

Age of Ice

A time of Heroes

You arrive, and the first thing that hits you is the cold. From the position of the Sun in the sky, it should be a warm, bright Summer afternoon, but the light shining down on you through a break in the clouds is gloomy and weak, somehow lacking the warmth it should have as it struggles to pierce the thin, grey murk that blanket the sky.

Already your breath is steaming in the cold air, and breathing is starting to become painful as the icy chill rakes at your lungs.

Around you is a land blanketed in dirty grey ice and massive snow drifts. Not the bright white crispness of fresh fallen snow, but the bleak, oppressive greyness of ice compressed to something harder than iron by the sheer weight of year after year of fresh snow deposited by the freezing winds of a winter that you already suspect may have gone on for centuries.

In the distance you see movement, but...

It isn't moving towards it that seems to be the problem. It is cold, but it isn't that cold, not yet at any rate.

The drive, the urge to explore, to learn, to master, to thrive and grow better than you are is almost gone.

Subsumed by something alien.

A mindless acceptance of the status quo.

Perfect Stasis.

Quiet.

Unchanging.

How things should be.

You aren't sure how long you just stand there. The thin sunlight fades to the darkness of night, and the wind begins to howl, shrieking through the frozen, skeletal remains of a dead trees nearby.

In the distance the light of a few fires appears, tiny crimson dots in the darkness.

Light.

Warmth.

Hope.

It sparks something inside you, and you find yourself once again free to act, to move, the unspeakably seductive idea that you should simply stand there till you cease to live and slowly freeze, becoming an eternal, unchanging thing of ice vanishing.

It hurts to move now, agony unlike anything you can recall, the chill in the wind raking deep enough that you feel it in your bones, but you doggedly force yourself onwards, step after step, clinging to the sight of those distant fires the way a drowning man clings to a lifeline.

A Light in the Darkness

Making your way to the fires is one of the hardest things you can remember doing, each step seeming to take as much effort as climbing a mountain, the chill sapping your strength, the wind almost seeming to whisper to you, urging you to give in, to stop, to accept.

Finally, after what seems like years, centuries, you reach the fire, stepping into the circle of warmth emanating from the roaring bonfire.

It takes awhile for you to communicate, mostly because your teeth are chattering hard enough that it takes hours before you can talk.

It does give your new companions a chance to explain things to you though - you discover they are a hunting party on their way back to what may very well be the single bastion of warmth left in the world - a hidden valley surrounded by mountains, mountains big enough to shield a few hundred square miles of farmland from the icy winds Mulcarn, god of winter has sent to ensure the world remains frozen.

While the small group is barely a few hundred strong collection of hunter gatherers barely above the stone age now, in time they will rediscover old customs that will lead them to developing into a unique and thriving civilisation.

**Just who have you made contact with however?
Select one of the following civilisations and claim a new companion.**

The Bannor

Erebus was once a battleground, a place where the armies of the gods clashed, a place where titans were mere footsoldiers, thrown away in their hundreds of thousands, cut down by great and terrible things the likes of which have never been seen even in the most twisted fever dreams of madmen.

In time the concord was signed and the gods retreated from the world, leaving it to the few mortals who had survived the great war. In time empires rose and mortals thrived.

Then Bhaal, Goddess of Fire was corrupted by the whispers of Hyborem, king of Hell.

Without Bhaal to oppose him, Mulcarn, god of winter, Ice and Stasis rose to dominance and condemned the world to an eternal ice age.

This was not something the people who would one day become the Bannor knew of, because as Bhaal plunged into hell they were dragged along with her.

Doomed to a fate worse than death the trapped mortals were rescued by the Archangel Sabathiel and his host. In exchange for salvation they willingly bound themselves to eternal war against evil, chaos and disorder.

Finally Sabathiel has led the descendants of those who swore allegiance to good from Hell and back to the Erebus.

Though a shadow of its former power, the Bannor have already begun the work of rebuilding their strength to continue the fight their mythical forefathers swore them to.

This continuing Holy War permeates every part of their society, leaving it almost totally militarised. For the Bannor, there is no clear line between religion, family, and politics. They apply a frightening religious fervour to the art of war, and their obsession with order makes

even the peasant regiments among the best drilled of all the empires. All men are trained from childhood in the arts of war – hand to hand combat, archery, self defence, strength, and agility. Unlike most other societies, there are plenty of possibilities for rising through the ranks through bravery and skill, a fact which inspires as much if not more fighting fervour than the religious element.

Because they need to be defended and ready at all times, outlying villages are more like forts, every farm is a small castle, the cities are huge garrison towns but also centers of trade, religion, and diplomacy. Few men are without scars from battle and the women are strongwilled and hardened. They know that the children they raise may one day be lost in battle, and they also know that one day the war may come to them. It is a rare woman among the Bannor that cannot handle a sword.

Sabathiel, the mythical ruler of the Bannor, exhausted by his tireless fight against the influence and attacks of Hyborem, is said to reside deep within the recesses of his Halls, watching, guiding, teaching, and warding over the Bannor, conserving his temporal strength for some dire future conflict where he will once again be needed. He is a shadow king, never seen by his subjects but always a haunting figure, ever present in their consciousness.

- The Bannor are easily the most well trained and well equipped force in the Age of Ice.
- All Bannor are required to train in combat and all serve three years in the army, meaning they can potentially field a massive army when needed.
- Elite soldiers are descendants of Sabathiels host, men and women who bear angelic blood and who stand head and shoulders above others, stronger, faster, more intelligent and possessed of angelic beauty.

Donal Lugh, Aegis of the Bannor

When Sabathiel led the final assault that saw the Bannor escape from Hell they left a rearguard to occupy the demon army who sought to prevent their escape.

Alone of all the brave men and women who went into what they knew was a fight to the death against an unending tide of demons, Donal Lugh survived.

Countless demons fell to his blade, while his shield, the Empty Bier, turned aside weapons forged of pure hatred and the foulest sorceries both without taking so much as a scratch.

Thanks to his experiences Donal is an incredible defensive fighter, and with his shield he is easily one of, if not the most durable combatant alive today, and his skill in battling the demonic is second to none.

The Kuriotates

The Kuriotate City State was formed when squabbling tribes, clans, warlords and embryonic city-states were gathered almost overnight into a small nation led by the boy-king Cardith Lorda. It is in this background that we find the secret behind the Kuriotates' rather odd societal structure. All these diverse elements gathered together in a sheltered and bountiful land, and started to forge a state that could survive in a dangerous world. However, the mutual distrust between all the clans, families and dynasties Cardith Lorda brought together means that they will not suffer another to grow more powerful than they are. In effect, the lower levels of government in the core regions are marked by a form of democracy, watched over by a royal administration with complete control.

Thus, all expansion is conducted by the King, and by him alone, and all territory is royal territory. The army swears allegiance to the king alone, and all administrative functions flow from the state rather than a master-servant system. There is no feudal system among the Kuriotates. The powerful live in the cities, and compete for positions there. In the outlying areas, the powerful are only powerful by royal decree, and Cardith Lorda's careful machinations ensures that it stays that way.

The Kuriotates are a confederation of peoples and races, marked by a very powerful core region, vast areas more loosely connected to the core cities, and full freedom of asylum, even citizenship, for those who wish to move from other nations or the wilderness of uncivilised territory. The settlements, controlled solely by the central administration (i.e. Cardith Lorda's government) act as administrative centers, tying vast areas, often with their own highly advanced semi-autonomous indigenous populations, into the Kuriotate confederacy. The settlements provide facilities for transit, trade, administration and diplomacy in the affiliated regions, but never develop a very large population of pure Kuriotates. They are mostly populated by bureaucrats, merchants, a handful of soldiers and their families and the most promising born here quickly relocate to the central cities. A system of trade and friendship with their centre on the small Kuriotate settlements keeps the hodge-podge of allies, protectorates, semi-autonomies and client states happy and ensures that much-needed resources continue to flow to the core lands.

The vast areas with sparse human population that get locked within the Kuriotates' disproportionately large sphere of influence and cultural domination mean that they get in contact with many of the rarer species of Erebus. For many civilizations, that might prove problematic, even act as a source of conflict and destruction. For the Kuriotates, it is a boon, and a source of their strength.

For the Kuriotates don't much care who you are as long as you have something meaningful to offer to the nation as a whole. The Kuriotates' particularly positive relationship to the non-human species of Erebus dates back to the very beginnings of the confederation, when a small group of Centaurs aided Cardith Lorda in his rise to power. Other creatures, attracted by the special power they detect in the boy king, have since flocked to the Kuriotate banner, escaping marginalization or even persecution in other parts of the world. The Centaurs, having risen to be a force to be reckoned with in Kuriotate political life, smooth their transition and integration into the society, putting their special skills to good use in the areas at which they excel, through innate ability or cultural conditioning.

The culture of the Kuriotates is such that the demi-humans are treated as, and indeed regarded as being, equal to the human majority, and judged by merit and benefit to the nation alone, although the fundamental differences between the races mean that some measure of distinction is necessary in order

to allow the Kuriotate nation to run smoothly. However, again this may be a secret benefit.

This specialization and segregation has given rise to something akin to a Caste system, another reason the Kuriotates have such a stable central government. While the humans are the jack of all trades, each of the races have found their niche, dominating their own area. The Centaurs, the warrior caste, hold many high positions in the army, the Lamia wield great magical power, and command respect among the magi, and so on. Since all these subcultures owe allegiance to the king alone, they act, in their specialized roles, as an effective bulwark against the ambitions of human noblemen.

Those few dissidents who let their resentment at being bypassed be channeled into irrational hatred of demi-humans are held in check by strong personal trust in Cardith Lorda and an emphasis on the state religion, not to mention state superstition and traditions. Few Kuriotates dare cross or even question the will of the state, the will of the people of the confederation, and most importantly, the will of the divine Boy-King.

The Kuriotates hold loose sway over a massive sprawl of an empire, but the borders are porous, and when war threatens, they will often act as a turtle, retreating into the hard shell of their core lands until they can muster the forces to take back that which was lost. Thus, the Kuriotates through their openness to others, strong central authority and large but loose sphere of influence have a flexibility many of their opponents lack. Truly, they are one of the centers of enlightenment in the dark of Erebus.

