

Aden

Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Kirtania

Locations:

Audos Reach – Library, maintained by an order of academics and a small but elite corps of temple guards. Holds a modestly sized but very in-depth library of history.

Bandit's Roost – This shanty town on Spar Isle grew up around an abandoned fortification on the highest point of the island. The town now serves as a haven for all manner of bandit, brigand and pirate, though some who live there make their way legitimately.

Circle of Sands - Sand-blasted spires of rock emphasize the emptiness of the Red Wastes in the Oujang Desert. This circle once held significance for someone, but those people are long gone.

Copperton – This mining town grew up around the Copperton mines in the King's Cross Mountains. The area is rich with seams of copper ore, though the richest veins are high in the mountains, both dangerous and difficult to get to. The town has had periodic problems with the kobold tribes that live in the hills.

Cotter's Bay – A broad, deep bay off the Odane Ocean. The bay gave rise to Harborhead. The bay is protected by a pair of massive stone jetties that must have been made by magic. Atop the northern jetty is a hundred-foot-tall statue of a robed woman of middle age, made of the same stone as the jetty. The southern jetty supports a similarly sized tower of stone, though the tower's doors and windows are merely facades – it is also a statue.

Courad-Del-Tarron – This black basalt keep rises up out of the fine dust of the Oujang Desert at the base of Mount Hesperon. The keep is maintained by giants in menacing black iron armor, and from inside can be heard the baying of desert dogs. Rumors and legends say that the master of the castle is a beautiful, pale man with pointed ears and teeth that is the father of all the jackals, dingoes, coyotes and dogs in the desert.

Crystal Beaches – The crystal beaches are just that – beaches of fine glass and crystal sand. On bright days the sight of the beach alone can blind someone.

Demogol - Black basalt and rusted iron mark the architecture of this bleak city, and the same structures underlie the spirits of its people. Demogol is a place of rain, shadow, and hard living.

Droskar's Crag - Sitting to the south and the east of the Little Spindle is a quirk of geography. Built stone by stone the small jut of Droskar's Crag barely peeks up over the treetops. Over the years the stones have lost their edges and nature has taken its course. The mountain is now largely indistinguishable from any other. Below it are the cavernous workshops of Droskar's dedicated cult, now long gone.

Ebincourt – The ruins between the rivers Corner and Belton have no proper name, but have been called Ebincourt for well over two hundred years. The ruins are mainly stone walls and tile roofs, since all wood has rotted away. While the architecture seems outdated now, it must have been tremendously advanced when built. Rumors abound that the location is haunted, and most locals believe them enough to stay away.

Ent's Grove - The graveyard of the forest creatures squats deep in the Spindlegrove. The dark forest opens around the mulch and detritus of the ents' last resting place. In the recent past the grove has become corrupted by something, a sign of much darker goings on in the Spindlegrove. The natives of the forest shun this place now, and seek a way to make things right.

Falselight – This tiny town is more a caravan of carts than an actual settlement. The main feature of the town is a false lighthouse meant to lure sailors to wreck on the rocky shores and shallows nearby. Harborhead frequently sends groups of guards and mercenaries to destroy the fake tower and clear the town out, but the residents are always gone by the time they arrive. Falselight responds by sending raiding parties to dim the light at Luxton.

Galley's Graveyard – The Galley's Graveyard marks the site of most of the wrecks caused by the Falselight tower. Dozens of merchant vessels, ships-of-the-line and even rowboats have come to rest in the shallow surf. Popular superstition has it that the ghosts of sailors killed by wreck haunt the area, and furthermore a great black galley makes an appearance every harvest season to claim the souls of fishermen and all of those who make their living by the sea.

Gol Lake - While most lakes might support trade and fishing, Gol Lake has little enough to go around. The lake is fertile enough, if immensely deep and algae-covered, but the frequent struggles between Golir and Aden make life in the area difficult.

Harborhead – The largest town and keep in a week's travel, Harborhead is a thriving port community. The city sports only the population of a large town, but does enough trade and floats enough ships to be a bustling and profitable place. Harborhead is a large town with about 4,500 permanent inhabitants, though up to 7,500 people may be in the city at any one time. The gp limit is 10,000, the alignment of the town is lawful neutral, and the town is overseen by a governor equivalent to a baron.

