. OC, the refs want to make this game a space for people to explore gender identity and presentation. We will do our utmost to support people in this, and address any problematic behaviours accordingly. This includes maintaining a zero-tolerance policy towards homophobia and transphobia. Details on this can be found in YUSU's [EDI policy](#).

## Ancient History

While few in the present day know any details of events during the Noiartine Coalition's reign, the knowledge is available to any scholars who seek it out.

- |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| About<br>- 300 | Hatteshpa saves her people for the first time, and is crowned God-Queen. Her namesake city, Hatteshpur, is founded.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 0              | The Inscription, the creation of the first rune, and the founding of the Guild of Runecarvers in Petriokheia.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1              | The knightly order of the Excubitors is created, to guard the runecarvers and their secrets.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11             | After demonstrations of the magical benefits of runes, multiple cities sign the Foundational Charter, uniting in the Noiartine Coalition. Petriokheia, Galesios and Eloivos are among the founding members. The terms of the treaty allow the Guild of Runecarvers the right to operate as they please, but the pre-existing city governments remain formally in charge, though bound by Coalition laws.                                                                                         |
| 12             | Several more cities join the Coalition. Kurbellum refuses for months, but after the runecarvers demonstrate their power, both beneficial and destructive, in front of the city walls, the populace riot against their leadership, and the city joins, leaving Hatteshpur as the only major holdout in the Bay.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 39             | The first Benefaction. The dead are made to walk again via the power of runes, and menial labour starts to become a thing of the past.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 45             | Both the Coalition and Hatteshpur begin to build up troops, both sides clearly anticipating war.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 47             | Hatteshpa unexpectedly chooses to peacefully join the Coalition, though she negotiates favourable terms in doing so, notably ensuring her church has the right to continue to worship her.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 49 -<br>53     | The First Scouring. Rather than disband the prepared forces, the Coalition launches a war against the 'western barbarians,' as they call the Covenant of the Faithbound, who have been raiding from the mountains. Despite the inhospitable terrain, runic magic is unmatched, and it is a resounding victory. Rather than pursue beyond the mountains, into the heart of Faithbound territory, Coalition forces return home, knowing that with runecarvers, they can never truly be threatened. |

- 55        The knightly order of the Scolii is founded, as laws and law keeping becomes more unified among the Coalition.
- 56        Hatteshpa resigns as queen, naming one of her descendants as monarch, and puts in place a series of laws to turn Hatteshpur into a constitutional monarchy.
- 61        Hatteshpa passes away peacefully.
- 73        A mining outpost, Sarfud, which will eventually become Leviathan's Heart, is founded.
- 87        The knightly order of the Tagmata is founded, to provide security to the increasingly remote small settlements coming under the Coalition's protection. At the same time, the Guild of Runecarvers begins a project to build a massive road network between cities, using labour from the Blessed on a large scale.
- 117 -     The Second Scouring. Some kinbands have returned to raiding, so a second war is launched. This time, significant amounts of land beyond the mountains are devastated as a message.
- 119
- 123       The Guild of Runecarvers starts to operate in Sarfud and it becomes a city.
- 236 -     The Third Scouring. This time, fortifications are set up on the western edges of the mountains to prevent the Faithbound's return.
- 241
- 289       Explorers travel beyond the sparsely inhabited jungles, marshes, and mountains to the south to find the Southern Kingdoms. A diverse set of polities, trade with them becomes extremely lucrative, as they each compete to outbid each other for access to magic.
- 354       The last of the fortresses in the western mountains is abandoned, after over a century spending significant resources to maintain distant fortifications that haven't had to repel an attack in decades.
- 396 -     The Fourth Scouring. The kinbands of this time are more united and organised, and make use of the abandoned fortifications. After several early losses, a new commander, Octavia of Kurbellum, wins a decisive victory, leading to a subsequent extremely successful political career.
- 401
- 464       Ippios is founded. With trade routes to the Southern Kingdoms well and truly established, and monopolised by powerful merchant companies, there are several ventures to find new lands by maritime exploration, and these islands make a useful staging point.
- 485       The Guild of Runecarvers produces the first ship that moves the water around it, requiring neither oars nor sails. As well as facilitating trade, this increases the speed of maritime exploration. Many uninhabited islands, and a few inhabited ones, are discovered in the following decades, though most have little to offer in trade.

