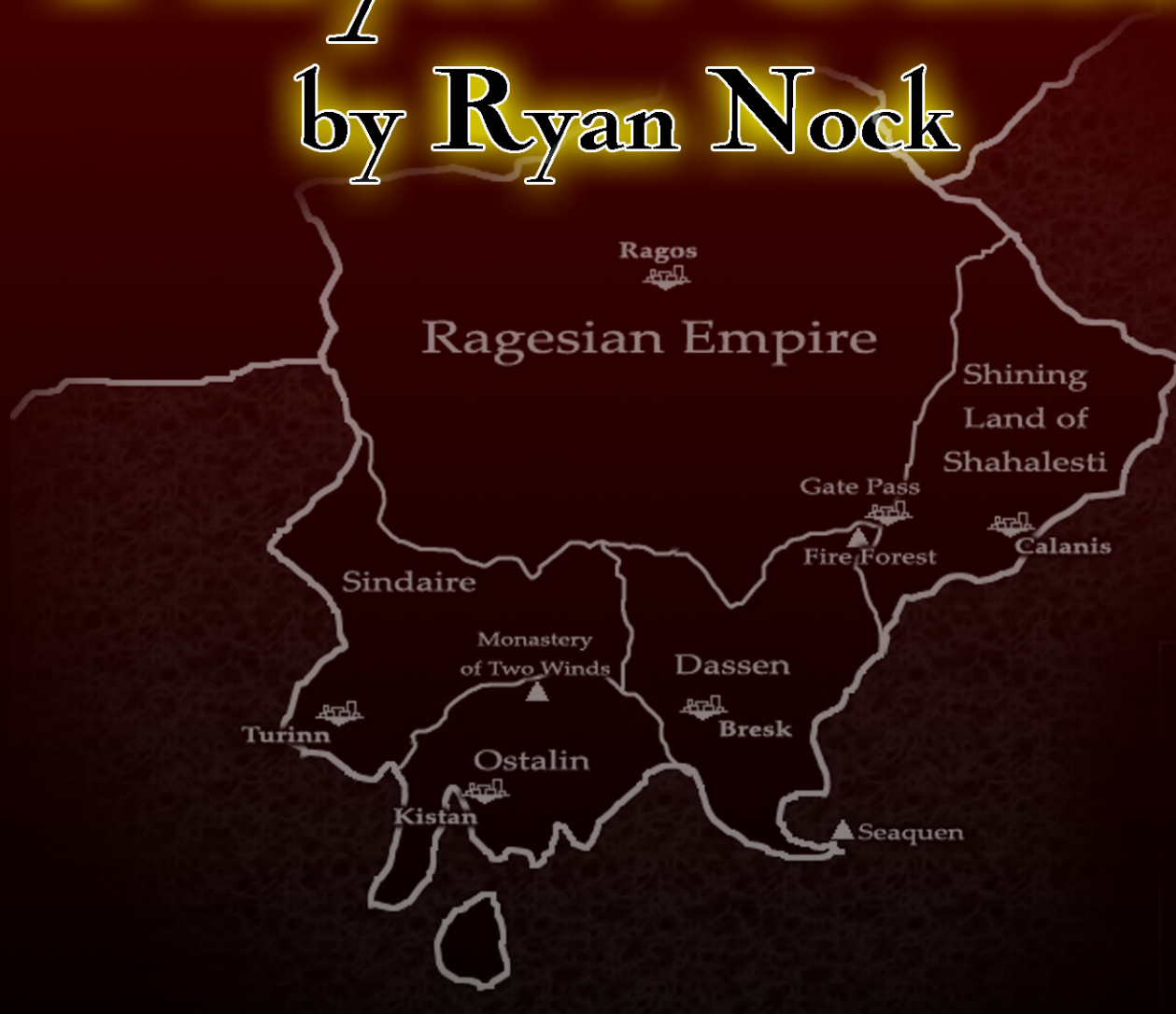


War of the Burning Sky

Player's Guide by Ryan Nock



For all Character Levels



Requires the use of a Roleplaying Game Core Book published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



WAR OF THE BURNING SKY

PLAYER'S GUIDE

BY RYAN NOCK

While once news reached the Free Citystate of Gate Pass by weekly teleporting courier, that channel has gone silent, and now news travels by the old routes of rumor — travelers from the outside world. You might be one of those travelers, or a concerned native of the city, but you have heard the rumors.

Emperor Drakus Coaltongue, ruler of the mighty Ragesian Empire which lies to the west of Gate Pass, has been slain in a distant nation, or so the rumors say. Of course, the rumors once said that Coaltongue was immortal. However, no one doubts the tales of armies mustering in Ragesia, with orders to secure the borders of the empire at this time of weakness and uncertainty. And from Shahalesti, the elvish nation east of Gate Pass, the rumors say its ruler seeks to claim the vulnerable Ragesia for his people.

Gate Pass sits alone in its mountain pass, one of the few safe routes between these two nations — Ragesia and Shahalesti. For weeks people have been saying war would come to Gate Pass, and now the rumors are true.

In *War of the Burning Sky*, you will have the chance to fight in a war of mythic proportions, and determine the fate of many nations in its aftermath. Ever-escalating conflicts, powered by mighty magic and fervent faith, threaten your freedom and lives, and even the world itself.

Driven by the dogs of war, you will head for a distant safe haven, a mages' school named Lyceum, which has sent up a rallying cry for those who wish to resist the warmongers. You will have a chance to form alliances, to build an army, and to uncover the strange secrets that underlie the conflict. As the war reaches a climax, powerful magic will threaten to scorch nations, or sunder them into nothing but nightmares. It will be up to you to bring the war to an end before only embers and ruins remain.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *War of the Burning Sky* campaign saga. While the *Campaign Guide* is intended for the game master and has materials players should not read, this document has nothing that will spoil the game, and is available for all to see. Of course, the new rules material in this Player's Guide is available only at the game master's discretion, and the details of the region and its politics may change based on the setting of your game, so think of everything here as optional.

CONTENT

This document is divided into three parts. The first section briefly details the city of Gate Pass where the campaign begins. The second section provides an overview of the rest of the region, its nations, politics, and history. The third section is the Battlefield Guide, intended for groups keen on new tactical combat options. In each section we present new rules material pertinent to that topic. You can also find all these new rules compiled and available for free download in Rich Text Format at the E.N. Publishing site.

Everything in this book other than the covers, the title and contents page, the illustrations, "EN Publishing," the EN Publishing logo, character and place names, story elements, and the EN Publishing product line title "War of the Burning Sky" is designated Open Game Content.

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SECTION ONE: GATE PASS

The Free Citystate of Gate Pass lies in a rocky mountain pass that runs east to west between Ragesia and Shahalesti. Sheer cliffs mark its northern and southern borders, and fortifications built up over centuries have made the city highly defensible, allowing it to avoid being annexed by either of the nations that surround it. These same fortifications, unfortunately, make it difficult for anyone to sneak out of the city without going through any of the numerous gates that give the city its name.

Gate Pass (Large City): Conventional; AL NG; Population 17,000; 40,000 gp limit; Assets 34,000,000 gp; Mixed (57% human, 13% orc, 10% elf, 6% half-orc, 5% half-elf, 5% gnome, 3% dwarf, 1% other).

Though the city's borders to north and south are tightly limited — less than a mile wide at the widest point — the mountain pass is nearly twenty miles long, giving the city a lot of room to grow eastward and westward. The older districts of the city lie in the center of the pass, with different eras of development sprawling out gradually in both directions. Additionally, various small farms and ranches dot the mountains around the city proper, though these people are generally hostile to foreigners and relatively well-armed. Gate Pass has only been conquered once, and its citizens managed to drive out the invaders and regain their freedom, so many of the farmers and ranchers view themselves as the first line of defense for their city.

TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

The city's architecture tends to multistory buildings with bridges between roofs, creating thousands of "gateways" along roads and alleys. Even in poorer districts, buildings are usually at least two stories tall. Many merchants, made wealthy from the traffic that passes through the city, own vast ranges of adjacent buildings, all of them connected with high bridges. An expression of the city — "a coin for every gate" — both refers to the wealth of the city, and serves as a warning to visitors to avoid poorer areas where buildings lie unconnected.