Hellpass – This pass into the Oujang Desert runs through the mountains near the Stonemaw Ruins. A combination of these 'haunted' ruins' proximity and a number of stories about the dangerous inhabitants and happenings of the mountains in this area make the Hellpass a nasty route in the best of times. Searing in the summer, prone to avalanches in the winter, and full of predatory wildlife... the Hellpass is simply best not attempted.

Highchurch – This village was once the seat of temporal power for no fewer than three major religions, and has the churches to prove it. However, since the founding of Harborhead, most business and most power have simply moved there. These days Highchurch is famous mainly for its stunning ancient architecture and art, and a truly dangerous alcoholic cider.

Hundred Streams – Hundred Streams is the name given to both the collection of creeks, rivers and rivulets that run through the northern grasslands and the name of the area itself. The streams draw many different sediments from the mountains, giving each stream a distinct color (some are red, some brown, some bright blue or green, and some are perfectly clear).

Isford – Isford is the place that Copperton's wares end up, and as such is populated by many skilled smiths and metalworkers. As well, they take lumber from the Spinwood and turn out well-crafted wooden products. All of these are shipped downriver to Harborhead, where they make their way up the coast or overseas. This is also where grain and paper goods from the plains make their way to the west.

Kassen - A small town just to the north of the Little Spindle, not many bother with Kassen except as a stop between Isford and Harborhead.

King's Cross Mountains – The King's Cross Mountains are a rocky and precipitous bunch of peaks. A range of foothills stretch east of them, but the west faces of most mountains are craggy and dangerous to ascend or descend. The reason for this disparity is unclear. The tops of the mountains are permanently capped in snow, and avalanches are not uncommon in winter.

Lakefort - Between Aden and Golir is Gol Lake. In the center of Gol Lake a craggy island juts up, and a bleak fortress further projects from the island. The Lakefort has traditionally been a bone of contention between Golir and Aden. The island changes hands frequently. A small village sits on the northern shore, as well as the southern. Traditionally the town in control of the Lakefort puts the opposing village to the torch. Whichever nation controls the fort controls river passage to the sea.

Little Spar – The smallest of the three Spar Islands, Little Spar is home to not much more than a few casks of forgotten rum, a number of exotic small animals and a vast variety of wildlife.

Little Spindle – The small outcropping of the Spinwood known as Little Spindle is composed of widely spaced deciduous trees. Small adorable animals romp through it and it is a favorite place for hunting, camping and picnicking for those near enough to travel here. Logging teams from Isford and some small surrounding villages mark out tracts of lumber for harvest. Other areas are tended as orchards for towns in the area. Some say the forest started as a massive fruit orchard that grew beyond its boundaries.

Luxton – Named for the lighthouse at the edge of town, Luxton is a small fishing village that suffers frequent raids from the piratical town Falselight to the south.

Mardintown - The border between the Serpent Sea and the Odane Ocean can most easily be gauged by Mardintown's location. Mardintown is a port, but not a populous one. The marshes to the south hinder trade, the dangerous seas make major shipping difficult, and it's too far across the river for most caravans. The real wealth of the city is not in frequent trade but in their easy access to the Crystal Beaches.

Marshford - The last stop before entering the Shield Marshes is a humble and unassuming town. Marshford is built of dusty bricks and hard marsh wood. Being the final stop for many travelers before the marsh means that the town is typically well-stocked with adventuring goods, and is the home of several buyers more than willing to trade in antiquities, rare herbs and animals, etc.

Monastery of Illias – The Maimed God keeps a large (and largely empty) monastery high in the mountains. The monastery is curiously well fortified, sporting thick retaining walls, wells and gardens inside the keep and enough room to house a village if need be. Despite this only a few dozen acolytes and priests live here with their paladins and a few supplicants who have come for healing and help.

Mount Hesperon – Mount Hesperon is named for a long-dead and forgotten god of fire. The mountain is an active volcano that constantly belches out oily black smoke and occasionally rumbles loudly. A tiny clan of fire spirits and their thralls live near the rim. The thralls are wiped out every few years by pyroclastic expulsions, but the spirits collect more.