- Dozens of races exist within the Kuriotate lands, and each one has something they can excel at, meaning specialist troops are incredible at their roles.
 - Centaur warriors are by far the most powerful cavalry available in the world.
- Diverse races mean that trade opportunities available will dwarf those other civilisations can expect, and the economy will be incredibly strong for them.

Skol the Iron Driver

Skol is perhaps the biggest Centaur ever to exist, his equine half built like a scaled up Clydesdale, his human half so thick with muscle he looks like a sack filled with cannonballs.

There are few things that can survive a charge from the massive Centaur and the almost ridiculously massive lance he favours.

In addition to his fearsome charge Skol is almost completely tireless, able to race for days on end. That combined with the enchanted horseshoes he bears that allows him to race across water or up walls means his charge will inevitably come from a direction his foe is not expecting.

The Luchuirp

Dwarves do not always live in caves. The Empire of Kradh-Ke-zun, the Open-Skiers, suffered terrible losses during the Age of Ice precisely because they, as opposed to their cousins the Khazad, had adapted to a life on the surface and forgotten the secrets of making their lives in the subterranean world. Fantastic craftsmen, cunning artificers, and proficient enchanters, the Kradh-Ke-zun were creators of some of the greatest artifacts of the Age of Magic, not least of which were the Golems: Golems for war, Golems for transport, Golems for farming, for mining and for industry. Life, for the Open-Skiers with their endless supply of infallibly obedient servants, was good, and the people thrived.

The new reality of the Age of Ice was harsh on the Open-Skiers. When the glaciers rolled forth, strangling life, isolating populations, and crushing cities beneath tons of grinding blue ice, the Luchuirp watched helplessly as the cunning devices they had entrusted so much of their survival to succumbed to the long winter.

Three-foot-tall city dwellers are not adapted to the rigorous, marginal, nomadic existence of Ice Age hunters, and few survived for long. Of the once mighty Empire of great cities, thriving farmlands and millions of contented citizens, only one particularly hardy clan survived: the Luchuirp. Though weakened by the dominance of Mulcarn the god of Winter, Kilmorph, the Earth Mother, still managed to hold a warding hand over this little tribe of surface-dwelling Dwarves. She came to the leader, the now-legendary Graoin the Delver, and taught him the things his people had forgotten: how to dig, how to build homes under the mountain. Combining this with what little of their incredible artisanry and Golem mastery they could still make use of, they fashioned themselves a society of sorts in the caves beneath the Ice, and they waited, knowing that one day, the clan of Luchuirp, heirs of the Open-Skiers, would once again walk under the sun.

- Very weak Dwarves are protected by an army of powerful, tireless completely obedient Golems.
 - Golems will become increasingly powerful as the Luchuirp develop new models.
- Tireless construct workers mean that people will never have to worry about basics like food or clean water.

Barnaxus the Golem King

Barnaxus was beautiful, perfect. The pinnacle of years of work, of finding the right words to power him, of selecting just the right pieces, of lovingly sculpting every little detail of his joints and his features. Barnaxus was more nimble, more exact, more careful and more effective in everything he did than any of the other golems that were built in the empire of Khrad'Ke-zun. For many hundred years, this giant did as he was told, when he was told, and always did it better than anyone else, dwarven or golem. Barnaxus works were the pride of the Empire, and, when the ice sheets smothered the world, the name and reputation of Barnaxus passed into legend.

Perhaps it was this legendary status that meant that when, years after the Ice had pulled

back and the Luchuirp embarked on their mission of rebuilding the Empire, a tall, weather-worn golem appeared at the gates of the capital, he was instantly recognized as the long-lost Barnaxus. For, surely, only a golem of such perfection and brilliance as Barnaxus could have survived so long without maintenance and protection? It quickly became clear that Barnaxus was unlike any other golem. Barnaxus did not "take orders." He cooperated, he discussed, and he made suggestions. Barnaxus was a thinking golem, a learning golem. No one could guess how he had managed to break the magical ties that bind a golem to the two-dimensional world of "order and execution", and nobody really expected that they would ever find out. When asked, Barnaxus merely said: "A man spoke to me in the wastes and I awoke," he would say no more.

True, Barnaxus could do what he wished, but what he wished was to help the Luchuirp. He wished to help them rebuild the Empire, to recall what was forgotten, and to perfect what was remembered. He appeared to harbor a love for the Luchuirp that mirrored that of a doting father, with a hint of a patronizing air to some of his advice. And the Luchuirp, amazingly, instead of rankling at being "taught" by a golem, loved him back. He was their link to the past and an amazing store of knowledge. Golems, after all, never forget. But most important of all, Barnaxus also taught the golems. What Barnaxus learned, the other golems soon copied.

And so it was that Barnaxus went from being the "King of the Golems" to being a true leader of golems and of dwarves.

The Lanun

A ship at sea is its own world. To be the captain of a ship is to be the unquestioned ruler of that world and requires all of the leadership skills of a prince or minister. What then must it take to rule a realm of pirates?

The Lanun are a seafaring folk and a crew's first loyalty is to its captain. The Captain's loyalty however is most likely to Hannah or Falamar - the de-facto leaders of the Lanun. Falamar sees himself as a dashing rogue - a charming leader with a rapier-sharp wit. When he sets his sights on plunder, he prefers to not kill the victims of his raids (claiming that would keep them from bringing him more loot). He is an excellent swordsman and a most capable commander. Hannah, however, is everything Falamar is not. She is the storm personified, temperamental and powerful. She has had entire cities razed for a perceived insult, and rules not by charm, but by fear.

The Lanun themselves, the so called Kraken of the fields are in truth far more comfortable

making a living from the sea than tilling farmland, so the vast bulk of their settlements are along the coast, heavily fortified and well developed ports that attract trade from far and wide.

What little they cannot draw to them with the promise of fine prices amongst their famed markets they simply pirate, and their shipyards are second to none, able to build ships both faster and to a far higher standard than any other civilisation on Erebus.

- The Lanun are the greatest seamen in the world, and the most skilled pirates.
- Ships are superior to other races by orders of magnitude - faster, better designed, tougher and more manouverable.
- Lanun markets are world famous for being able to provide virtually anything.

The Black Wind

Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than you'll e'er see!
Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than the navy!

Listen me hearties an' I'll sing ye the tale,
of the a fearsome ship, aye, Hell did send
out of the depths, in a midnight gale.
The fabled vessel name o' Black Wind.
Cunning was the captain
Of this dauntless vessel fair,
Though they never plundered but a coin,
'twas always 'nough to share!

Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than you'll e'er see!
Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than the navy!

The boat herself was a sturdy old gel,
Nigh invincible they'll tell you,
Her hull was strong, and the mast as well,
She could take whatever you'd do.
Why they say she rammed a Queen O' the line
Cloaked in the fog, dead a-winter
You think that stopped a ship this fine?
Well--least they had a carpenter!

Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than you'll e'er see!
Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than the navy!

The crew was brave, the terror o' the seas,
Hardened men of every stripe,

The bounty on them could have pleased
Even the greediest type.
O'I Black Wind 's crew was the boldest lot,
That's why they're in our chantey's,
This verse goes out to their wildest plot,
When they stole ol' Hannah's panties!

Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than you'll e'er see!
Oh, heave and ho, and away we go, faster than the navies!

The Black Wind is perhaps one of the two most famous ships to sail the seas of Erebus, and one that strikes fear into the hearts of any captain who spots her flag on the horizon. Entire fleets have been sent after her, and not all of them have returned.

The Jotnar

Jotunheim, the lands of the true giants are a bitter land of cold winters and cool summers, a land that breeds hardy folk, the native human tribes led by powerful shamans, the Vaetti goblins exceptionally stealthy skirmishers and archers, the mighty trolls surprisingly cunning berserkers and the giants themselves led by powerful priests and clerics called Gode.

The Giants once ruled these lands alone, but with the coming of Mulcarn their power was broken when the frost giants, some of the largest, most powerful and most populous of their kind turned against their kin and swore themselves to the god of Ice and Stasis. The Stone, Fire and Storm giants were almost wiped out till Mother Eolingas, the last surviving Gygja, the Jotnar wisewomen who serve as oracles and advisors decreed that all the old grudges would be ended and Man, Giant, Troll and Vaetti would stand united.

Together all four races have slowly begun to prosper, even in the Age of Ice and under constant attack by the Ice Giants of Mulcarn, though only the hill giants, the smallest of the giant races and the ones who gave their name to the civilisation exist in any numbers, the Stone, Fire and Storm Giants numbers increasing with glacial slowness over the centuries, with each new birth cause for great celebration.

- Giant troops are relatively rare but incredibly powerful, with the incredibly rare Storm Giants able to shatter entire armies.
- Security will never be an issue - the Jotnar were able to domesticate the local megafauna, so while other races make do with guard dogs, the Giants use guard

cavebears and guard Sabertooth Tigers.

- Each Staeding has or is led by a Jotnar Jarl, so raiders and bandits are never an issue.

Tjatse the Abductor

The last of the Niefel, the true Frost Giants, the traitorous giantkin who swore allegiance to Mulcarn are to Tjatse as a halfling child is to a human adult. A veteran of the war amongst the Gods he is a powerful sorcerer and owns an eagle cloak that grants him the ability to change shape. In the godswar in ages past he used this power to capture Idun, guardian of the Apples of Immortality, stealing away one of the apples for himself, earning eternal life.

In his Niefel form he is an incredibly powerful warrior, the icy winds of Rimtarsul swirling around him, chilling the living to the bone. No slouch as a spellcaster either, his skills at magic are incredible. In the form of a great Eagle his mastery of Air magic is unsurpassed, but he loses access to the other magics.

The Mechanos

The beginning of the Mechanos dates back to many years before the Age of Rebirth. With dragons and warring gods causing destruction all over Erebus, some people refused to pay respect to any god. Such beliefs before the Compact were almost inevitable death sentences, as without the protection of the patron god no city would survive more than a few weeks.

Much has changed after the signing of the Compact at the Seven Pines. Still, only the most powerful individuals or groups would dare to speak their atheism openly. And even less would survive doing so, as they soon were attacked by joined crusaders of even conflicting faiths. In the eyes of priests, paladins, and eidolons, the only thing worse than followers of the opposite angel were those that refused to take part in the crusades and just wanted to be left alone.