A broad, twenty-foot wide thoroughfare called

the Emelk Way runs the length of the city, interrupted only by the district walls every half mile or so. The city's natural landscape rises in the center to a broad hill called Summer's Bluff. In addition to being home to dozens of gated estates for the city's politicians and rich merchants, Summer's Bluff is the site of the city's grand square, where various annual holidays are celebrated. The grand square can easily hold several thousand people, and it is dotted with dozens of small groves, statues, and ornamental gate arches, with staircases people can climb to get a better view. In the center of the grand square is a high stone dais, its surface carved in a massive relief that depicts several local legends.

The rest of the city consists of various districts of skilled workers, common housing, warehouses and businesses, and slums. Each district has representation in the city government. By city ordinance, every fourth district must contain a park at least a quarter mile to a side, though entrance to these typically requires payment of a few coppers.

The city grew outward from its central districts, with a new district and new outer wall springing up every decade or so. Because of this, it is possible to see the changing styles of construction and defense over the centuries of the city's existence, like reading the rings of a tree. In older districts, built before the development of the city's underground sewer system, countless reservoirs and aqueducts rise above the rooftops, designed to catch rainwater and direct sewage to dumps outside the city. The current sewers flow into an underground river before being swept into endless, uncharted caves.

In the past few decades, clerics have blessed the gates of new districts in expensive rituals, and a tradition has developed for respected citizens to be buried in the sanctified ground near the gate of their district. Most graveyards, however, lie outside the city, either fenced in atop hills, or in gated crypts.

DISTRICTS, WALLS, AND GATES

The city is segmented into dozens of districts, each about a half-mile in length, separated by 30-

foot-high walls (Climb DC 20) that stretch from north to south, 6 feet thick at the top. The tops of the walls sport metal grates sticking out sideways 5 feet in each direction, making it difficult (Climb DC 25) to make it over them. City ordinance forbids any rooftop within 10 feet of a wall, though the city has a few stories about industrious thieves using massive ladders to traverse the city for twilight heists carried out in the wealthier districts.

In a few districts are found smaller walled areas populated predominantly by a single race. Most common of these ghettos are those of the elves, who tend to shun outsiders. Elvish ghettos are renowned for having no visible entrances through their walls — all the doors are secret, which elves can intuitively notice.

Each district wall has a gate, a pair of reinforced wooden doors (hardness 8; hp 45; Break DC 35) each 20 feet high and 8 feet wide, which remain open during the day but close at sunset. A small steel access door can be opened to allow individuals to pass through at night, but vehicles and beasts of burden are almost never allowed through between sunset and dawn. A small guardhouse, large enough to comfortably hold eight soldiers, overlooks the gate with arrow slits and murder holes. More guards typically watch the ground level by day.

Passing between districts is relatively easy if one takes the main thoroughfare during the day, though guards are known to perform random inspections. The High District, in the center of the city, is much more heavily guarded: typically twice the usual number of guards is on hand, and those guards have orders to randomly inspect someone every few minutes (especially those who look like outsiders).

The northern and southern borders of the city typically have walls built from the natural cliffs, averaging 40 feet tall. Each district on the edge of the city usually has a gate either to the north or south, and a wide swath of clear land on the outer side of the wall makes the approach easy to see. These walls are only a token defense, since a devoted military press could easily overwhelm them, but normally the city relies on the fact that approaching the city through the mountains is slow and treacherous.

THE FESTIVAL OF DREAMS

Though Gate Pass has its share of holidays, the most prominent is the Festival of Dreams, a holy day observed by all of the city's major temples, taking place on New Year's Day. Parades march from either end of the city, stopping at the grand square on Summer's Bluff just before sunset for a ceremony in which the high priests of each of eight different temples "offer up the dreams of the people."

Every citizen is encouraged to write a prayer or hope on a slip of paper and place it in a small clay urn, which the city produces by the thousands every year. People deliver their urns to Summer's Bluff in the days leading up to the festival, and on the holiday itself, each high priest chooses one from amid the thousands. Each breaks open his or her urn and reads the prayer held within, then pledges to fulfill that dream if possible during the next year. Selfish requests are frowned upon, and often the city takes great glee in perverting the words of selfish prayers, fulfilling the adage "be careful what you wish for."

The rest of the urns are left in the center of the square, and citizens are encouraged to pick one up and try to fulfill someone else's wish. The morning after the festival, those left unopened are carted en masse to the countless small caves that dot the cliffs around the city, where they are buried. Many folk tales involve stories of these buried dreams coming to life and bringing good fortune, though most adults of the city just view these as merely superstition.

Only a handful of districts have gates that lead to actual roads, and most of these are used for deliveries by farmers and miners. Each day groups of Gate Pass soldiers patrol the northern and southern borders, looking for signs of illegal passage and occasionally apprehending criminals who try to hide in the craggy hills.

Most traffic passes through the easternmost and westernmost districts, which have major gates that lead out of the city to Shahalesti and Ragesia re-

spectively. These gates are much more heavily guarded: the exits have two sets of doors with a wide kill zone between them, and city taxes pay for a variety of magical defenses on the gates.

CITY HISTORY AND MYTHS

Gate Pass has the distinction of being the only city to successfully drive out occupation by the Ragesian Empire. Forty years ago, Emperor Coaltongue defeated the city's army, set up a military government, and erected a 90-foot-tall statue of himself in the grand square on Summer's Bluff before moving on to his next conquest. For two years, citizens waged an insurgency against the occupying army, until finally Coaltongue decided the city wasn't worth the loss of men.

Shahalesti and Ragesia, once allies, were approaching open war, and Coaltongue declared that he would withdraw from Gate Pass if the Lord of Shahalesti agreed to leave the city as a neutral buffer between their two nations. The elves agreed, the city celebrated its victory, and trade between the two nations began to flow.

The city still sports numerous indications of the occupation, and many citizens purchase busts or paintings of the aged emperor, as if both to mock the Ragesians for their failure and to respect Coaltongue's wisdom in deciding to leave their city alone. Even the emperor's statue remains; it is decorated and painted gaudily on various holidays.

Because of his name, Drakus Coaltongue is often associated with a myth that is native to Gate Pass and Ragesia, that of the Dragon and the Eagle. A series of myths tell of an ancient time when the lands that are now Ragesia and its neighbors were the domain of four elemental spirits — the Tidereaver Kraken, the Worldshaper Worm, the Flamebringer Dragon, and the Stormchaser Eagle, and these four beings are common motifs in the art and architecture of Gate Pass (as well as in Ragesia).

FAMOUS MYTHS

"The Wavering Maiden" tells of how the Tidereaver Kraken sought to explore the land by making a human body for itself out of the surface of the seas. In the form of a beautiful young woman with rolling black hair, the Kraken explored the world. However, because the tide is not constant, sometimes her fake form would pull away, and the Kraken would be forced to spend an evening in a lake or river in its true form. The myth is a series of comic events based around numerous suitors who fall in love with the Kraken in its woman form, and who often seek to destroy it in its Kraken form.

"The Trilling Stone" tells of how the Worldshaper Worm sought to prove its superiority to the Stormchaser Eagle by creating a song more powerful than the Eagle's thunder. The myth explains the various monsters who live in the depths of the world, saying that they were lured by the Worm's eerie, whistling song, only to be trapped when the arrogant Worm decided to sing even louder, causing an earthquake. This, it is said, is why the bodies of the dead are filled with worms when they are found in the ground.

"The Aquiline Heart" is a morality tale about the dangers of both pride and power. The Flamebringer Dragon had never, after many years of chase, been able to catch the Stormseeker Eagle, so it preyed instead on the Eagle's pride, bragging that the Eagle was too weak and cowardly to ever chase the Dragon. The angered Eagle pursued the Dragon, and did not realize until too late that it had been tricked into flying down a tunnel into the depths of the world, where the Eagle did not have enough room to maneuver.

The Dragon bit the Eagle's throat and began to drink its blood for its power, when the Worldshaper Worm came upon the scene. The Worm was blind, but the Dragon knew that it could feel the beating hearts of both the Dragon and the Eagle. To avoid its treachery being discovered, the Dragon tore out the Eagle's still-beating heart and hid it some place where it would never be tempted to try to get it again. This explains how dragons became the strongest creatures in the world, and teaches that those with too much power risk being turned upon by those around them.