Northspar – The second largest of the Spar Islands, Northspar features a few abandoned huts and little else. The water here is not potable and smells sulfuric. Even plant life refuses to grow on much of the island. The only thing on the gray rock here is a foul-smelling yellow lichen.

Ocean Oracle – The fourth island in the near Odane Ocean, the Ocean Oracle's island has no proper name. The island is overgrown on the south face, from the sandy beach all the way up to the craggy

middle point of the island. From there the isle drops dangerously into rough surf. Somewhere in the midst of the scrub and forest on the south face is a slender tower made of bones or ivory colored stones. There lives the Ocean Oracle. It may be a spirit, a demon, an angel or simply an ancient crone. Whatever the Oracle is, it will grant petitioners information about the future and faraway places in return for strange prices.

Odane Ocean – The Odane Ocean is mellow and clear, but cold. Fish are plentiful north of Cotter's Bay and near Luxton and the Tear. Crabs regularly infest the Crystal Beaches (tiny things with brightly colored shells). The Odane Ocean is shallow, with a shelf that drops sharply about a quarter mile out from the shore.

Oujang Desert – West of the King's Cross Mountains is the dusty desert called Oujang. The Oujang Desert is mostly sand and salt flats, though scrub and brush grow in profusion where they are able. Travel across the desert is not as dangerous as traveling the Southern Sea of Fire and oases can be found if one knows where to look. However, these oases are frequented as well by lanky hyenas, jackals and desert dogs that travel in packs. The wildlife and heat lightning make trekking across the Oujang perilous. More dangerous even is the chance of bumping into the desert dogs kept by the terrible master of Courod-Del-Tarron, or perhaps his black armored messengers.

Red Pass – The southernmost pass through the King's Cross Mountains, Red Pass is well trafficked and easily traveled on foot. The pass does have a tendency to fill with snow each winter, making it impassable for a third of the year. The small town nearby, the Gray Village, marks the safe end of the pass to the west.

River Belton – The River Cormer turns near Isford, and the River Belton rushes from it, cold and fast and deep. The water runs dark with silt and sediment and frequently cuts deeply enough into the foothills to create ravines and canyons. All manner of strange water-creatures live in the Belton.

River Cormer - The River Cormer fed by the hundred streams. At its source it is tumbling and brisk, but as it reaches the plains and feeds into the River Belton it broadens. Here the water is cold and clear and full of fish. Past the towns of Isford and Copperton the river becomes polluted for many miles by livestock and the remnants of refinery. The river past Isford is also broad and deep enough to support a small river trade between Isford and Harborhead.

Scattered Isles - Where the Shield Marshes end and the Scattered Isles begin is a matter of some debate by geographers. The marshes spots of land sink into salt water, but low islands begin to spot the ocean soon after. The low islands then mature into broad expanses of fertile ground. Colonizing these islands is near impossible - they flood frequently, are too close to the denizens of the marshes, and have little to offer. At times, though, they are used as temporary hideouts for pirates and bandits, and they have been the refuge of more than one marooned fisherman.

Serpent's Sea – North of the Odane Ocean and distinguishable through no practical means other than location is the Serpent's Sea. It is named so for the strange goings-on that plague the area. Common reports indicate that the crabs that visit the Crystal Beaches grow to great size here, seeming to be more jewel-colored islands than creatures. Sightings of a tremendous serpent called the Leviathan are usually dismissed as fables and fibs. On at least one recorded occasion the glass from the crystal beaches floated out over the waves in a sheet a hundred miles on each side, creating a false land. When ships sailed into the glass their hulls were cut through. None survived.

Shield Marshes – The River Belton and Cotter’s Bay flood on occasion, helping to maintain the broad marshland north of Harborhead. The marsh is a perilous place full of sinkholes, twisted mangrove trees, poisonous creatures and plants and other such dangers. In addition to this a tribe of lizard-men live in the center of the swamp and make frequent raids on the road from Highchurch to Harborhead, and sometimes they even mount small skiffs and ride out on the surf to trouble fishermen. All attempts to track and confront the lizardfolk have been confounded by the impossibility of moving through the swamp.