- 516 - The Fifth Scouring. Multiple competing commanders, all seeking the glory and  
517 prestige of a successful victory, leads to a disunited force that is repeatedly  
outmanoeuvred by the so-called 'barbarians.' Due to these issues, few  
runecarvers agree to join, and with limited magic, this becomes the first military  
defeat the Noiartine Coalition has ever had.
- 519 - The Guild of Runecarvers constructs a line of runic obelisks along the Bulwark  
522 Mountains. Once completed, they alter weather patterns, making the mountains  
colder and more snowbound. Over the next few years, the Bulwark Mountains  
become impassable, save for one narrow passage.
- 533 Explorers from Ippios find a route through the frozen northern ocean to the  
homeland of the Covenant of the Faithbound. These distant kinbands have never  
participated in the battles with the Coalition, and are open to trade. Thus begins  
the start of a rocky, unofficial peace between the two, as well as the slow spread  
of runes into Faithbound lands.
- 609 The continent known to the Noiartine as the Land of Cascades, the original  
homeland of the Ergaliasi, is discovered across the ocean to the east. Despite  
initial suspicion from the locals, the offer of runes to trade soon changes things,  
though outsiders are never allowed to travel beyond the coastal cities.
- 610s - Often considered the Golden Age of the Noiartine Coalition. These centuries are  
810s marked by an economy booming through trade, and peace both within and  
without. Some historians argue the Coalition became complacent, pointing to the  
decline in both exploration and new runic creations during this period.
- 824 Multiple merchant corporations have become successful enough to rival city  
states in power, and begin to cause political upheaval and disruption over trade  
tariffs.
- 833 Backed by the Guild of Merchants, several southern cities openly defy Coalition  
rule on economic matters.
- 835 The Foundational Charter of the Noiartine Coalition is rewritten, with power  
becoming more decentralised.
- 861 A radical runecarver, Brutus, attempts a coup in Petriokheia, with the goal of  
bringing the entire Coalition under official Guild rule. They are put to death by  
their own Guild.
- 890s The first of the Calamities begins when crops start to fail, leading to food  
shortages. Over the ensuing years, this becomes worse, with famine becoming  
widespread.

## Rumours, Superstitions and Conspiracies

These are a wide range of rumours, conspiracy theories and folk beliefs that can be encountered all across the Noiartine bay. Your character is welcome to have heard as many or few of these as you wish, though no guarantees are given for the truthfulness of any given claim.

- Occasionally travellers report seeing a floating island high above the Deadlands.
- Some theorise that a secret faction of runecarvers has survived and exists below ground, secretly controlling the city states from behind the scenes. They say that at an unspecified time they will emerge and seize control of the surface with their secret army of Excubitors.
- Some sailors believe that a small island in the Shallow Sea is the shell of a colossal ocean-crossing turtle, explaining its sudden appearance.
- It is rumoured that the remaining Blessed have changed more with age, with some even beginning to speak to each other.
- Travellers near Bulwark Mountains have claimed to see strange and twisted creatures unlike any mutated creatures they'd ever seen.
- Merchants sometimes report seeing phantom villages that appear or disappear overnight, though few claim to have approached one.
- Sailors insist that merfolk dwell in vast cities beneath the shallow sea.
- It is said that strange singing can often be heard in the woods at night, but those who seek its source never return.
- Many believe that Desolations can be divined before their coming, with bone reading and consulting the falling of sand being popular methods.
- Some say that the Kindred actually arrived in the bay fleeing a great darkness that now seeks to cross the mountains.
- In the swampland to the east of the bay it is widely believed that faceless spirits rise from the marshes to prey on the living.
- A minority belief holds that the Calamities were the result of an outside attack on the Noiartine Coalition, though who this force could be is never clear.
- A tradition exists of leaving a rune at the top of a mountain or hill to bring luck at important life events. Although this practice is mostly dead, many an unscrupulous scavenger will routinely check hilltops.
- It is commonly considered bad luck to sell something you received as a gift, or give away something bought without changing it in some way.

- In some villages it is said that on moonless nights the stars may reach down to snatch unwary travellers from the road.
- It is rumoured that the Lightning has created great storm dragons as servants, which fly high above the Bulwark Mountains.
- A few believe that Druse-struck can see glimpses of a person's future when they draw life from them, and so volunteer some of their life in exchange for insights.
- It is believed that one can curse one's enemies from afar by inscribing their name on a lead effigy and throwing it into a runic forge. The guilds of runesmiths and blacksmiths both discourage this practice.
- There are tales of undead Accursed who have kept their intellect, and lead the others against the living.
- Some speak of a great spell that would have prevented the Calamities, but that was thwarted by traitors among the runecarvers before completion.
- There are those who believe that the rulers of Leviathan's Heart have been raising a living leviathan in a vast cavern below the city, to one day unleash upon their enemies.
- In certain circles, people wear many bracelets, armbands, and the like, believing them to fix the flesh's form and prevent mutation.
- Wild rumours abound about the mutant bogeyman Callistrate: that he can alter the form of his mutations at will; that he possesses a runic artefact of great power; that he is a feral who has somehow kept hold of reason; that he was never a human to begin with; that, because of his mutations, he constantly craves human flesh and blood.
- There is a story told by wanderers about a moving Tagmata lodge that appears and disappears all over the Bay.
- Rumour says the Excubitors have continued to survive in secret, and recently revealed themselves to fight the Deadlands.

## Credits

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# LOST FOUNDATIONS