ORGANIZATIONS AND POWER GROUPS

City Council

The government of Gate Pass is a council of representatives from each of the districts, with a city governor chosen every ten years. Many different groups hold sway with the government, ranging from citizen groups to wealthy merchants to religious and military groups.

One of the more colorful characters in the council is Erdan Menash, a former merchant and tailor who used to sell well-crafted but horribly unfashionable gear to adventurers, with the goal of making sure everyone knew he was the one sponsoring their heroism. His personal manor is painted vivid green, yellow, and purple.

The current governor is Merrick Hurt, a half-orc who has kept relationships with Ragesia warm in the past, though many worry he will be too agreeable to demands by the new ruler of Ragesia. Rumors say that he bitterly loathes elves and has a vast lexicon of insults for them, a vice that relatively few in the city worry about.

The Temples

The religious community of Gate Pass is diverse, owing to the interaction of cultures flowing through the city. Eight major temples represent the religious core of the community, and though each religion has its own interests, they share common ground through the annual Festival of Dreams, during which the temples all briefly work to provide for the greater good. Numerous temples of smaller religions dot the city, and though they lack the same sway as the major eight, they still put a lot of effort into New Year's festivities.

Shakur Biggs, head priest of a temple devoted to the god of revelry, is currently the master of ceremonies for this year's festival. He was apparently planning to head a large musical performance, but his plans have been dampened by the threat of a hostile Ragesia.

The Military

While the Gate Pass military answers to the city council, their opinion carries great weight given how much attention the city pays to its defense. Unlike most militaries, they are not trained for large open field combat, but rather for the defense of the city, taking advantage of enclosed terrain. Commander Harmand Fletcher, a veteran of the rebellion against Ragesia, recently retired from leader of the armed forces, replaced by Brant Sawman, who if anything is almost more gruff and brooding than his predecessor.

A small unit of twenty griffon riders serve to patrol the far reaches of Gate Pass's domain, but otherwise the city has little in the way of a cavalry tradition.

Gabal's School

Gabal, a famed evoker who helped drive the Ragesians out forty years ago, maintains a school of war. This large cluster of squat towers connected by covered bridges and surrounded by a moat and fence is jokingly known as The Castle. Gabal's students — easily identifiable by their red robes — are generally viewed as arrogant and hot-tempered, but their mentor forces them to sell their services for low prices, particularly in matters of defense and construction, and a handful of wizards serve in the city military.

Gabal is said to scorn magic-users who do not study spellbooks for their powers, and has a particular dislike for sorcerers, commonly saying he doesn't trust people who have that much charisma. Charm is a personality flaw Gabal proudly lacks.

Thieves' Guild

Everyone knows that thieves operate in the city, often with the aid of bribed councilmen who turn blind eyes. The thieves tend to prey on wealthy merchants, especially foreigners, and so many commoners view them favorably.

One particularly well-known rogue is a dashing scoundrel named Rantle. He came to fame because of an elaborate confidence game to steal from a female merchant. One night when his scam was near fruition, he was with the merchant when she was attacked by a trio of common thugs who intended to have their way with the woman. Rantle fought them off, then stayed around to protect her while the city guard arrived, even though he knew he would be recognized and arrested. Public support for his heroism got him pardoned, and many people have begun calling for him to join the city council.

Of course, the merchants of the city still don't like being victimized. It is said the clientele of One-to-Go, a tavern in one of Gate Pass's slums, is composed entirely of former thieves who have lost a hand as punishment for stealing.

The Resistance

Devoted to keeping the city of Gate Pass free from the rule of both Ragesia and Shahalesti, the resistance is composed of a huge variety of people from many of countries, since many nations have a vested interest in keeping the current balance of power. Mostly they work to bolster pride among the citizens of Gate Pass, though occasionally a spy is turned over to the authorities by unknown persons, and the resistance is credited with the capture.

Many farmers and ranchers who live in the mountains surrounding the city claim to have spoken to members of the resistance, who encouraged them to be prepared to fight to defend their lands.

RULES MATERIAL

Gate Pass Feats

The following feats are a special game option to reward players who create characters that are invested in the campaign's conflict from the beginning. The first adventure, *The Scouring of Gate Pass*, introduces the player characters to a variety of organizations and affiliations in the city of Gate Pass.

There are six main affiliations your character could be a part of. At the game master's option, if you create a character with one of these affiliations, you gain the associated feat as a bonus, in addition to your normal feats, at 1st level. You may also select one of these feats normally, though the benefit granted is not on par with a standard feat. Remember that access to these feats is wholly at the game master's permission.

- **City Council.** While most of the politicians in Gate Pass wish to surrender to Ragesia, some want to take a stand. A character involved in the government and politics of Gate Pass gains Civic Minded as a bonus feat.
- **The Temples.** The religious community of Gate Pass fears the heretical zealotry of the Ragesian inquisitors. An associate of one of the temples gains Blessed by Dreams as a bonus feat.
- **The Military.** Elements of the Ragesian military are displeased with their orders and their new ruler Leska, while commanders of Gate Pass's military desire reinforcements. A member of either military gains Cavalry Errant as a bonus feat.
- **Gabal's School.** Gabal, a famed evoker, maintains a school of war, and he intends to make a stand against Ragesia. An apprentice of Gabal gains Student of War as a bonus feat.
- **Thieves' Guild.** The guild in Gate Pass is nervous about the prospect of Ragesian martial law. One of their members or agents gains Thieves' Guild Sympathizer as a bonus feat.
- **The Resistance.** A small group of Gate Pass natives are taking up arms to defend their home against both Ragesia and Shahalesti. A member of their group gains Blade of the Resistance as a bonus feat.

Blade of the Resistance [Gate Pass]

Fed up with the oppression of the Ragesians and Shahalesti, you wage a discreet war against them.

Benefit: You gain Sense Motive as a bonus class skill. Additionally, once per encounter you can select an intelligent creature who has dealt damage to you or your allies as your preferred foe. That creature need not have dealt damage to you or your allies during the current encounter; a previous encounter will suffice. Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +2 bonus to weapon or ray damage rolls against your preferred foe.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass resistance.

Blessed by Dreams [Gate Pass]

You have helped the Gate Pass temples to manage the annual Festival of Dreams holiday parade, and last year you were promised good fortune.

Benefit: You gain Knowledge (religion) as a bonus class skill. Additionally, once per day you may reroll a single saving throw made by you or any ally within 30 ft. of you, using the better of the two results.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass temples.

Cavalry Errant [Gate Pass]

You are (or were) a member of Ragesia's or Gate Pass's military, and are trained as a cavalryman.

Benefit: You gain Ride as a bonus class skill. Additionally, you gain the ability to help your mounted allies. Once per round, you can make a Ride check and use your check in place of an ally's if yours is higher. The ally must be within 30 ft. of you.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass military.

Civic Minded [Gate Pass]

You are involved in the politics of Gate Pass, and know your way around the city's laws and government.

Benefit: You gain Diplomacy as a bonus class skill. Additionally, whenever an ally within 30 ft. of you uses the aid another ability, the bonus he provides increases by +1. Normally this will improve the bonus from +2 to +3. Multiple characters with this feat do not improve the bonus further, though other special abilities can.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass City Council.

Student of War [Gate Pass]

You have studied the art of war at Gabal's wizard's school, and have practiced battling many foes at once.

Benefit: You gain Knowledge (history) as a bonus class skill. Additionally, you can strengthen your spells for use in large-scale battles. You can spontaneously modify a spell, which extends its casting time: if the spell's normal casting time is 1 action, casting the modified version is a full-round action; for a spell with a longer casting time, it takes an extra full-round action to cast the modified version. When you do so, if the modified spell affects three or more creatures, increase the spell's save DC by +1.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with Gabal's School in Gate Pass.

Thieves' Guild Sympathizer [Gate Pass]

You have had dealings with the Gate Pass thieves' guild, and you suspect they might owe you a favor, though you know it might not be safe to push your luck.