Spar Isle – Spar Isle is a large crescent island in the Odane Ocean. The western side of the island is a forbidding cliff with sharp rocks at the bottom and treacherous currents flowing around it. In contrast the eastern side is composed of sandy beaches, broad fields and a tiny forest. The land is rich enough to support a small community, Bandit’s Roost, and the protected nature of the crescent makes it an ideal place to moor a ship.

Spindlegrove – This mysterious town is fiercely insular and deeply religious. Tucked away in the heart of the dark Spinwood, the town is comprised of treehouses, burrows and huts. Those who live in them are reported to be human, mostly. Outsiders claim that the tribe and their land devote worship to and are protected by a powerful god of the woods and his attendant spirits. Whether or not this is true, the inhabitants of Spindlegrove allow only minimal logging and brook no interference into their affairs.

Stonemaw Ruins - One of the remains of the cult of Xvim sits astride Hellspass. None visit this place, but a small sect of Xvim's dedicated have made their home here, and intend to begin a holy purge across the northern plains.

Sunken Halls - Rich with the ancient ruins of a fallen empire, the Sunken Halls are an adventurer's dream. Legends tell of a hundred treasure-vaults and a thousand palaces owned by the pashas of these coral-covered ruins. The city sits on the shallow bed of the Serpent Sea and collects coral, flotsam, and a rime of salt. Many of the taller towers project above the waves.

Tear Cove – Situated just south of Falselight, Tear Cove is a deep and comfortable place to dock a few galleys or a dozen smaller ships. The secluded nature of the cove and its easy defensibility make it a favorite place to hide for pirates and buccaneers.

The Fingers – A local legend told in Highchurch says that the Fingers are the barrows of five great protectors of the land; giants clothed in copper and bone. Further, if the land is ever in serious danger, these five will rise again with a ghostly army and protect their home. Young men in the village often dare each other to spend a few days camping among the Fingers.

The Spinwood – The woods are lovely, dark and deep. Broad deciduous trees and thick loam produce a close atmosphere that is intensified by the proximity of the trees. The forest grows very close in the Spinwood, and is inhabited by many things. Ghosts, fairies, serpents and all of the regular fauna make their home here, as well as a strange tribe of people in Spindlegrove. Recently there have been troubling reports of loggers and woodsmen assaulted by spiders the size of hounds, though no one has taken action on this.

The Tear – The land south of Tear Cove seems rippled and bucked, and looks as though a peninsula was simply torn off, leaving scraps of land and a ragged mark on the coastline. The waters here are impossible to sail safely due to sandbars, reefs, jagged rocks and vicious currents.

Vayellane - Perched at the border of the Spinwood, this elf-influenced town acts as the gate into the wood.

Villa Beata - The Beautiful Village is the northernmost outpost of Aden. It's a vacation spot near enough to visit the Crystal Beaches, the only safe harbor in the Serpent Sea, and one of the few places to make safe crossing between Golir and Aden. The town may be small but the inhabitants are cosmopolitan and well educated.

Village Haym - In the breadbasket of Aden the Village Haym stands out as the largest trading post for ranchers, vinyard owners, and farmers in all of the plains. The town is notable for its open air markets and several varieties of enchanted whiskey produced by the arcane brewers of the town.

White Barrow - Worship of Urgathoa is not something to display publicly. For that very reason her shrines and temples have ever been hidden. The White Barrow is an ancient bastion of vermin, disease, and the unclean things from outside of time. It has been forgotten by all but the most dedicated.

Yelfort - The second most vital point of defense on the border of Aden, Yelfort is a patchwork keep of yellow brick. It sprawls over the space of a small town, and contains markets, workshops, living quarters, etc.

Yll'shk - Lizardfolk are not known for their infrastructure. Yll'shk is their only town of any size and is the site of sacred meetings, important trade bazaars, and the occasional war council.

Creatures:

Blink Dogs – These hounds travel across the deserts and plains exactly like packs of regular dogs. However, every pack is usually twice the size it appears – half of the dogs are occupying the ghost world, blinking in and out of our world.

Dire Animals – Dire animals are the same as their normal kin (bears, boars and the like), but they have grown to incredible size. They are also usually fiercely territorial.

Dust Wights – Another danger of the Oujang Desert, dust wights are spirits raised from their rest by the foul smog around Mount Hesperon. While they are raised around the dark mountain, they range all across the desert.