Then a second change occurred. Just before the Age of Ice, some of the unbelievers came into contact with dwarven engineers and were allowed to learn some of their secrets. This was a key to their survival. Steam engines allowed them not only to heat the caves that sheltered them during Age of Ice, but also to live quite comfortably despite severe weather. This, combined with human curiosity and ingenuity, led them to developing bigger and better engines and perfecting the technology.

It was the first sign of a change. While the dwarven ideal is Arete - the perfection in the craft and dedication to the work, Mechanos, as they began to call themselves, adopted a

new one: Bigger and Faster. Their machines lack the artistry of the dwarven craft, but ARE big and fast. Confident in their new power, the Mechanos emerged from their caves. Now they are refusing not only to pray to the gods, but also to use any of the aspects of the magic. They regard all spells as tainted with the gods' powers and manifestation of their will. Instead, they use mana nodes as a power source and feed refined mana to so called "mechanical spirits", cryptic beings that inhabit Mechanos machines.

- Mechanos armies are small, but with arquebus and cannon, they can punch far, far above their weight.
- The only civilisation to be in the middle of an industrial revolution, with all the social, cultural and technological advantages that brings.
 - Factories allow for mass production.

Lenora, Pride of the Air Fleet

Many people have looked up and watched a bird in flight, and in every civilisation there are those who go on to try and duplicate that flight - attempts at hot air balloons to gliders, and there is always the popular story of one determined Doviello warrior who jumped off a cliff flapping his arms. Most peoples have made some small amount of progress, even if it is usually straight down.

The Mechanos however, have Scientific Theory. While others try to mimic the shape of a soaring bird and copy the flapping wings, the Mechanos study, learn and work out how and why a bird flies.

And then they duplicate it.

The Mighty Corvus Thopters of the Air Fleet are mighty engines of gleaming metal borne aloft by two mighty wings, and where the shadow of these flyers falls, the enemies of the Mechanos know fear.

Above and beyond the Corvus Class there is the Aquilan Class, and truly the Aquilan is as an Eagle among Ravens. The sole example of the class, the Lenora is the flagship of the Air Fleet, capable of flying higher, faster, further and longer than anything else in the skies. If there is anything she cannot outrun, she carries enough weaponry to make the pursuer regret being so fast.

The Doviello

He was lost. The realization suddenly dawned on him, in all its cold and inescapable horror.

He had no idea where the camp was. He had been taken along on the hunt, for the first time, but now the others had left him here. He was about to panic, but he steeled himself against the cold and loneliness instead, remembering what could happen if you lost control out here.

Charadon wandered about the windswept plains for some time, catching a few rabbits and eating them raw, as his father had taught him just a few weeks--an eternity it seemed now--earlier. As twilight gave way to moonlight, he saw a hill close by, and decided to climb it.

It was then he saw the wolves. A large pack of them, resting for the night in the small shelter against snow and wind the hill offered. They did not see him, and nor did they smell him, it seemed.

To him, wolves had always been defined by the distant howling at midnight, or the shadowy shapes sometimes darting at the edges of the campfire's light. He had never had the chance to behold them in their stark glory before. Their graceful figures, stalking across the land, always poised to strike, never letting their guard down. Their thick grey fur providing shelter from the wind and ice. Their powerful jaws, with teeth fit for crushing and grinding.

For the next few weeks, he followed the wolves. Always taking care to keep a safe distance, he diligently observed the behaviour of the pack with a child's curiosity.

One thing he noticed was the sheer brutal efficiency that signified its progress, not constrained by the human emotions of compassion and mercy. If one among the pack had been hurt or struck by fatigue, the others merely left it for dead on the icy ground, unless prey had been scarce lately, then they welcomed the food supply their weaker kin provided.

If a young pup was born weak or crippled, it was the father's prime duty to crush its neck and throw it aside, as a human would throw down a broken spear. When the hunt was on, and a prey was taken down, the wolves did not share the spoils equally, but fought to the death for it, young as well as old, male as well as female.

At first these things horrified the young Charadon, but gradually the horror gave way to admiration. Because the wolves, thanks to these measures, were very efficient at what they did. By rooting out the weaknesses of individuals, the pack managed to survive. In a world as harsh as this, unyielding cruelty was the greatest tool in the struggle for resources.

One day, as he climbed a hillside to get a view of the progress of the pack, he spied the smoke of campfires in the horizon. Greatly uplifted by the sight, he made his way towards the camp. As he approached the camp, moving slowly down the hillside, he gazed at its inhabitants. What a contrast compared to the wolves! Here, the elderly were brought food

by the hunters, the children nursed in their mothers' tender embrace and the sick cared for by herbal medicine and gentle treatment. They were glorifying weakness. At this sight, and this realization, something deep in the heart of Charadon went cold and dark. With a clarity both liberating and dreadful, he suddenly knew what he had to do.

Charadon stood on the hillside and watched the slaughter. His people had been taken completely by surprise by the pack of wolves. His face was expressionless as he watched them drag his mother out of her tent, and fight over her entrails. His father attempted to stop them, only to be ripped apart by the leader of the pack. As he stood there, silently waiting, what was left of his people, the strongest and fiercest among them, finally managed to drive the wolves away. The worthy ones. He made his way down the hillside, to join up with the survivors. There would be a place for them in the future after all.

The Doviello embody the concept of Barbarianism almost completely, a society where the weak are slaughtered without mercy and the strength of a persons sword arm is all that matters.

- Doviello warriors are widely regarded as some of the most feared raiders around.
 - Very low rates of illness due to the weak and the sick being slaughtered.
 - Wild animals do not attack the Doviello, recognising them as kindred spirits.

The War Machine

Dentaro was not a typical Doviello. In battle he was as ferocious as the next, which earned him his place in the tribe, but after battle, he would not partake in the feasting, the telling of exaggerated stories of bravery, or even the sating of other desires with the conquered peoples.

No, after every battle Dentaro scurried about the battlefield, picking through the rubble. He examined each rusty blade, axe handle, chariot wheel, bits of sturdy bone or even teeth. These would be placed in his pack, and deposited in his home the next time they returned to Doviello lands. Worse, to his kinsmen's estimation, he would inspect any books they came across, reading some, discarding others. His older brother laid Dentaro flat the first time he caught him reading. The second time, Dentaro broke his brother's axe arm and knocked out three teeth, so the others left him to his eccentricity.

Any Dwarven prisoner would be questioned closely by Dentaro. Unlike his peers, he would not ask where their wine, weapons, or wealth were. He asked them about steam, about mechanics, about enchantment. On this continued, late into his life. The tribe's fortunes waxed and waned, but gradually the enemy pushed them back to their tundra homeland, and pressed further. Then one night Urslo itself was threatened in a surprise attack, by

disciplined soldiers. The sounds of battle awakened Dentaro, and the sounds of battle continued until they were drowned out by an unearthly roar. Dentaro's ramshackle house burst apart. The Doviello word for 'machine' was invented that night, as Dentaro's War Machine emerged.

It falls well short of even the practical Dwarves' standards of beauty, but no one can deny its effectiveness. Heavy crossbows fire as it drives forward, needing only periodic reloading. Blades sweep side to side, and more lances lead the War Machine's charge than a company of knights. Whether powered by magic, technology, some beasts running in circles inside, or an unholy combination of the three no one but Dentaro could even guess.

The enemy at Urslo was wiped out to the man. The Doviello began to retake their old conquests, Dentaro at the lead. No one spoke of him as the odd one anymore, and even Dentaro's older brother began to introduce himself by his relation to the old misfit. Dentaro himself barely noticed his increased stature. After every battle, he climbs down from the War Machine, and begins to pick through the carnage, taking a blade here, a chariot wheel there, and adding it to his sack.

Calabim

The Age of Ice almost spelt the end of the Vampires. When the vast sheets spread over the once-fertile land, their main source of food, humanity, started to become scarce and ever more concentrated in small tribes. Fearing a fate worse than death, the shadowy almost-death of a vampire deprived of fresh nourishment for centuries, most vampires tried to cling to the ever-shrinking communities of survivors. A lone vampire trapped in a small group of people quickly switches from hunter to prey. One by one, the vampires were dispatched to the afterlife.

Of those few vampires who escaped the hunters, most took to a feral existence, living off whatever inferior blood they could scavenge in the wild, preying off the occasional human unfortunate enough to be caught alone. But some wise few realized that the only path to survival lay in making the natural transition from parasite to master.

Lead by the ancient siblings Alexis and Flauros, a small group of surviving vampires "adopted" a rag-tag tribe of humans. Using their powers as immortals, unaffected by cold, or exhaustion, gifted with incredible vision and speed, they made sure the tribe had plenty of food. And all they asked in return was an endless, expendable resource: A few drops of blood. But a vampire's powers are not restricted to supernatural senses and strength-?their great power is in the mind.

Slowly but surely, using their natural powers of guile and persuasion, and dangling the "Dark Gift" as bait to lure the best and strongest humans into helping them, the vampires wormed their way to the top of their little society. Few wished to oppose them, and risk losing their valuable hunting skills. Those who did, had accidents, or simply disappeared.

When the humans finally realized what was happening, it was too late. They were trapped in a hellish situation, little more than cattle for a growing class of parasitic nobility, and they had been trapped there of their own free will.

Now, Flauros and Alexis are the Grand Prince and Princess of a depraved and hopeless society of bloodpets and slaves, controlled by the Grand Broods, the vampire families that rule each city as their own personal estate farms, living in decadent luxury, and sating their lust for blood at will. The Calabim are the apex of vampire evolution, an abomination that is the natural enemy of all holy nations.

- Small amounts of incredibly powerful vampire warriors backed up by legions of fanatical bloodpets.
- Innate necromatic ability allows vampires to raise legions of skeleton cannon fodder.
- The oldest and most powerful vampires can raise themselves from the dead if they have gorged on blood before they are slain.

Losha Valois

Three generals sat in the antechamber, awaiting their summons to the throne room. One, a battle hardened veteran, sat cold and stoic while the second man, younger and newer to his position, fidgeted nervously. The woman yawned and gazed out the window. Soon the doors opened and they were ushered in and arrayed themselves before the dual thrones. The guards left, leaving the three alone with Alexis and Flauros.