Benefit: You gain Bluff as bonus class skill. Additionally, your experience with being a lookout grants you an ability to alert your allies just before danger strikes. If you are not surprised at the start of an encounter, your allies receive a second Listen or Spot check to avoid being surprised.

Special: You gain this feat as a bonus feat if your character begins at 1st level affiliated with the Gate Pass thieves' guild.

Spellduelists

The students at Gabal's school in Gate Pass — as well as the mages of Lyceum — practice spelldueling as a way to better their art. The techniques of spelldueling are particularly useful in combat against inquisitors. Additionally, students of these schools may select Ignan as a bonus language.

Alternate Class Feature

Spellduelist

Level: Sorcerer 1, Wizard 1.

Replaces: You do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: You gain Spellduelist (detailed below) as a bonus feat.

New Feat

Spellduelist [General]

You have studied the art of spell dueling, perhaps under the famed evoker Gabal in the small school he maintains in Gate Pass, or at the Lyceum academy in Seaquen.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast spells.

Benefit: You gain Bluff and Sense Motive as bonus class skills. In addition, you know how to convince an onlooker that you're casting a spell when you actually are not. Whenever you cast a spell, you may make a Bluff check, and any opponent who would respond to you casting a spell — such as by attempting to counter it, taking an attack of opportunity, or performing a readied action — makes a Sense Motive check with a DC equal to your Bluff check. If you win the opposed check, you trick your opponent into acting before you actually begin casting. Counterspells are wasted, because they were completed before you began casting; attacks of opportunity that hit you do not force you to make a Concentration check, because the damage was dealt before you began casting; other readied actions are completed before you actually begin casting. If you fail the opposed check, your opponent's action overlaps your spellcasting as normal.

New Spells

Gabal's Superior Missile

Divination/Evocation [Force]

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: See text

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: Up to five creatures, no two of which can be more than 15 ft. apart

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

The archmage Gabal proudly states that this spell is superior to the old standby *magic missile* in urban settings. Though its range is shorter, it can be cast even without line of sight to its targets.

The spell creates two energy darts, plus an additional missile for every two caster levels beyond 3rd, to a maximum of five at 9th level. Each missile strikes its target unerringly, and does 1d4+1 damage. This spell has two modes. The first mode has a casting time of a standard action and is identical to *magic missile* except for its shorter range.

The second mode has a casting time of a full round action. You become aware of every visible creature within range of the spell, and can divide the targets among them, though all targets must be within 15 ft. of each other. You can target creatures that have total cover or total concealment with respect to you, as long the target is not totally concealed and there is a clear route between you and the target. A clear route is one where line of effect can be traced from one square to the next along the route, but the beginning and end of the route do not need line of effect to each other. The total length of this route cannot exceed the spell's range.

For example, you could target a creature inside a room even if there was a wall between you, as long as a door or window was open. Likewise, you could target a creature hiding behind a *fog cloud*, as long as there was a clear route around the fog. However, you could not target a creature totally concealed within the *fog cloud*.

Stand the Heat

Abjuration

Level: Clr 1, Drd 1, Pal 1, Rgr 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 24 hours

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The touched creature and all equipment it carries suffer no harm from being in even extreme heat. It can exist comfortably in temperatures as high as 500 degrees Fahrenheit. This protection is sufficient to endure the oven-like heat of a forest fire, though neither the creature nor its equipment is protected against fire damage.

If the affected creature catches fire, it can put itself out automatically by spending a move action.

Material Component: Ten gold coins which have sat in a fire for at least one hour.



What dramatic twists lay ahead for the heroes of Gate Pass?

— Illustration by J. L. Jones

SECTION TWO: RAGESIA AND SURROUNDING LANDS

Ragesia is the largest nation in the region, and four other nations commonly interact with it. The politics and history of the region are relatively simple, though the recent power vacuum in Ragesia threatens to make things much more complicated.

OVERVIEW

The Ragesian Empire lies in the northwest of the region, spanning several hundred miles north to south and east to west. To the east is the Shining Land of Shahalesti, a tenuous ally with whom relations have frayed of late. To the south lie the Exarchate of Sindaire, the Kingdom of Dassen, and the Khaganhold of Ostalin, three nations which so far have managed to avoid being conquered by Ragesia.

RAGESIA

Capital City – Ragos (Metropolis): Conventional; AL LE; Mixed (56% human, 24% orc, 16% half-orc, 2% elf, 1% half-elf, 1% other).

The Ragesian Empire is based in the capital city of Ragos, located on central lowlands dominated by many lakes. While the core of the empire is populated heavily by orcs and half-orcs, the outer regions have wildly diverse cultures and populations, the result of having once been many separate nations, conquered by sword and torch.

Every region has a large component of orcs in the population, along with heavy military presence to ensure loyalty and peace. Though the people of Ragesia have been conquered, most are content that they live today in relative safety. Given the power of the empire, rebellion just doesn't seem worth it. The majority of the population is still human however, or half-orc, and different ethnic groups remain mostly concentrated in their old homelands, which are often separated by low, long mountain ranges.

The northern reaches are home to people known as the Kelaquois, who live in frigid lands that are frozen for most of the year, where they coexist with frost giants, mastadons, and vast herds of bison. The western plains were once the nation of Latia, its re-

nowned ship-building now benefiting Ragesia and its navy. The southern lands are craggy, with cold rocky deserts dominating what was once Chathus, a land of nomads and traders who nevertheless defended their lands with great vigour, using cavalry and mobility to wage a protracted war, allowing their home to be the last conquered by Ragesia. The central heartlands once belonged to the powerful nation of Morrus, and numerous old castles, forts, and walls dot the landscape, defenses which were easily bypassed with Emperor Coaltongue's Torch.

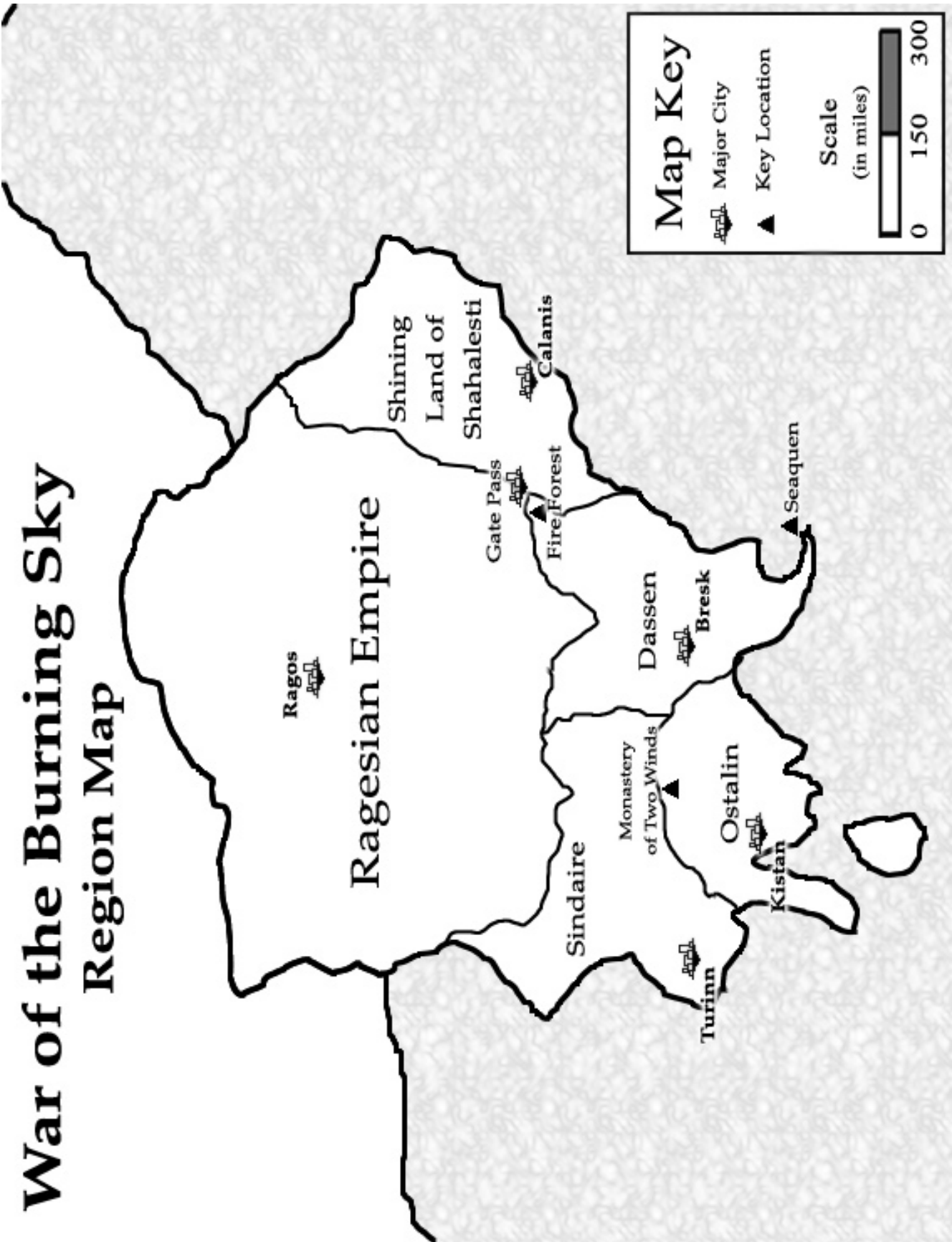
The capital city of Ragos stretches along a vast lake, and the imperial palace lies safely offshore on a fantastically-defended island. At night its walls burn with thousands of torches, making the lake look like it is on fire.