Elementals – Elementals are nothing more or less than the physical manifestation of the land. They tend to occupy areas that are central to the area they guard: the largest tree in a forest, the tallest hill in a plain, etc. Neither good nor evil, their only purpose is to ensure that the land and its occupants survive.

Fairies – The Fey come in many, many shapes and sizes. The most common are the nymphs and satyrs that live between the Spingrove and the King's Cross Mountains. Other notable fey include the will'o'wisps that live in the Shield Marshes and the pixies that confuse travelers in the Spinwood. Most of the other fey make their home deep in the Spinwood and are rarely, if ever, seen.

Gnolls – The only real danger in the grasslands north of the River Belton, gnolls travel in small packs along with their hyenas. They present danger to humans only in large numbers, though they do occasionally raid small farms and ranches.

Hill Kobolds – The most dangerous of the kobold breeds, these small scaled creatures tend toward red and tan in their coloration. They present great difficulties to miners as they consider everything under the ground their own. They have been known to collapse mines, raid towns and accost travelers through passes.

House Kobolds – A house kobold chooses a household and makes it its own for the duration of its life. Like a live-in maid and gardener, a house kobold takes care of washing, gardening and other household chores in return for food and a place to sleep. They are mischievous and not good with children, but otherwise a great boon to any home.

Howlers – The only known pack of howlers lives in a canyon carved by the River Cormer, and is constantly fighting for territory with the pack of Krenshar that also occupy the canyon. They are fiercely territorial, and only a real danger to those who wander into the canyon.

Jewel Crabs – These tiny crabs congregate en masse on the Crystal Beaches. They come in many colors and their shells are prized for use in jewelry and in inks and paints.

Krenshar – The krenshar pack occupies a canyon carved by the River Cormer. They constantly fight with the pack of Howlers that lives in the same territory. While the howling of both packs bothers those who live nearby, they pose no real danger to those who avoid the canyon.

Lizardfolk – The Shield Marshes are home to a tribe of lizardfolk who know the swamp better than any other. The lizardfolk mostly gather and hunt what they need from the confines of the swamp, but occasionally raid travelers along the road from Highchurch to Harborhead.

Ogres – Ogres live and move around the southern tail of the King's Cross Mountains. Due to their low numbers they rarely trouble others, and most locals know to stay away from that area. They have a rudimentary alliance with the trolls that live in the same locale.

Sea Kobolds – The sea kobolds, also known as klaubetenmanner, take up posts on ships and boats. Unlike their mountain kin, sea kobolds are often viewed as wise and genial. They enjoy terrible jokes and have a weakness for tobacco. A ship is blessed to have a sea kobold aboard as they are masters of navigation and seamanship.

Shocker Lizards – These tiny blue lizards spend days burrowed in the sand under the Oujang Desert, and their nights hunting. They produce static electricity and travel in large packs to better hunt larger prey. At night in the desert their blue discharges can be seen for miles.

Trolls – The King's Cross Mountains are home to all kinds of creatures, among them the trolls. The trolls live in the south of the mountain range, and have formed a simple alliance with the ogre clan that lives nearby.

Wyverns – Wyverns are the apex predators of the northern mountains, making their nests high up in the peaks just below the snow caps. They hunt and live in packs, preying on mountain goats and the like, as well as any unlucky travelers in the King's Cross Mountains.

Unique Creatures:

Blight (Night Twist) – A small section of the Spinwood has grown darker than usual, with trees rotting inside their bark and creatures growing vicious. At the center of this foul blight is a twisted tree infested by some dark spirit.

Captain Fordaun – The captain of the Bonnie Lass, a black-hulled pirate ship driven into the rocks of the Tear in 1421. The Bonnie Lass shattered on the rocks in a storm and pitch and oil spilled on the deck and the ship lit afire despite the rain. With his last breath Captain Fordaun swore revenge on the helmsman. The helmsman was the first to abandon ship and one of the few to make it to shore alive. Captain Fordaun now amasses more wrecks and visits the site of his death once a year in a ghostly, smoking black ship.