Alexis arose at once, walking swiftly towards them. "You three were ordered to hold our new settlement of Pavu'nar! Yet before you even returned to me, like beaten dogs, my scouts have informed me that our city is ruined! Tell me what happened and why I shouldn't consume- -why I shouldn't have you killed."

"Sheol, your report first," Flauros interjected. He still slouched on his throne but his gaze narrowed upon the younger man.

"Yes Master, Mistress. We...on Perdion's orders we split our command into three upon reaching the town. I took charge of the hunters. We headed for the hills and forests, finding the enemy well before they neared Pavu'nar. My, um, I broke my units into small groups to harass

the enemy as they marched, and dispatched the scouts with information on their numbers and makeup back to Losha and Perdion. I continued to pick off the enemy through the month as they laid siege to the town. Then, the gates of the town opened! I had not force enough to beat the enemy, Masters...I must report that it was Losha and Perdion that failed you."

"You all failed, fool," Alexis snarled. She stomped back to her throne and sat, withering Sheol with her glare.

"Perdion, pray continue the tale," Flauros said.

"It is as Sheol said, Masters, though I must place the blame squarely on Losha's shoulders. I took the shock troops and left her the archers and the settlers to arrange defense of the town. She should easily have been able to hold out all season, though the number of the enemy turned out to be larger than we expected. I returned to nearby Acaia to gather more forces, and was on my way back when I received the news the settlement had been razed. I left my men garrisoned there and returned when summoned. So clearly Losha cost us the battle," the general finished, stepping back and bowing his head.

Flauros smiled. "Losha, it appears as I have often told my sister: the weaker sex lacks judgment as well as strength. But please, tell your story, and we shall see."

Losha calmly began. "It is as they say, my prince and princess, though they underestimate the numbers of your foes. They had many times the number we set out with. In a battle we might have taken them, but the deaths of our troops would have been a great loss. So I decided that the loss of the settlers was preferable to battle."

"How dare you! You were ordered to hold the settlement!"

"My Mistress, I have the orders here with me. It says, 'stop the invading army when they reach our town of Pavu'nar.' That is what I did."

"Losha, you just said that you lost the settlers."

"Oh did I forget to mention? Before I abandoned the town--and its annoying inhabitants--to the enemy, I poisoned the food stores, and the wine, and the water."

Alexis blinked; Flauros sat upright in his throne. "Sheol, Perdion, you may leave, your orders will be forthcoming. Losha, stay." The young man skittered out, and the older man followed, but not before giving Losha a cruel smile.

"So have I angered my Masters?" Losha asked.

"Dear Losha," Alexis said with a smile, "you have redeemed yourself utterly. Come, we have a gift for you."

Losha is everything people think of when they picture a vampire - stunningly beautiful, wickedly cruel and incredibly powerful, easily able to manouver through society, treating mortal kings and lords the way a shark treats a school of fish.

Don't let her ability to manipulate mortals fool you into thinking she is nothing more than a schemer, the vampiress has mastered melee combat, and augmented by her undead strength she is a fearsome combatant, as well as a spellcaster of no small skill. Most terrifying of all is her ability to resurrect herself from the dead, provided she has feasted before she is brought low.

Archaos

When the Age of Ice came upon Erebus, civilized men abandoned their cities and fled to the caves. In the darkness below the world, some managed to maintain their former society and heritage and waited out the Ice Age amongst friends. Others however were not so fortunate in their choice of cave. One such group were the Archos - a minor barbarian tribe during the Age of Magic. Fleeing the surface as the blizzards blasted their village, the Archosians fled into a large cave-complex.

The tribe had not expected to abandon their village and had little time to prepare supplies in their hurried flight. The caves themselves offered little - save for shelter - and in desperation the tribe turned to eating the insects that dwelled in the upper caves. Scouts were sent to investigate further into the caves to find other food and when they returned days later, they carried with them a number of spider carcasses - each roughly the size of a man's head. The caves below teemed with these creatures and it seemed that - whilst unpleasant tasting - they would provide adequate food. A few tribesmen became ill at first, but over the years they developed an immunity to the poison.

The immunity was not complete however. Slowly but surely the poison was building up in the bodies of the tribesmen and being passed down to the next generation. Some of the newborn showed signs of mutation or disfigurement and almost all took on an unhealthy looking pallour. Shortly before the time that the ice began to recede, a cult emerged amongst members of the tribe and centered around the worship of the spiders. The cult did not stop consuming the young spiders, but treated the meal more as a ritual than a method of survival. For each meal, they gave thanks to a greater spider, commonly called "Mother".

- Cities are filled with masses of domesticated Giant Spiders and other more terrifying arachnids.

- The Archos are all incredibly resistant to poison as well as being so poisonous themselves that contact with their blood can kill.
- The more mutated Archos are initiated as a warrior elite in the cult of Mother, and the half human half spider cultists are incredibly deadly.

Mother, the Ur-Spider

Light. Bright. Prey outside. Hunt. Kill. Feed.

The massive form of the spider burst from the cave on legs like chitinous birch trees. The dwarves stood for a moment in shock as the beast speared the first of them. Panic swept the ranks of the Soldiers of Kilmorph and some began to run. Never before had they seen such a beast, and by Kandros' gold - it looked angry!

Kill. Feed. Kill. Feed. Kill. Protect the nest.

The Haruspex emerged from the cave next, leading a host of giant spiders. Beneath them, the floor moved as a carpet of Mother's young raced ahead. As the first spells were cast, the dwarves were in full flight. Huntsmen were already in pursuit, few of their warriors would make it back to their mountain homes. The Haruspex attended Mother, expecting her to return to the nest. She did not.

Hunt. Kill. Feed. Hunt...

The first Arachnid, the template from which all other spiders were derived, Mother has spent aeons crawling through the pitch black caverns at the core of the world, growing vast and terrible on a diet of nightmarish scuttling things that never see the light of day.

Now, lured to the surface by offerings of living humans this mountain sized horror of chitin and razor sharp fangs dripping a corrosive poison that has lain low man, angel, demon and god alike stands ready to fall upon the enemies of the Archos and consume them all!

You now have 1000 CP.

Locations

There are many places of great power across Erebus, sites of incredible value to anyone who can hold them. Thanks to the interference of a certain someone, a few of these locations can be moved to near your new home...

You may choose one for free, a second for 300 CP and a third for 600 CP.

Cliffs Of Kelle

Once the site of a centre for the worship of Tali, any settlements on these storm-shrouded mountains have long since been abandoned. It has been said that the ruined temples carved into it's peaks are inhabited by the spirit of a priestess of Tali, whose devotion towards her diety drove her to madness, as he never responded to her prayers. Seeking affirmation of her faith, she threw herself off the highest of the cliffs, believing that her god would lift her to safety, and died on the rocks below. Ever since, stormclouds have covered the mountains, covering them in a constant veil of darkness, only ever shattered by flashes of lightning.

As well as providing an incredible source of Air Mana and a place where such spells as effect the weather and sky can be cast with incredible ease and massively increased effects, the titanic storms that seethe around the cliffs can be harnessed to obliterate those who would dare lay siege to your holdings.

Bair Of Lacuna

In the first age, the high age after the gods signed the concord and left Erebus to the mortals, Kylorin the first and greatest mage ever to exist saw fit to gather all those who bore the spark of magic into one place where they could teach and be taught.

The Bair is a colossal floating palace, untouched by the ravages of time and ice, a place of incredible luxury and conceals a great many arcane secrets, as well as truly incredible source of Dimensional Mana. The enchantments that hold this mana surge in check both allow the Bair to fly, prevent all but the most powerful from even approaching and allow the lord of the Bair to teleport to any location they control or have seen.

Bradelines well

Who or what Bradeline was, or why they felt the need to create such a portal have all been lost to the mists of time, and any who may have been able to answer long ago turned to dust. What

is known is that the well contains a pathway to a bleak, grey realm of despair, a hiding place for those souls who have not been claimed by any of the gods and who have yet escaped the notice of Hyborem.

As well as a source of Entropy Mana, the well teems with unclaimed souls, anyone who lays claim to it will find themselves in possession of an incredible, if disturbing source of information, for the dead remember all things.

Of course, there may be other uses you can think of for all those souls...

Broken Sepulcher

Kylorin gathered the first mages, and taught them, and he watched as they developed new forms of magic. In time these mages came to view themselves as superior, and all other people as farm animals at best, and at worst things to destroy for amusement, the same way a child would pull the legs from a fly.

One of these mages, Barbatos came to be called the Liche, the first and greatest master of Necromancy ever to exist on Erebus. In time Kylorin came to repent of his dark ways and sought to convince his apprentices to follow suit, or to stop them. Even with all his power he was unable to destroy Barbatos, for the Liche was able to return from death at will. Ultimately all he could do was seal the Necromancer away in the Sepulcher.

It seems that Barbatos was able to effect an escape sometime during the centuries of ice, for the great, ten thousand ton keystone has been shattered in two and cast aside, the Sepulcher empty now. Barbatos long imprisonment has left its mark though, for the tomb functions as a massive source of Death Mana, but beyond that, those entombed here cannot and do not rest easily, rising again after a few hours as undead, utterly subservient to those who rule the Sepulcher. In a world where armies clash almost daily, there is certainly no shortage of bodies...

Odio's Prison

When the compact was signed and the gods and their armies made ready to leave Erebus Odio, Archangel of Rage refused to lay down his weapons and leave in peace. In his fury he turned against the Dwarves, the children of Kilmorph, Goddess of Earth. At that moment the Compact was broken and Kilmorph was free to act. Grabbing the rogue Archangel she dragged Odio into the Earth, petrifying him for all eternity.

Now all that remains visible of Odio is head and an arm, reaching for the sky and looking nothing so much as a statue of a drowning man struggling to keep his head above water.

As well as being a massive source of Body Mana you will be able to release Odio once per jump against the target of your choice. Given that the parts of the Aarchangel of Rage still visible tower almost a mile into the air, it is safe to say that few can stand against him.

Mount Kalshekk

One of the few remaining places of warmth in the Age of Ice, Mount Kalshekk is the greatest volcano on Erebus, and the tunnels and jungle filled valleys that dot its mighty flanks are the sole reason the Lizardmen even survived, to say nothing of the fabled dinosaurs, titanic reptilian beasts rumoured to be ancient kin of the dragons.