An ocean borders Ragesia to the west, with rocky mountains marking Ragesia's borders with the nations to the south — Sindaire and Dassen. The northern border is a high, frigid mountain range, separating Ragesia from most of the rest of the world. The same mountains curve down to form the eastern border, rising high enough that Ragesia never saw much value in trying to conquer beyond them.

The Inquisitors

Dressed in bear skins, their faces concealed by bear-skull masks, inquisitors are the feared blade of Ragesia, expert in cutting out those who resist its rule. They fervently serve Ragesia's supreme inquisitor, an aged witch named Leska, who until recently was a loyal servant of the emperor. Now Leska desires to rule, and her inquisitors are her greatest weapon.

Mages tell stories of inquisitors — sent to hunt down disloyal mages — completely ignoring powerful spells, or even turning spells against their casters. The few who have been captured by inquisitors and have lived to tell the tale recount being tortured, their wrists slashed by an inquisitor's clawed gauntlets, then being left to a slow, cold death unless they betrayed their allies. Some rumor that inquisitors



EMPEROR DRAKUS COALTONGUE AND THE TORCH OF THE BURNING SKY

The Old Dragon, some called him, since he seemed immortal, and he only grew more cunning and powerful with age.

Decades ago, a warlord arose among the orc tribes of what is now Ragesia. Drakus Coaltongue, half-orc son of a human noblewoman, brought a level of patience and political cunning rarely seen among the savage orcs. He united many tribes, slew a gold dragon and took its child as a prize, and prepared his people for glory.

And then, to everyone's surprise, he did not sweep into human lands for a bloody but ultimately short-lived rampage. Instead, Coaltongue allied with various poor human nations, helping them drive back the predations of the strongest country in the region, Morrus. Coaltongue even gained the aid of the insular elves of Shahalesti, until finally he was ready to lead a coalition army against Morrus. For this great assault, Coaltongue revealed a devastatingly powerful artifact that would lead him to victory, the *Torch of the Burning Sky*.

The power of the *Torch* was to call down fire from the sky, and to carry Coaltongue's army hundreds of miles in an instant, plucking them up with one pillar of flame, and depositing them with another. Coaltongue and his allies easily defeated Morrus, and from the nation's burning remains, Coaltongue created a new kingdom for himself and his orcish followers, Ragesia.

For a time Coaltongue and his allies coexisted in relative peace. Coaltongue was content with his new homeland, and did not want to jeopardize it by reaching too far and falling before the might of many nations, as Morrus had fallen before him.

But slowly, Ragesia expanded its borders. It took years for events to play out, and always in a way that Ragesia's imperialism was justified, either in response to enemy attacks, or to aid another nation that was being threatened. With the benefit of hindsight, many suspect that somehow Coaltongue provoked these conflicts. Finally, when Coaltongue was far older than any half-orc had right to be, all the lands that had once belonged to his allies were his.

Recently, after nearly a decade of inactivity, Coaltongue offered to help the Exarchate of Sindaire put down a rebellion within its borders, and the nation nervously accepted, fearful of being swallowed up by another trick. What Coaltongue was planning may never be known, because a few weeks into his military campaign, something went wrong. Ragesia has not heard from its emperor in over two months, or if they have, they have hidden the news.

Some dread it, and some cautiously hope for it, but it seems the Old Dragon has been slain.

can even devour the souls of magic-users, taking their powers for themselves before raising the slain mage as an undead follower.

Inquisitors possess alternate class abilities. If you are interested in playing an inquisitor or a character who has managed to learn their secret techniques, talk to your game master.

New Item

Shatterspell: Shatterspell is a black compound infused with antimagic that is poured into sealable vials when extremely chilled. As it warms it turns gaseous, so that when the vial is opened or shattered (such as when thrown as a grenade-like weapon) it fills a 5-ft. square with wispy black gas. The character who threw the shatterspell then makes a dispel check (d20+0 against DC 11 + caster level) for each magical effect in that square, as if a targeted *dispel magic* had been cast, though shatterspell has no effect on permanent magic effects or magic items.

If a vial of shatterspell takes any cold damage (such as from a ray of frost), the contents turn fluid again, lasting for one minute. During this time the compound can ingested like a potion, granting the drinker SR 10 for one minute.

A vial of shatterspell costs 50 gp and weighs about a tenth of a pound. The Craft (alchemy) check to create one is DC 25.

New Spell**Cancel**

Abjuration

Level: Brd 2, Clr 2, Drd 3, Pal 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One spellcaster

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *dispel magic*, except that it can only counter spells as they are being cast. Make a dispel check, d20 + caster level (maximum of +10) against DC 11 + caster level of the character whose spell you're trying to counter. If you succeed, the spell is countered.

Since this spell takes a standard action to cast, you must either ready an action to cast it in response to a spell, or must be able to counter spells reactively.

SHAHALESTI

Capital City — Calanis (Large City):

Conventional; AL N; Mixed (45% elf, 35% human, 10% half-elf, 5% halfling, 2% orc, 2% half-orc, 1% other).

On the far side of the mountains that mark Ragesia's eastern border spreads the Shining Land of Shahalesti, ruled by Lord Shaaladel, a middle-aged elf who rose from being a military commander to the nation's ruler during the ascension of the Ragesian Empire. Shahalesti was in danger of being conquered like Ragesia's other neighbors, and Shaaladel's aggressive displays of force — including the conquest and destruction of two nearby elvish lands that were hostile to him — are credited as major reasons why Ragesia has so far not looked east for conquest.

During Ragesia's annexation of its neighbors, Lord Shaaladel lent aid, and he and his trusted aides participated personally in battles at Coaltongue's side. A canny, charismatic commander, Shaaladel is respected even by the Ragesian army, and many expected him to succeed after Coaltongue's death. Rumors say that the elvish lord had been quite displeased that the old half-orc was refusing to die of old age.

Shahalesti is not an entirely elvish nation. The majority of its population is human, but they live as commoners with little real power. The aristocracy is almost exclusively elvish, as well as the higher ranks among the military. Despite a grudging alliance with Ragesia, however, orcs and half-orcs are despised and persecuted, unable to hold any public positions, often horribly exploited as nearly slave labor. A few outposts of wealthy orcs with ties to Ragesia have tried to start their own communities, and this is a steady source of strife.

The capital of Shahalesti, Calanis, is built over a crescent rift carved by a waterfall. The city is forbidden to non-elves except by invitation from one of the royal family which, as of now, consists only of Shaaladel and his daughter Shaloshia.

The Solei Palancis

The Shahalesti military, including its navy, focuses on quality rather than quantity. Most soldiers are equipped with at least minor magic items, and arcane magic in general is key to most of the nation's tactics. Their most famed soldiers are the Solei Palancis, the shining legion, whose swords shed light as bright as the sun.

Alternate Class Feature

Mageknight

Level: Wizard 1.

Replaces: You do not gain Scribe Scroll as a bonus feat. Choose one school of magic other than divination. You lose access to that school. (This is in addition to any schools lost due to wizard specialization).

Benefit: You can ignore the arcane spell failure chance from light armor when casting wizard spells. You may select Celestial as a bonus language.

New Feat

Shining Warrior [General]

You possess the luminous power of the Solei Palancis, the elite fighting force of the Shahalesti army.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3, ability to cast *light* as an arcane spell.

Benefit: If you wield a magical weapon that sheds light (or one glowing because of a spell with the light descriptor), you can choose to intensify that light, increasing it to the strength of a *daylight* spell (60 ft. radius, with shadowy light another 60 ft.) as a standard action once a day, lasting 10 minutes.

Whenever you strike a critical hit with a weapon that is emitting intensified light, the creature struck must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be blinded for 1 round. On a successful save, the creature is merely dazzled for 1 round.

While in an area that is brightly illuminated, you gain a +2 bonus to saves against fear and negative energy effects. You cannot be dazzled or blinded by bright light.

Special: A fighter may select Shining Warrior as a bonus feat.

New Item

Potion Bracer: A potion bracer functions like a highly specialized *handy haversack*, allowing you to store up to 10 potions or similarly-sized items in an extradimensional space. No matter how many items are stored in the bracer, you can retrieve the one you want as a free action. You can only wear one *potion bracer* at a time; wearing a second causes both to cease functioning. Most *potion bracers* are worn on the user's weapon arm so the user doesn't have to drop a weapon to get out a potion. If both hands are full, you can drink directly from the *potion bracer* as a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

Faint conjuration; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, prestidigitation; Price 500 gp; weight 1 lb.

DASSEN

Capital City — Bresk (Small City): Conventional; AL LN; Mixed (65% human, 28% dwarf, 5% orc, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

The Kingdom of Dassen lies to the south of Ragesia, and the southwest of Shahalesti, its borders defined by craggy mountains defended by hundreds of small dwarven strongholds. Dassen's people, a swarthy assortment of humans and dwarves, cherish their land, to the point that superstitious cavalrymen even put dirt in their boots so never have to stop touching the soil of their homeland.

King Steppengard rules a patchwork of eight feudal holdings, many of them controlled by distant relatives with claims to the throne of numbing complexity. To assure that he never has to worry about untangling these claims, Steppengard has had a huge family with eighteen children, all of them legitimate on the word of his oath.

There are no mighty cities in Dassen, only thousands of farms and towns growing out from the nine castles of the king and his dukes. The largest city, Bresk, lies on a major river beside Steppengard's castle, and is a hilly community built both above and below ground.

Lyceum Academy

At the end of a swampy isthmus on Dassen's southern tip, the town of Seaquen is home to a school called Lyceum, devoted to teaching magic of all kinds. Students of Lyceum are encouraged to learn a variety of magical styles, and are trained in spelldueling techniques similar to Gabal's school in Gate Pass. They were relatively unknown in the region until recently, when Simeon, headmaster of the school, sent out a call to all the people in and around Ragesia, asking for them to stand up against the threat posed by the Ragesians and their new leader Leska.

New Spell

Duelist's Etiquette

Abjuration

Level: Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Range: Touch

Area: 30-ft. radius

Duration: One hour

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

When cast, the radius of the spell's area is traced with a faintly glowing line of energy. The spell creates a subtle defensive barrier against magical attacks, causing all damage from spells and summoned creatures in the area of effect to become nonlethal. Whenever a creature enters the warded area, it must consciously choose to accept this restriction, or else the spell ends. If at any time a creature inside the area wishes to no longer abide by the duelist's etiquette, he can spend a full round action to concentrate and end the spell. When the spell ends, all creatures in the area of effect immediately are aware.

This spell is primarily used to ensure that spell duels are not fatal, without forcing mages to hold back their strongest powers.

Focus: A pair of padded sticks.

The Wayfarers

Every port in the region has at one time or another been host to the Wayfarer Theater, a beautifully-decorated ship that is both home and base of operations for the wayfarers. The wayfarers are both master acrobats and skilled mages, prone to dress in elaborate and eclectic costumes cobbled together from dozens of lands.

New Spell

Wayfarer's Step

Conjuration (Teleportation)

Level: Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 full-round action

Range: Touch

Target: Personal

Duration: One minute

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You can teleport 10 ft., plus 5 ft. per two levels. You do not need line of sight to your destination, but you cannot teleport to any location if there is a physical barrier between you and it, so you could not teleport through a window, through prison bars, or past a door, but you could teleport across a chasm, through fog, around a corner, or up a cliff. If your intended destination is occupied, you do not teleport.

SINDAIRE

Capital City — Turinn (Large City): Conventional; AL LN; Isolated (95% human, 3% halfling, 1% orc, 1% other).

The national government of the Exarchate of Sindaire is officially run by a representative from Ragesia, but in practice the Exarch has limited power. The people of Sindaire — mostly humans with some caravans of nomadic gnomes — pay some taxes to Ragesia, but maintain their own armies and laws. They take mild comfort in knowing that, should Ostalin, their neighbors to the south, ever attempt to claim more land, Ragesia will come to their defense.

Recently a vocal group of city mayors in the center of the nation began to protest the taxes to

Ragesia, and refused to pay. Unlike the coastal cities, they little benefited from trade with Ragesian ships, and they called for the removal of the Exarch, a half-orc woman named Horstea. Despite protests from the government ministers, the Exarch sent a plea to Ragesia, and Coaltongue's army repented, traveling by Torch to the central prairies to put down the rebellion.

Sindaire has a long-established druidic tradition, coming from a time when a group of refugees fleeing a catastrophe in what is now Shahalesti settled in Sindaire's warm forests, converting many of the locals through their generosity and their disciplined devotion to nobler ideals. Because lions are revered in these foreigner's culture, lions now fill the role of pets to the aristocracy, and guard dogs for the common folk.

The capital city of Turinn lies on two sides of a long rock spur. The western side has ports on the sea, while the bulk of the city lies safe on the east.

Knights of the Aquiline Cross

The Order of the Aquiline Cross originally emerged in Sindaire a decade ago. Since then, small chapels that teach the order's doctrine of mercy, sacrifice, and a fierce defense of life have sprung up throughout the lands of Ragesia and its neighbors. Knights of this order dress in white and red tabards marked with a cross surrounded by a halo of feathers.

New Feat

Vow of Healing [General]

You have pledged yourself to heal all those in need, friend or foe. For this sacrifice, you are blessed with greater healing power.

Prerequisite: Heal 4 ranks, ability to cast *cure* spells or otherwise magically heal.

Benefit: Once per level per day, as a free action you can release a 10-ft. radius emanation of positive energy. Every living creature in the area immediately heals 1 point of damage, while undead creatures take

1 point of damage. Additionally, you gain one bonus spell slot of your highest spell level, which can only be used for a spell of the healing subschool.

You cannot refuse to heal any injured living creature who asks you for healing, though you are not obligated to provide more than 1 point of healing, and you are not required to heal enemies unless they surrender and you are reasonably sure they cannot betray you. You cannot perform a *coup de grace* on a living creature, nor can you target damage against a dying living foe (you may deal damage to them with area attacks, though you must make a best effort to avoid doing so). If you violate this oath, you lose the benefit of this feat for 24 hours. Repeated or flagrant transgressions can result in permanent loss of this benefit until you receive an *atonement* spell.

OSTALIN

Capital City — Kistan (Small City): Conventional; AL CN; Mixed (85% human, 5% elf, 3% lizardfolk, 3% half-elf, 2% orc, 1% gnome, 1% other).

For many years, the small island people of Ostalin battled among themselves, before finally a warlord conquered his foes and proclaimed himself Khagan. He then led his people to the mainland, conquering lands from Sindaire with the aid of hippogriff aerial archers until he reached a mountain range and felt he had done enough. The Khagan had many children with many wives, but ultimately left his nation to his half-elf son Onamdamin, in whom he saw the same fire of obsession that led him to conquer. The Khagan hoped his son would be the one to topple Coaltongue and rule Ragesia.