The volcano serves as an incredible source of Fire Mana, and the caldera can be used as a colossal forge, large enough to create weapons and armour of any size that seethe with molten fury. The caves of Mount Kalshekk are also thick with veins of Obsidian, a material that can easily be used to manufacture weapons of incredible sharpness and armour that greatly resists magic.

Mirror of heaven

Once there were great deserts that covered Erebus, for the god of the sun and the goddess of fire were as close as deities can be, and more often than not one accompanied the other across the sky each day, the light and heat scorching the land below. In these places only the Malakim, the desert tribesmen dwelled, and when in great need the Malakim seek guidance by heading alone into the desert. Though they risk death they often receive visions or enlightenment. The most holy of these wildlands is the Mirror of Heaven, a desert so hot the sands have melted to smooth glass sea.

At the core of this glass sea is a place where the sand has been turned into a mirror so perfect its reflection can show those who can survive the heat anything that has or is happening. The mirror also focuses Sun Mana and is an incredible font of the stuff.

Pool of Tears

There is a place, a small pool within a quiet forest glade. Quiet and peaceful, yet permeated with an air of sadness so intense few can bring themselves to speak in this place, instead silently weeping for those lost.

This is the Pool of Tears, and it is the place Angels go to mourn.

As well as being a source of Water Mana, bathing in the Pool of Tears can wash away any injury or illness.

Pyre of the Seraphic

When Bhaal fell, she crashed into and then through Erebus as she made her way to hell, and the Bannor were dragged along in her wake. Many more people felt the effects of her fall though - twisted and changed and burned into a new form they became the first of the Orcs, Goblins and Ogres and united as the Clan of Embers they came to worship Bhaal.

Constructed from massive, crudely cut stone blocks wrestled into place by countless slaves, the ever burning fire atop this rough, step sided pyramid came to be the holiest place of fallen Bhaal, a place where captured angels were sacrificed to the hungry flames.

As well as a massive source of Fire Mana, anyone who goes into the flames, willingly or not, will be reborn as a Fire Elemental. Mortals become beings of living magical flame, but as yet no one knows just what would occur if a more powerful creature went into the flames.

Ruins of Patria

Patria was the first city, the capital of the Empire of the first high age and the greatest settlement the world has ever seen. Wonders now only seen in a handful of the greatest palaces were commonplace, and many of the things achieved by The Patrians aren't even talked about in myths and legends, for some things are just too unbelievable.

Though the city is all but gone now, a little of its magic remains - the foundations of the ruined buildings and the roads between them still exist, and they were all laid out in carefully measured geomantic patterns.

As well as being a powerful source of Earth Mana these massive glyphs will affect your entire newly adopted home civilisation, drawing forth truly incredible amounts of mineral wealth and gems. Even the poorest citizens will be counted as a Lord in other lands, and the forces you have available will be clad in Mithril arms and armour normally only seen on the elite bodyguards of kings.

Ring of carcer

She withered in the onslaught of flames, for the first time feeling the sensation of burning. It was as if she dove into the sun. Tears of gold ran down her sword, so hot it was melting before reaching its target. Her armor popped and warped and her wings were little more than charred stubs.

Behind her 440 angels fought against thousands. There was little hope but they fought because hope was not required, only passion for what they were. And hatred for what they would not become.

They were all hurling down. Bhall had succumbed, and in that thought destroyed the heaven that they all occupied. She paid little attention to the war raging around her, a battlefield streaking through the sky, angels flying, burning and killing each other. Bhall was the burning heart of the inferno, like a massive meteor surrounded by thousands of shattered pieces, and Brigit was diving towards her.

Brigit landed on her chest, her willpower split between protecting herself, guiding her movements and reaching out to Bhall. Brigit was barely taller than the goddess head but she raised her sword to drive it through to Bhall's heart.

"My queen, you must recant. The men and gods all stand on your strength. In your loss you will consume creation."

There was no response, Brigit raised her sword again, but she could not finish the motion. It was not the pain, or the fall, she was simply unable to do it.

"Can you not kill me child?"

Bhall's words rang through each of her angel's. Behind her Brigit could see the ground nearing, there was a great city below with tall spires and vast domed temples.

"You cannot fall, you won't let this happen!"

Bhall closed her eyes, as if considering the statement, then lashed out at her highest angel grabbing Brigit in her right hand and pointing her left toward the mass of warring angels. In that second each of the 440 angels that hadn't followed Bhall that had remained loyal to her holy dominion was incinerated in pale yellow flames. The thousands that had followed their queen cheered, Brigit could see that they were already being transformed by their fall into twisted horrid shapes. Of all of Bhalls angels only Brigit remained pure and beautiful.

"You will not join me?"

"No." Brigit remained absolute.

Just before striking the ground Bhaal threw Brigit away from her. To a place where fire creatures would never go, deep into the lands of snow and ice. Bhaal's commands chased after her, forming a prison for the archangel, a ring of lights that burn anyone who tries to pass through it. And to this day Brigit remains trapped within it.

Brigit the Shining is the last of the uncorrupted angels of Bhaal, a figure of unsurpassed beauty, a woman whose hair is fire and whose wings are inferno. As an Archangel she is incredibly powerful, one of the most deadly combatants that walks Erebus, and as the last bearer of the fires of the uncorrupted goddess of flame, it may be possible to elevate her to godhood...

Oh, and the Ring of Carcer itself is an incredible source of Law Mana as well.

Seven Pines

When the Gods met to sign the Concord, they met in a stand of seven white pines, and forever after the place was held sacred by followers of all gods, the trees all bearing sacred insignia of those who signed the agreement to cede Erebus to the mortal races.

Any agreement made in this place is beyond sacred - No matter who or what made the contract, as long as it was signed in good faith the universe itself will see to punishment of those that break faith, and no matter how powerful you think you are, the reality you exist in turning against you is not something you can survive.

The site also provides a surfeit of enchantment mana, and serves as a location many pilgrims travel to, bringing a boost to the economy and news from far off lands as well.

Sironas Beacon

In the time before the concord, the gods waged war through proxies, fierce Dragons, wild Krakens, and armies of lesser angels and demons and, rarely, face to face. In either case, the destruction caused was cataclysmic.

Immanuel Logos was a follower of Sirona, goddess of wisdom. He ruled a small tribe in her name, dispensing wisdom and providing shelter for her followers. Until one day he observed her army, a phalanx of titans, marching upon a stronghold of Aeron. The armies met in a field worked by a group of subsistence farmers. When the battle ended, the armies were tattered, but the bystanders were worse, broken in body, fields destroyed, and despondent of spirit. It was a scene played out countless times, as dragons crushed struggling settlements when they clashed or holy fire rained down upon those caught in the middle. Immanuel believed in his

goddess, but he could no longer stand on the sidelines, nor confine his care to his own people.

Off came his regal symbols, and he tossed aside his sacred spear for the last time. He gathered orphaned children in his arms, and doled comfort to the dying. Sirona watched this noble leader leave her service but did not forbid him leaving. She knew that for humanity to survive, they needed more than someone fighting on their behalf. They needed care and shelter through the days of heavenly warfare.

Sironas Beacon was the place he founded, a temple, a hospital, a refuge, a school, a place where the lost, the sick and the downtrodden could find respite. The beacon itself is an incredible source of Spirit Mana and radiates a light that raises the spirit of all that are bathed in its light. Hope blossoms, and inspiration strikes almost at random, people both emotionally healthy and prone to almost daily flights of brilliance.

Tomb of Sucellus

... Mulcarn entered creation and with a whisper the Luchuirp army was wiped out. A permanent winter set in across creation.

The gods considered this breaking of the compact. They were unwilling to restart the Godswar, but couldn't let Mulcarn move into creation unchallenged. They agreed to let one god go into creation to fight Mulcarn. That god was Sucellus, the god of nature.

Sucellus entered creation and battled with Mulcarn. Though he fought long and hard, eventually Mulcarn triumphed and Sucellus body was broken in seven pieces and scattered across Erebus. The Soul of Sucellus departed for the Underworld, where he helped Arawn, God of Life and Death, deal with the huge influx of souls that perished in the cataclysms that marked the beginning of the Age of Ice.

The tomb itself is not the resting place of Sucellus however. Indeed, it is the place of his resurrection, the place where he became the god of life, and the echoes of this event still echo in the small marble mausoleum. As well as being a source of Life Mana, the tomb radiates life, bringing almost unimaginable vitality to the surrounding areas. Crops grow almost overnight, farm animals give birth to six or seven healthy, thriving offspring at a time, the soil is deep and rich, waters teem with fish and lifespans almost double.

Tower of Eyes

While Kylorin was the first Archmage, he was never the most powerful. In time he encountered a young boy called Perpentach, a boy lost in his own mind, starving to death as he conversed with people only he could hear. In time Kylorin came to understand Perpentach was the first

practitioner of mind magic, and the voices were direct, perfect copies of all the minds he had visited. Using Perpentach's own power, he twisted the young boy's mind, sealing away the unwanted cacophany of voices and restoring the sanity of the young man.

Perpentach exchanged madness for wickedness.

Finally, eventually Kylorin came to repent his own wicked ways and sought to undo the evils he had unleashed and caused to be unleashed. One was beyond even his great powers though.

Perpentach.

In the end, Kylorin could not destroy Perpentach, and all he could do was shatter the seals within the young mage's mind that held back the countless personalities that were trapped within his mind.

Rendered catatonic by the sheer noise of all those voices, Perpentach could do nothing as Kylorin called up a great tower and created mindless golems to guard it, a prison the mind mage would not soon escape.

The Tower of Eyes stands empty now, though it is not unoccupied. The tower is first of all a massive source of Mind Mana, and more than that, the echoes of all those voices trapped in Perpentach's mind have imprinted onto the stones of the tower themselves, giving the building its own unique sentience. Every one of those personalities have merged into one that is incredibly wise, incredibly intelligent and is also unfortunately somewhat ...quirky. The Tower, immobile as it is represents perhaps the most powerful magic user to exist or ever have existed, and it came to be purely by accident.