The Khaganhold of Ostalin is a violent state, ruled poorly by Khagan Onamdamin, whose passions and desires far outstrip his talents. The capital city of Kistan is relatively small, since the city that used to occupy the land was burned down only a few decades ago by the original Khagan. The nation's diverse landscape is renowned for its beauty, and Sindaire still seeks to reclaim it.

The Monastery of Two Winds

The Monastery of Two Winds lies in the mountains that form the main border between Ostalin and Dassen, near to the large town of Eresh. The monastery teaches two different approaches to harnessing the power of air magic, the gentle west wind style, and the fierce east wind style. Some monks of the two winds feel compelled to travel the world, letting the wind guide their journeys.

Alternate Class Abilities

East Wind Training

Level: Sorcerer 1.

Replaces: You do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: You gain East Wind Style as a bonus feat, detailed below, if you fulfill the prerequisite.

West Wind Training

Level: Cleric 1.

Replaces: You do not gain armor or shield proficiency.

Benefit: You gain West Wind Style as a bonus feat, detailed below, if you fulfill the prerequisite.

New Feats

East Wind Style [General]

You have learned the techniques of the Monastery of Two Winds. Your vicious, tempestuous fighting style makes you a storm upon your foes.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast *shocking grasp* spontaneously.

Benefit: You can multiclass freely between sorcerer and monk. If you have monk levels, you can apply your Charisma modifier instead of your Wisdom modifier to your monk's AC bonus and to the DC of your stunning fist attacks. You cannot cast sorcerer spells with the earth descriptor.

If you have the Stunning Fist feat, whenever you make a stunning fist attack, your unarmed

strike deals +1d6 points of electricity damage. If you possess the ki strike ability, you can expend a use of stunning fist to cast shocking grasp as a swift action (the shocking grasp occurs instead of the normal stunning effect). This does not count against the normal limit of using stunning fist only once a round, so you could choose to expend two stunning fist uses to cast shocking grasp and deliver a powerful stunning strike infused with electricity.

You may select Auran as a bonus language.

West Wind Style [General]

You have learned the techniques of the Monastery of Two Winds. Your graceful, windy fighting style makes you a breeze among your foes.

Prerequisite: Access to the Air clerical domain.

Benefit: You can multiclass freely between cleric and monk. Add *fly* to your cleric spell list as a 3rd-level spell, and *overland flight* as a 5th-level spell. You cannot cast cleric spells with the earth descriptor.

If you have the Stunning Fist feat, you can expend a use of stunning fist or turn undead as a free action to gain a fly speed equal to your land speed (good maneuverability) lasting for one round. If you continue to expend stunning fist or turn undead uses round after round, you do not fall between your turns. If you possess the slow fall ability, you can expend a stunning fist or turn undead use when you fall to take no damage from the fall, and you land safely on your feet.

As you gain levels, you can grant additional creatures the ability to fly. When you use this ability to let yourself fly, you can grant a fly speed to one additional willing creature within 30 ft. for every 5 character levels you possess. Each creature's fly speed is determined by its own land speed. For instance, a monk 2/cleric 8 could use one stunning fist attempt to give a fly speed to himself and two allies.

You may select Auran as a bonus language.

SECTION THREE: BATTLEFIELD GUIDE

The following rules material is designed for more tactically-minded groups, particularly those who want to get involved in large-scale battles.

LEADER FEATS

Leader feats are part of a group that allows any character to bolster his allies in combat similar to the way a bard can. Fighters can select Leader feats with their fighter bonus feats.

Leadership Performance [Leader]

You can inspire the courage of your allies.

Prerequisite: Perform (any) 3 ranks.

Benefit: Perform is a class skill for you, and you gain an ability similar to bardic music. You can use your leadership performance abilities a number of times each day equal to the number of Leader feats you possess. The feat Leadership counts as a Leader feat for this purpose. Unless otherwise noted, abilities granted by Leader feats are extraordinary abilities, and only affect creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or higher who can understand your language. They are not magical effects.

If you spend a minute giving an inspiring speech or other performance to your allies, their courage is bolstered. If they enter combat within the next hour, they gain a +1 morale bonus on saves against charm and fear effects, and a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls. These benefits last for the first 5 rounds of combat. For the purposes of this ability, combat begins when a character attacks or must make a saving throw.

If you have two Leader feats and 11 ranks in Perform, the bonus increases to +2. If you have three Leader feats and 17 ranks in Perform, the bonus increases to +3. If four feats and 23 ranks, the bonus is +4.

Special: Most leaders focus in Perform (oratory) rather than musical performances.

Fearless Leader [Leader]

You help your allies avoid the effects of fear.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform

(any) 3 ranks, plus either Iron Will or resistance or immunity to fear effects.

Benefit: You can spend one minute giving a performance and use one of your leadership performances to try to remove fear. Make a Perform check. Each ally who hears your performance can use the result of your Perform check in place of his saving throw against the first fear effect that affects him within the next hour.

If you have three Leader feats and 9 ranks in Perform, you can use a leadership performance to help allies break free of a fear effect, though only if you have successfully saved against the fear. Make a Perform check. If your Perform check beats the DC to resist the fear effect, each ally within 30 ft. of you acts as if he had succeeded his save. If you have four Leader feats and 17 ranks in Perform, you can use this ability to help allies break free of any sort of mind-affecting effect, as long as you successfully saved against it.

Legendary Leader [Leader]

Your leadership shall become the stuff of legend.

Prerequisite: Cha 17, Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 17 ranks.

Benefit: Whenever you give an inspiring speech to an ally using the Leadership Performance feat, the benefits of that performance persists for as long as you remain within 30 ft. of that ally plus 5 rounds of combat, instead of lasting only 5 rounds of combat.

Additionally, you can use one of your leadership performances to inspire allies to greatness. All allies within 30 ft. gain 17 temporary hit points and a +2 dodge bonus to AC, lasting for as long as you are within 30 ft., and for 5 rounds thereafter. A given creature can only be inspired this way once per day.

Maneuver Leader [Leader]

You can direct the maneuvers of your allies.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 6 ranks.

Benefit: You can use one of your leadership performances to grant all allies within 30 ft. of you (but

not yourself) the ability to take a bonus move action immediately, acting in their normal initiative order. This movement does not count against their normal actions on their own turns, nor does it disrupt readied actions.

If you have three Leader feats and 14 ranks in Perform, you can use a leadership performance to let a single ally make a bonus single attack at his highest attack bonus, using whatever weapon he has available. The character may choose not to attack. If you have four Leader feats and 20 ranks in Perform, you can grant a single bonus attack to each ally within 30 ft. (but not to yourself).

Necrotic Leader [Leader]

Your leadership performances can affect mindless undead.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Knowledge (religion) 12 ranks, Perform (any) 3 ranks, ability to cast *animate dead*.

Benefit: Your leadership performances can affect mindless undead creatures if they are under your control, or are under the control of one of your allies. This is a supernatural ability.

Operation Leader [Leader]

You can direct your allies in situations that require special skills.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 6 ranks.

Benefit: If you have 5 ranks in Hide and Move Silently, you can make use of your leadership performances without making noise by using communicative gestures, though you can only affect those allies within 30 ft. who can see you. This only functions for the Leader feats that don't require you to make a speech.

Likewise, if you have 5 ranks in Bluff and Sense Motive, you can use non-speech leadership performances while being observed. Make a Bluff check, and onlookers unfamiliar with your communication techniques must succeed a Sense Motive check (DC equal to your Bluff check result) or else not realize that you are doing anything unusual.

These abilities only work with allies with whom

you have taken time to establish a set of communication cues; this usually takes ten minutes of discussion and practice.

You can use one of your leadership performances to make it easier for your allies to help each other with certain skills. Beginning this is a standard action, and continuing it requires concentration. While directing your allies thus, if at least one ally within 30 ft. of you has 5 ranks in a given skill, all other allies with at least 1 rank gain a +2 bonus to checks with that skill.

The skills that can benefit from this are Balance, Bluff, Climb, Disguise, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Ride, Search, Sense Motive, Survival, and Swim. Usually this is used to help the team navigate difficult terrain, maintain a façade while undercover, or perform an ambush. However, if you lack the skill ranks to communicate stealthily or discreetly while observed, there are obvious situations where you would not be able to benefit from this ability.

Primal Leader [Leader]

Your leadership performances can affect creatures of animal intelligence.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Handle Animal 12 ranks, Perform (any) 3 ranks, ability to cast speak with animals.

Benefit: Your leadership performances can affect creatures of animal intelligence that are friendly or helpful to you, or are friendly or helpful to their masters, if their masters are allies of yours. This is a supernatural ability.

Spellwise Leader [Leader]

You can bolster the magical abilities of your allies.

Prerequisite: Leadership Performance, Perform (any) 6 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can use one of your leadership performances to coordinate the magic of your allies. Starting to coordinate in this way is a standard action, and maintaining it requires concentration. As long as you coordinate in this way, if an ally within 30 ft. of you casts a spell targeting a creature that another allied spellcaster targeted within the last round, that creature takes a –2 penalty to its saving

throw for this spell. Additionally, all allies within 30 ft. who have at least 1 rank in Spellcraft immediately can identify any spell or effect that you successfully identify with Spellcraft.

If you have three Leader feats and 14 ranks in Perform, while you coordinate your allies' magic, the caster level of allies within 30 ft. of you is increased by +1. If you have four Leader feats and 22 ranks in Perform, the caster level bonus increases to +2.

These abilities are supernatural, not extraordinary, and are subject to cancellation in an area of antimagic.

COMMANDER CHARACTER CLASS

Commanders are at home on the battlefield, with a group of allies or minions by their side. While bards simply inspire the courage of their companions, commanders know what tactics have the best chance of leading to victory, and know how to motivate people to fight well. Most commanders are members of the military, but many tribal chieftains, rebel leaders, and ship's captains have the skills and talents of commanders.

In an adventuring party, the commander is not necessarily the leader, though he is the person to listen to when large or complicated combat looms. Players of commander characters are encouraged to research some classic military tactics, because no amount of stat bonuses can balance out genuinely poor planning. Some key tactics to bear in mind include:

- **Encirclement.** A foe is best attacked from multiple sides. Likewise, you should maintain an awareness of the battlefield so as not to be surrounded.
- **Overwhelming Force.** Strike where your foe is weakest. Overwhelming a single target and destroying it prevents your enemy from regrouping and recovering. Defend against your own weaknesses, and plan in case you are attacked there.
- **Hit and Run.** If you cannot field overwhelming force, use your enemy's size against him. Strike where not expected and retreat, then strike elsewhere while your enemy is distracted. Know when a small mobile force is more useful than a large army.

Additionally, consider where to fight, bearing in mind how to array your forces so they cannot be surrounded, without spreading them so thin that they can be overwhelmed. Know the range at which your enemies are a threat, and take advantage of mobility offered by mounts, vehicles, and magic. It is critical to take the initiative, to strike before your opponents can, and to strike accurately. Knowledge of these tactics will benefit you both in small skirmishes and in battles between armies.

Game Rule Information

Commanders have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Different commanders have different styles, but Intelligence aids a commander in developing and deploying tactics, while Charisma determines how well the commander can motivate his allies. Some commanders like to be in the thick of combat, and so high Strength and Constitution are important.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The commander's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis). See PHB Chapter 4 and this book for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at 1st Level: $(6 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 3$

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $6 + \text{Int modifier}$.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the commander.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A commander is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields (but not tower shields).

Commander Feat: At 1st and 2nd level and every 3rd level thereafter, the commander gains either a Leader feat or a fighter feat.

Direct Orders (Ex): A commander is skilled at directing his allies. Once per round as a swift action, the commander may choose one of the following

types of rolls. All allies within 30 ft. gain a bonus to those rolls equal to the commander's Charisma modifier, to a maximum of the commander's class level. This benefit lasts until the beginning of the commander's next turn, and only affects allies with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher who are able to understand the commander's language.

- Attack rolls to confirm critical hits.
- Attack rolls while charging.
- Caster level checks.
- Disarm attempts, both to make and resist.
- Fortitude saves.
- Grapple checks.
- Reflex saves.
- Sunder attempts, both to make and resist.
- Trip attempts, both to make and resist.
- Will saves.

At 7th level, the commander can give an order as an immediate action. If the commander had given a different order on his turn, the new order supersedes the old one, and lasts until the beginning of the commander's turn after next.

Table: The Commander

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Commander feat, direct orders
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Commander feat, initiative bonus +1
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Widen command +10
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Battle cry
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Commander feat
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Initiative bonus +2
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Direct orders (immediate)
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Commander feat
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Widen command +20
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Initiative bonus +3
11	+8	+7	+3	+7	Commander feat
12	+9	+8	+4	+8	Chain of command
13	+9	+8	+4	+8	Implicit command
14	+10	+9	+4	+9	Commander feat, initiative bonus +4
15	+11	+9	+5	+9	Widen command +30
16	+12	+10	+5	+10	Inspire sacrifice
17	+12	+10	+5	+10	Commander feat
18	+13	+11	+6	+11	Initiative bonus +5
19	+14	+11	+6	+11	Seize command
20	+15	+12	+6	+12	Commander feat

USING THE COMMANDER CLASS

The traditional fantasy military leader is a soldier who has risen to the highest ranks of the army, but fighters and paladins lack the necessary skill points to be truly effective leaders compared to classes that focus less on combat, particularly bards or rogues. The commander class maintains the martial flavor of the fighter, but trades some combat prowess for abilities that improve teamwork. While some characters may find appeal in being a devoted commander, the commander class is primarily designed to be useful for other characters, especially fighters, to dip into.

Of course, in a fantasy setting, theoretically anyone can command an army. We have tried to make sure that the Leader feats have enough variety that characters of any class could choose to be a leader and still keep the flavor of their original class. You might consider letting the commander class not count toward favored class experience penalties, in order to encourage different styles of commander.

Initiative Bonus (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, the commander and all his allies within 30 ft. when combat begins gain a +1 morale bonus to initiative checks. This bonus improves to +2 at 6th level, +3 at 10th level, +4 at 14th level, and +5 at 18th level.

Widen Command: At 3rd level, the range at which a commander can affect allies with his direct orders, initiative bonus, and leadership performances increases from 30 ft. to 40 ft. It increases to 50 ft. at 9th level, and 60 ft. at 15th level.

Battle Cry: At 4th level, the commander should choose one or two catch-

phrases, slogans, or battle cries that encompass his style of command. Once per hour he can speak or shout a battle cry as a free action during combat in order to gain an additional leadership performance, which must be used during that combat.

Chain of Command (Ex): At 12th level, a commander can grant uses of his leadership performances to others, usually his subordinates. When he does this, he must choose a specific leadership performance effect. Those subordinates must make use of that effect in an hour, or the benefit is lost. The effect of the performance is the same as if the commander himself had made it.

For example, a 14th level commander with 17 ranks in Perform and the Leadership Performance feat might grant each of his three warlords the ability to make a speech and give their allies a +3 bonus to attacks, damage, and saves against fear. To do so he uses up three of his own leadership performances.

Implicit Command (Ex): At 13th level, the commander no longer needs to share a language with his allies to grant them the benefits of his leadership performances.

Inspire Sacrifice (Ex): At 16th level, whenever an attack or spell with a visible component would reduce the commander to 0 hit points or below, an ally within 5 ft. may choose to take the damage instead. The ally must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. The commander can benefit from this ability no more than once an hour (since, after the first sacrifice, not as many people are willing to risk their lives). The choice of whether to take the damage is wholly up to the ally.

Seize Command (Ex): At 19th level, a commander may use one of his leadership performances to exert his force of will upon a single creature with an intelligence of 3 or higher within 30 ft. If that creature fails a Will save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ commander's level + commander's Charisma modifier), it obeys the orders of the commander to the best of its ability for one hour. During this time, the creature acts as if it was completely loyal to the commander and his allies, even at the expense of its own normal allies. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Tactical Genius (Ex): At 20th level, once per day as a standard action a commander can direct his allies within range of his inspiration to perform swift and complicated maneuvers. All allies within range of his inspiration immediately take one full round worth of actions, keeping their normal initiative order. At the end of this bonus round, normal initiative resumes. The commander does not benefit from his own ability.

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