Yggdrasil

The first living thing ever to exist on Erebus, Yggdrasil, the first tree, remains undimmed and unharmed by Mulcarn's ice, the branches of the great tree shielding an area hundreds of miles across from the frost and snow, miles after mile of verdant forest that exists in an eternal half twilight, the sunlight filtered by the leaves of the great tree and leaving all under its boughs in half shadow.

Lakes and cities and even farmland exist in and on and between the great branches of the tree, clouds crashing into the very top of the mighty plant, and down on the ground amongst the roots strange plants and fungi thrive, things found nowhere else.

The fruit of Yggdrasil are massive nuts the size of a man's head. They can be refined with ease into Nature Mana, and the meat of the nut is truly incredible. As the progenitor of all plants, the nuts each taste different, as exquisite as they are unique, flavours hinting at fruits and crops

yet to exist. A few mouthfuls of the delicious stuff is enough to sustain a man through a week of backbreaking labour and he can expect injuries, aches, pains and exhaustion to fade as he chews.

If the seeds are planted, while they will not grow into another Yggdrasil unless the first is somehow destroyed, they will sprout into whatever plants the planter would find most useful, root vegetables for the hungry to massive shade giving palm trees for those trapped in the glare of the desert sun.

Letum Frigidus

Mulcarn, God of Winter froze the world, and Sucellus, God of Nature went to the world to battle him. In the end Mulcarn triumphed, and this place, this bleak, grey circle of roughly worked ice slabs marks where the God of Nature was slain. The Illians, the wild men who worship Mulcarn out of fear wrestled the slabs of ice into place and hold it as the most sacred place in Erebus.

Even now the echoes of the cataclysmic battle resonate here, and the unleashed power of the Gods of Winter and Nature has marked the Letum Frigidus as well.

As well as being one of the only sources of Ice Mana on Erebus Winter spreads from the spot, frost and snow covering the terrain, though thanks to the influence of the fallen God Sucellus nature survives and thrives, grass growing beneath the snow, animals with thick winter pelts dwelling quite happily amongst frozen trees. As a result, while your own followers will be able to live quite comfortably, invaders will face all the problems resulting from starting a winter war in the ice age.

Dragon Bones

The most powerful engines of war deployed during the Godswar, the fall of even one was a momentous event that more than likely changed not just the course of the war but the face of Erebus itself, the titanic beasts big enough to sunder mountains in their death throes.

What name this one bore was lost long, long ago, but even now its influence is still felt. The massive skeleton radiates an aura of disruption that warps and deforms magics cast, and enough of the dragons spirit yet lingers that it can control the effect to the point where only hostile magics are effected, the anti-magic field encompassing all territory claimed by the ruler of the shattered mountain it rests on.

As well as being a source of Chaos Mana, the bones themselves can be mined for bone marrow,

the substance called Dragon Glass, a translucent blue crystal that absorbs magic like a sponge and can easily be fashioned into magical batteries or amulets.

Nine Unknown Men

A circle of free standing stones rising twice the height of a man, each bearing the roughly chiseled outline of a cloaked figure, the site is shrouded in mystery, literally and figuratively. Who placed the circle of standing stones, when, why or even how they work is truly an enigma. Even the exact number of the stones is uncertain, since they have a tendency to quietly move behind anyone paying close attention to them.

The site is a veritable fountain of Shadow Mana, and when the land the Nine Unknown Men stand on is claimed the power of the circle becomes apparent - Those within the area effected become invisible, utterly undetectable by any means, magical or otherwise, until they attack an invader.

Artifacts of an Elder Age

In the times before the Age of Ice there were countless wonders forged, and now as treasure hunters grow bolder and strike deeper into the ruins of forgotten ages they once again see the light of day.

Jade Torc

200 CP

A heavy necklace of carved Jade sections, the Jade Torc is widely coveted by lord and king alike, for it renders the wearer utterly invulnerable to poisons and toxins of all kinds.

Swift Boots

200 CP

History remembers these green leather boots by many names - Ten Step Boots, Seven League Boots and other names. History also remembers the many attempts mages and enchanters have made to duplicate the boots, and the results of wearing shoes that periodically see your feet twenty miles or so appart. Suffice to say, only the original pair of Swift Boots is safe to

wear, and when worn they allow one to step across miles of terrain at a time.

Ring of Striking

200 CP

Regarded by the greatest warriors as a cursed item and by the worst as an artifact of unparalleled power, the ring will guide the hand that wears it in combat, allowing blows to slide through an opponents guard with ease. The ring can turn the clumsiest person into an incredible warrior, but those with skill will find their attacks disrupted as the ring chooses alternate attacks and targets.

Travellers Cloak

300 CP

A cloak of shimmering scales that seems to perfectly reflect the terrain around it, the cloak has been utilised by several of the greatest thieves throughout the ages to render themselves virtually invisible. It was never intended for such acts however, for it was created for wanderers, shielding them from any and all environmental hazards and allowing the wearer to travel through the worst hurricanes or snowstorms as easily as a person walks across a room.

Cursed Token of Ragnarok

300 CP

A small tarnished silver wolfshead, the token is tied to the fate of the world, or, slightly more accurately, to its end. The closer the world comes to being unmade, be it fire or frost or any other fate that could befall a world, the more power the token will make available to its bearer, but with each strike it will also bring the world closer to the end.

Sylviens Perfect Lyre

300 CP

"The music. It might have lasted for a moment, or perhaps eternity had quietly passed as I stood transfixed at the edge of the forest. When it stopped, I felt my heart ache for the slowly dying beauty. The player, a slight elven lass, surely a princess of an ancient clan, turned to me and smiled. "Milady," I said, "Pray tell me what gift I might give you in return for the song that graced my ears, and what life of service do you ask, that I might chance to hear it again?" She but bid me take her instrument, this bright and perfect lyre, and to bring it here, to play it here that the joy given me might be passed on and peace grow stronger. Or at least that's what I tell people to sell more tickets."

—Emmedriys, famed bard of Evermore

One of the two most famous instruments ever made, Sylviens Lyre is so well made that even the most talentless, tone deaf fool can play music that would make an Angel weep with joy. In the hands of a master musician, it can sway hearts and minds with ease, spreading the culture of the bard playing the instrument with the speed of song.

Scorched Staff

300 CP

Forged from a meteorite that fell on the city of Garduk mere weeks after the fall of Bhall, the Scorched Staff was held to be a sacred artifact by the Clan of Embers, for it shrouds the wielder in a wreath of flame that scorched attackers to cinders and grants an affinity for Fire Mana - the more Fire Mana Nodes they have claimed, the more powerful they become.

Rod of Winds

300 CP

A solid staff some seven feet long and crafted from some light blue metal, winds snap and roar around the staff at all times, the weapon floating in the core of a minor gale even when no hand holds it to call forth its power. The staff allows its wielder the power of flight, as well as granting an affinity for Air Mana - the more Air Mana Nodes they have claimed, the more powerful they become.

Timor Mask

300 CP

A roughly made thing that appears as if someone has tried to carve a plank of wood into a mask of some sort and then decorated it with bundles of bloody feathers, the mask has somehow gained the ability to reshape itself, taking on the worst aspects of the viewers worst fears. Should someone don the mask, they can be assured that a glance will fill enemies with the sort of terror that kills lesser men.

Heart Amulet

300 CP

A tiny golden amulet in the shape of a stylised heart, this artifact seems warm at all times and strangely comfortable to handle, filling the bearer with a sense of confidence and the certainty that things will turn out well in the end. Beyond that, the artifact massively boosts the regenerative powers of its bearer, and the better a person they are, the more pronounced the effect.

Shield of Dagda

400 CP

Dagda, God of Force and Balance saw fit to endow this shield with a fraction of his power, and so this silver tower shield now makes the most well built fortress seem flimsy by comparison. While the shield cannot protect against magic or enveloping attacks such as dragons fire, the force of any melee attack that connects with the shield simply ceases to exist. The weakest child could defend against the most powerful ogre with the greatest of ease with this shield.

Staff of Souls

400 CP

The stave wielded by the first Necromancer Barbatos, how and why it came to leave his service is unknown, and the staff itself seems disinclined to discuss the matter. Formed of charred bone and almost six feet long the Staff of Souls bears its own dark sentience, though the artifacts personality is not the eldritch bringer of misery most would envisage, rather it is

incredibly laconic and laid back, speaking rarely and with a voice that suggests the speaker had more than their rightful share of adventure long ago and is in no particular hurry to experience more.

Simply holding the staff infers a portion of Barbatos power, and its new owner will find themselves crackling with Necromatic power, attacks rotting and decaying anything mortal by decades, even centuries at a time. Those spellcasters wielding the staff however, find themselves in possession of an exceptionally knowledgeable master of necromancy as well as gaining an affinity for Death Mana - the more Death Mana Nodes they have claimed, the more powerful they become.

Ring of Perception

400 CP

A polished steel band that bears an inscription that reads 'Open your eyes, then open your eyes again and see', the ring enhances a person's powers of perception to an incredible degree. No assassin or ambush will trouble the wearer, traps are as obvious as a beacon, lies told may as well be accompanied with the blast of a horn and after a few moments of conversation a person's true intent will be revealed to you.

Compelling jewel

500 CP

A crimson gemstone the size of a man's thumb cut with ten thousand facets and suspended from a delicate gold chain, the jewel's true power comes when it is shown to those the bearer has beaten in combat. Weakened and vulnerable few can resist the artifact's power as it twists memories, subtly altering them to the point where they may believe themselves a friend or ally of the bearer.

The jewel will not effect supernatural entities such as demons, angels, avatars or gods.

Hauberk of Abjuration

500 CP

A simple chainmail overcoat, this relic stands testament to just how high the first age truly was, for while it renders the wearer utterly immune to hostile magics its maker apparently considered it so mundane he or she didn't even bother to add any sort of maker's mark to the artifact.

Promotions

While your patron has abandoned you here for her amusement, as she is wont to do, she has

offered you the chance to gain a few new skills...

Cover

200 CP

Through a combination of skill with a shield and pure luck, ranged attacks are rendered almost completely ineffective. Clouds of arrows may darken the sky above you, but the end result is nothing but a field of arrows your opponents must stumble through to reach you.

Aptitude

300 CP

While this does not grant you instant knowledge of the magics used in Erebus, it does grant you, what else, but an aptitude for them - you will find unravelling the mysteries of magic far, far simpler from now on.

City Garrison

300 CP

You will find yourself counted as one of the greatest defensive fighters in Erebus history with this - organising the defence of a city or fortress or even a circle of wagons will be child's play, and with a few hours of preparation you can turn any of those places into an almost insurmountable obstacle.

City Raider

300 CP

Walls and moats mean almost nothing to you, minor distractions at worst. Without thinking you find yourself coming up with innovative ways to circumvent defences and leave defenders isolated and vulnerable.

Defensive

300 CP

On the defensive you are nothing so much as an unbreachable fortress, a wall that cannot be toppled. When foes attack you, your fighting skills are almost unmatched, though this style suffers on the offensive, to the point of worthlessness.

Drill

300 CP

You know how to raise and how to train troops, from common soldiers to archers to heavy cavalry, the tips and tricks and methods required to organise, teach, inspire and lead such fighters is second nature to you.

Dragon Slaying

300 CP

The most terrible beasts forged in the war between gods, Dragons are all but unstoppable. That isn't to say many have tried, from the greatest heroes down to those men and women who have simply been pushed beyond breaking point. Many have failed before even attacking, for the Dragon Fear each beast exudes strips courage and strength from all warriors. With this, the mind numbing aura of terror that surrounds the great beasts will not and can not affect you.

Should you close to combat with one of the great nightmare beasts, you will find yourself familiar with the creature - no two dragons are alike, each moves and fights and thinks differently, and understanding what the scaled fury will attempt will grant you precious seconds longer to live.

Demon Slaying

300 CP

Demons have long plagued Erebus, fallen angels and mistakes from when the gods united to create reality itself and other, stranger things, all united in a hatred of life and hope. With this, the infernal hellfire that shrouds the most terrible demons will not harm you, though others would be reduced to charred, crumbling bone by the presence and sometimes even simply the gaze of the greatest demons.

So too will their whispered temptations avail them nothing, their words falling on deaf ears whenever they seek to tempt you into an eternity of service to Hyborem, their promises unable to so much as stir a flicker of avarice within you.

Guerilla

300 CP

Most commanders dread taking armies into broken and hilly terrain, and for good reason - battles in such places are inevitably chaotic and drawn out, the landscape favouring the defenders immeasurably, every hilltop a minor fortress that must be overcome to allow progress.

You are in your element in such places, capable of utilising brilliant tactics and the lay of the land itself to stage campaigns both against and in defense of such places, till your opponents would swear blind they face five or six times the numbers you have at your disposal.

Hardy

300 CP

Even the legendary durability of the dwarves, forged from stone by the Goddess Kilmorph pales in comparison to you now, javelins nothing more irritating than mosquito bites, fifty mile marches through knee deep swamps in the middle of a snowstorm nothing more arduous to you than quietly enjoying a glass of wine.

Marksman

300 CP

Skill with ranged weapons beyond anything but the wildest stories the bards tell can be yours with this purchase, bows, crossbows, javelins, perhaps even the strange smoke spewing devices of the Mechanos can be mastered to an incredible degree within a few hours of practise, even if you were never even aware the weapon in question existed before you obtained one.

Medic

300 CP

Skilled as a herbalist and apothecary as well as a battlefield surgeon, you can keep yourself and your patients alive and in good health through simple skill and knowledge. In an age where surgical precision translates to 'Within an inch or two, plus a bucket of boiling pitch and a lot of screaming' you will find yourself rather popular to say the least.

Mobility

300 CP

You will find yourself fleet of foot, far quicker on your feet than you were before, but above and beyond this you will know how to organise an army to truly move as well, effortlessly arranging the massed ranks of soldiers into formation and keeping them moving with such speed that enemies will come to believe they can all fly!

Mountaineer

300 CP

Mountain ranges typically form impassable barriers to most civilisations, mighty walls unbreachable by all save a handful of entities. With this, while you are not an entity capable of bringing down a mountain, you are capable of bypassing it and leading your forces safely through the bleak, unforgiving and frozen terrain with speed and ease.

Navigation

300 CP

Skilled to the point where you rival the greatest of the Lanun sea captains, your command of any vessel you find yourself captaining is truly a thing of legend. Boats slice through the waves like a shark, and crews work like well oiled machines.

Perfect Sight

300 CP

With sight that Rivals Fiacra, the Eagle called by some The North Wind and kept as a pet by Mulcarn, nothing escapes your gaze. Your sight is so acute that even the most skillfully cast illusions simply unravel before your eyes.

Subdue Animals

300 CP

Many great animals roam Erebus, from the mighty Mammoths to the wily and cunning Wolves

that roam the tundra. With this not only do you know how to track each one, but you may effortlessly domesticate these creatures as well.

Subdue Beasts

400 CP

Erebus is home to monsters, things strange and terrible, from the wild Drakes that make their homes on the storm tossed peaks of the Mountains across the land to the mighty Sea Serpents and Giant Turtles that roam the seas. With this you find yourself aware of just where to find these beasts, how to identify them from the smallest of tracks and beyond that, how to tame them as well...

Complications

There are a great many remnants from the Godswar that still stalk Erebus, even now. Should you seek a greater challenge here, feel free to hunt these terrors.

Orthus The Barbarian King

+ 200 CP

The greatest of the Orcs and chosen champion of Bhall, Orthus and his horde have lain waste to more civilisations than any short of Mulcarn himself. Orthus towers over even his Ogre bodyguard, a monstrous, scar covered slab of muscle almost fifteen feet tall visibly mutated by Chaos magic, massive bone spurs jutting from his body.

His weapon, the Axe of Orthus is almost as famed as its wielder, a massive, crudely forged iron blade, the axe has been enchanted by the greatest shamans of the Clan of Embers and as a result it is surprisingly powerful, and grants any who wield it the ability to go into a terrifying battle frenzy.

Zarcas The Long Sighted

+ 200 CP

Perhaps the most deadly goblin ever to walk Erebus, Zarcas is a hunter surpassed by none, and the list of his kills is easily longer than the greenskin is tall. A member of the Scorpion Clan, a group of goblins already famed as archers and master poisoners Zarcas rose to prominence when he obtained his artifact weapon, the bow of Long Sight. Already capable of shooting

down a Sparrow in flight from almost a mile away, the bow simply enhanced his already terrifying skill.

While the bow itself is powerful, its greatest ability is that it allows its wielder to see and target anything within a hundred miles.

Tumtum

+ 300 CP

TUMTUM comes the cry from the horde, TUMTUM TUMTUM TUMTUM, a guttural chant, deep and rhythmic, almost like the beat of a monstrous drum.

The front ranks of the barbarian horde part, and something moves forward, a titanic Stoneskin Ogre the size of a Hill Giant riding a gargantuan boar almost three meters tall at the shoulder with tusks that rival the lances of the the most heavily armed knights, the animal regards you with tiny, red eyes that almost glow with porcine malice before it begins a charge that literally shakes the earth...

The Ogre is a Stoneskin Ogre, bigger, stronger and meaner than its lesser kin. If a comparison must be made, Ordinary Ogres and Stoneskin Ogres are the equivalent to Goblins and Orcs, though the Stoneskin Ogres nigh invulnerability to unenchanted weapons and incredible regenerative abilities make the comparison somewhat innacurate.

The boar, Tumtum, is the descendant of one of the great boars that pulled the chariot of Sucellus, the God of Nature, and it is both ancient and deadly. It's hide is thick enough to turn aside all but the most powerful weapons, and magics simply slide off the bristly hide of the beast.

Vulgen the King Wolf

+ 400 CP

As dogs are to wolves, so are Dire Wolves to the common wolves that haunt the forests and tundra of Erebus. Vulgen is the first of the Dire Wolves, the archetype from which all other canines were derived. In Erebus, common wolves are the size of horses, Dire Wolves stand half again as tall as these, and Vulgen? Vulgen dwarfs his lesser kin.

Capable of crossing hundreds of miles in a night and tracking a target from across entire continents the King Wolf is a terrifying combatant. His hide is tough enough to turn aside all but the most powerful weapons and attacks, and he is almost completely invulnerable to magic to boot, his fangs, all the size of a broadsword are capable of shredding even mithril like tissue paper and at his howl thousands of Dire Wolves will move to aid their monarch.

Sailors Dirge

+ 400 CP

The old captain reluctantly rose from his seat at the cabin, where he had been perusing his collection of maps. They had arrived, one of the crew had told him in a rather shaken voice. He was not at all comfortable with the situation, but he knew that he must not show it, or even think of it. They could sense that kind of thing, he had heard, and while not superstitious, he nevertheless was a careful man, the evidence of which being the fact that he had managed to become so old despite his dangerous profession.

As he came up on deck, he noticed that the afternoon sun had given way to foggy twilight. He must have been in the cabin for longer than he thought, though a small voice in the back of his mind told him that it was because of their presence. He resolved to ignore the voice, but he feared it was going to become more insistent soon. He'd better get these negotiations over with quickly, hopefully he would receive the reward without trouble, and be able to head home to Selena as soon as possible. The small voice laughed at this thought, but it was a bitter and humorless laughter tinged with desperation.

He saw their ship anchored next to theirs, he saw the plank that had provided a makeshift bridge, and finally his eyes fell upon the dark silhouette standing on the deck before him, with a few smaller ones scattered behind. "Good evening, captain. It is truly a nice ship you've got here."

The voice was warm and friendly in a slightly disturbing sort of way, a little bit like the warm and friendly voice of a predator luring its prey, the small voice commented. The figure made a gesture with what the captain fervently hoped was its arm, apparently meant simply to indicate the ship, but somehow managing to appear much more ominous. By the overlord's, this was unsettling! Then, a bit too late to be proper etiquette, he realized that he was expected to say something.

"Y-yes, thank you. Reputedly the best ship in the fleet, we are...."

"Of course you are. We chose you for the mission. Because your ship was chosen by Us, it follows logically that it is the best. We do not make mistakes. Thus it is and thus it always will be. Tell us of your mission." The captain was momentarily baffled at the way the tone of voice so quickly changed from alluring to commanding, but he could do nothing but obey. In a voice more stuttering in actuality than the captain believed it to be, he recounted the story of the past week. Of how they had sailed with the rest of the fleet to lead the final attack. Of how the fleet had sailed through hidden canals and shallow rivers to take the city by surprise. Of how the captain and his crew had, the night before the fleet reached the city, stealthily left the fleet to sail ahead and warn the city of the attack, betraying the positions of the other ships. Of how soldiers from the city had rushed to the ships' position under cover of darkness, destroying them and massacring their unprepared crews with ease.

As the tale progressed, the captain felt increasingly uncomfortable, and it must have been evident on his face, because the dark figure replied:

"Do not trouble yourself with meaningless guilt, captain. When We first approached you, We offered you a choice between death and life. You chose life. Life at the expense of many deaths, deaths of friends and allies perhaps, but life nonetheless. It was the rational choice. It is the choice We would have made. Given the circumstances, yes, it was the right choice. You couldn't have known, after all..."

The captain at first felt comforted by this, but then he suddenly heard the last sentence again in his mind, and a great feeling of horror overcame him.

"No...no...please...no..."he moaned

"You did not know that the choice We offered to you was not in fact a choice between life and death, but rather a choice between loyalty and betrayal. What We knew and you did not was that death would follow in either case. As We previously said, We do not make mistakes. Letting you live would be a mistake."

"No...NO! You promised...you promised...what have I done...?" The captain was sobbing now.

"An amusing comment. A betrayer should know better than to hold others to their word, We find." The dark figure took a staff that had been hanging on its back, and proceeded to ram it straight downwards into the ship, ignoring the sobbing captain. A flash of darkish purple light shone, and when the captain looked up again through his tear-filled eyes, They had vanished, along with their ship, leaving an enormous hole straight through the vessel, which was quickly starting to take in water. As the rest of the crew rushed about on the ship, panicking and making feeble attempts at saving themselves, the captain merely sat on his knees in front of the crack, thinking of the lives he had destroyed, thinking of Selena, thinking of his folly, all the while longing for the waves that would end his suffering.

As They knew then, and he did not, the suffering of him and his crew was not, in fact, about to end. It was about to begin.

The Sailors Dirge is one of the two most famous ships ever to sail the seas of Erebus, though perhaps infamous would be a better word in this case. The rotting hulk is the stuff of nightmares, and can appear on any body of water a ship has sailed, and the sight of its decaying black sails is enough to send entire crews to suicide before the Dirge can close and see them dragged aboard to suffer for eternity.

Leviathan

+500 CP

Danalin, God of Water was not greatly active even during the Godswar, content to shepherd his chosen people, the Aaifon, a race of humans who thanks to Danalin had gained the ability to

dwell below the seas as easily as they walked the land.

Eventually the Compact was signed, and Danalin left Erebus, while the Aifon retreated to a place that came to be called Aaifons Isle.

Something happened though, something that was terrible enough, dangerous enough that the Aifon contacted Danalin directly, and the God of Water dispatched his Avatar, the Leviathan.

It was not enough. Now, the Aifon exist no longer, and whatever happened was enough to drive the titanic Island Fish utterly, irrevocably insane.

Now the Leviathan, a sea creature that appears something like a cross between a whale, a piranha and an Angler Fish just under a mile from the tip of its tail to the front of its head roams the seas, obliterating anything that it finds.

Acheron, the Red Dragon

+600 CP

It flittered about impatiently as the ages passed, in this place without time. In this almost nothingness where myths go when dead but not forgotten. And Erebus would not soon forget Acheron, the flame lord, the beast of destruction, the Red Dragon. The earth had trembled when he walked. Centuries old Fir trees had been uprooted when he took flight. When he and his adversaries clashed, it was a sight like no other before or since.

But at the Compact, the power that sustained him was withdrawn. He was as fearsome as ever but his wounds did not heal so fast. When he brought forth his fire, now he got a taste of the pain he inflicted. And one fateful battle, he was not quite fast enough, and he fell, never to rise again.

He could not rest here as most of the others did, content in the majesty of myth. It was not his nature. His nature was that of fire. Fire, the ravenous devourer. Fire, the nimble dancer brought aloft on the winds. And fire, patient when defeated, but ever eager to spring to life again with the faintest fuel. And at last he detected it. The essence of his mistress Bhall. Not the goddess herself, but some people close to her--and Acheron's--fiery nature. They reproduced quickly, grew fast, fought with a roar, and died with rage. Chaotic, but strictly following the laws that governed them. Violent, but leaving a void that encouraged new growth. Nimble, but leaving a lasting mark.

They didn't know they called to him, that they gave him strength, but they did. Their rage opened a portal that he alone could take and returned substance to his long decayed flesh and bones.

Three-Tooth dumped his bag on the ground in Ahepetr. Three human skulls, an iron knife, and a handful of shiny trinkets tumbled out. Half-Nose reached for a diamond ring, and Three-Tooth

jumped him. The two orcs tumbled around the ground as the nearby goblins cheered them on, sneaking Three-Tooth's spoils when they could.

They were interrupted by an earth shaking roar. All turned to face him. Resplendent in primal glory, Acheron stood. His leathery skin had the luster of rubies, all the more so when his breath illuminated the dusk with a billowing cloud of fire. Every tooth, fang, and claw shone, sharp and perfect, as if he had not fought countless battles. His leathery wings embraced the humble village. His face wore a fearsome snarl ... or possibly, though it seemed so out of place on this beast, a smile.

As one the orcs and goblins gathered their war spoils and carried them before the mighty dragon, laying them at his feet. In time, the pile would grow to a mountain as the legend was reborn.

Mount Mostath

+ 800 CP

On the very northern edges of Erebus winter never ends and days are only a few hours long. Ever was it thus, even before the horrors of Mulcarn. Giant glaciers creep south like gigantic arcs, each laden with a cargo of horrors. Wandering tribes of Illians and Doviello mark the progress of these vast ice mountains, some of which can advance as much as a mile in a year. Generations of tribesmen come to know and honour these vast bergs, revering them as mobile temples to Mulcarn.

Of all these moving mountains, none are so mysterious or well known as Mostath. Barely peeking above a deep bed of bone chilling fog, the enigmatic mountain can travel as much as a hundred miles in a year, and unlike its fellow glaciers, it moves erratically. Sometimes it even turns north again, leaving its fellows on their inexorable march to the warmth of the southern lands and returns to the frozen roof of the world, only to slowly return again later. Sometimes young and brave and foolish tribesmen seek to climb the mountain, but even the Illians, the devotees of Mulcarn are repulsed by the incredible chill of the fog.

As a result, few now, if any know the truth. Mostath is not a mountain. Mostath is not a glacier. Mostath is a living thing, a behemoth, the greatest of the behemoths and perhaps the last to still walk Erebus, a mammoth creature the size of a glacier, and one almost as slow.

While Mostath is not a beast of war, its sheer size means that villages, towns, cities, even entire civilisations can be trodden underfoot. The great beast moves so slowly that only the stupid or truly insane might stand in his way, and his great strength allows him to quite literally shove entire mountains aside. If some unfortunate creature falls beneath his lumbering pace, they will surely die. Those few who can survive long enough to attack, and do so with enough force to attract the Mountains attention will find themselves battling against an enraged thing that appears as if a clumsy sculptor has carved a glacier into the shape of a mammoth, a trunk over six miles long and capable of shattering the greatest of Sequoia the way a man snaps a

toothpick swinging back and forth as the Mountain Herder frenzies, his rage titanic enough to see entire continents reshaped!

The Herald of Winter.

Required Complication.
+ 0 (zero) CP.

An axe, a plow, a hammer. Tools are the marker of the pinnacle races, clearly distinguishing them from the animals that share this world alongside them. From the beginning of civilisation, the most important of these tools were weapons, utilized for protection and conquest.

As man built, so built the gods. The weapon of the gods was never something so mundane as a sword or spear, however. It was the beast, created monsters plucked from the nightmares of men and sent against each other, or against the armies of their rivals. The most frightening of these beasts were the dragons.

The most terrible of the dragons was Drifa, the ultimate weapon of Mulcarn, the God of Winter. Collosal even by the standards of his gargantuan kind, a blizzard of fangs, wings, and frozen death that legends say could stand against the entire armies of other gods at a time.

Now, as you look out into the distance and watch the first banks of fog starting to spill over the peaks of the mountains that ring your territory you realise all those legends were incomplete. Bards and storytellers, generation after generation of them, and they all must have excised parts from the tales, Drifa growing smaller in each retelling, simply because without seeing the Great Dragon, none would believe the stories.

Already the air is so cold breathing hurts, the chill raking at your lungs.

You watch, and in the distance something lands on top of one of the mountain peaks. It takes several long moments for you to make sense of what you are seeing, and even when you do, it is difficult to believe what you are seeing.

A hand.

Wwith deliberate slowness Drifa pulls itself up and over the mountain range the same way a man would clamber over a waist high fence...

Now begins one of your greatest challenges, for only you are powerful enough to challenge the Avatar of the God of Winter. Should you fall, your adventure is over, and civilisation itself will fall soon after, and hope and light and warmth will vanish from Erebus forever.

Should you triumph, in time you discover this is to be one of the easiest battles you must wage to secure a future for this world...

Death of a god.

You aren't sure how long the battle with Drifa takes. As a living aspect of the God of Winter and Stasis time around the great beast starts to stagnate.

Later on you discover the fight went on for almost nine days straight before it happened.

Drifa froze for a moment, eyes unfocused as it looked at something not here.

Without warning the great beast screamed.

A sound of rage and hate and pain and loss more terrible than you could ever have thought possible.

A sound that even years later would sometimes echo in your nightmares.

There won't be a better moment.

You strike, and you strike true.

The beast doesn't move, and the first tendrils of fear begin to coil around your heart, till slowly it begins to fall with all the terrible force of an avalanche. The impact of the great body shakes buildings to the ground thousands of miles away.

You stand, panting, gasping for air, scarce daring to believe that the Avatar of the God of Winter

is dead.

You stop.

Inhale.

there is something there....

you breathe in again and you realise what has happened.

Somehow, Mulcarn is dead.

While you fought his Avatar, the god himself had been struck down. The scream Drifa let out...

That must have been the moment when Mulcarn was slain.

You inhale once more, savouring.

The air is already heady with a scent that none have encountered for untold centuries.

The scent of Spring.