Father Spindle (Treant) – At the center of the Spinwood is a single tremendous camphor tree. The knotted roots at the base are a warren of earth and wood, and in these roots grows an oak tree with the face of a man carved on it. The oak tree is young yet – or seems so- and does not spread its leaves far. The very few who have traveled to this holy place say that the oak tree can think, speak and even walk around. It claims to work in the service of the forest. Other plants seem to wake at his touch (awakened plants, shambling mounds, assassin vines, tendriculos, etc.).

Halqua (Gray Render) – When the trolls and ogres of the mountains seem to shrink away and hide in their caves, it can be guessed that the Halqua is ranging again. The Halqua is a massive beast with stony gray skin, beady eyes and vicious claws. It seems to eat anything organic, tearing up trees and consuming any living thing in its path. Moreso even than the trolls and ogres, the Halqua is the reason wise people don't visit the southern mountains.

Messengers (Beast of Xvim, Dread Warrior) – The Messengers that seem to follow Orenn's command in Courad-Del-Tarron are clearly not beasts, but they are also not human. Their black plate mail is composed of something with the texture and color of cast iron but they move as though it were no heavier than beaten steel. The armor is riveted around their bodies and no one living has seen what's inside. A sick green glowing smoke seems to pour out of the visors of their armor. If slain, legend has it, they will rise again under the employ of a newer and darker god. Burning or decapitation are the sure ways to prevent such a terrible occurrence.

Minotaur – In the near Oujang Desert there is a cursed figure. He has the body of a huge man, eight feet tall, and the head and shoulders of a bull. Its fur is thickly matted, its horns long and curving, and it seems not to want or need clothing or tools. The minotaur roams the desert from twilight to dawn, drawing sustenance from other animals and the low scrub of the desert. During the day he hides in caves and burrows.

Old Man Cormer (Dragon Eel) – "I once caught a fish this big," is the most common way to start a story about Old Man Cormer. Legend says that there's a huge scaled pike-like fish in the Cormer that rules the river. It is, apparently, one of the reasons that the River Cormer doesn't have all the strange wildlife that the River Belton does – Old Man Cormer eats anything smaller than himself, and that includes just about every fish in the rivers and seas. Most fishermen who have been on the Cormer long enough will brag that they've caught the Old Man at least once, but they threw him back and nobody was with them when it happened.

Orenn – If men are not the only animals capable of being evil, Orenn at least proves that they are the best at it. Whether birthed from a demon or simply bathed in the blood of a thousand innocents, there

is something distinctly dark and unearthly about the pale lord of Courad-Del-Tarron. The fortress itself seems to have showed up just as Orenn did and has never known another master. With him Orenn brought the Messengers and his vicious desert dogs, and even the mountain above began to belch darker smoke than ever before when Orenn arrived. The man himself, so they say, is a strange kind of beautiful. He is tall and hard as a board, perfectly pale from head to toe so that he shines in the desert sun. His eyes are black as night, his hair golden and sleek, and the nails of his left hand are like those of a hound. Whether any of this is true is debatable, as very few will admit to having visited Courad-Del-Tarron and lived. It's said you have to be a special kind of vile yourself to come back from that place.

Roc – While the rocky coasts near Falselight and the Tear have never been particularly safe, they now have a new predator to contend with. The roc, a massive bird that roams the coast and islands, has made its nest somewhere in the area. The bird is large enough to pick up small fishing vessels and rowboats and isn't too picky about its meal choices. It's assumed that the roc's nest is somewhere in the Tear where fishermen fear to go, but there have been no reliable sightings.

Shell Father – The jeweled crabs of the Crystal Beaches are no kind of threat on their own, but they do seem to have a tendency to grow unless they are checked. Specimens as large as two meters across have been caught in nets. The true prize though is a mythically sized creature that only rumors are told about. This crustacean has a shell over eight meters across and claws big enough to cut a man in half. The coloration is a bright, rich blue; all reports are consistent on this.

Silver Griffin – The King's Cross Mountains are a home to many strange animals, not least among them the silver griffin. It has a roost in the foothills of the mountains to the north and can be seen on clear days soaring across the wide plains. It has not attacked any humans yet, though it has wrought havoc on the livestock of farmers, taking chickens and even goats. Some hunters would love to add the griffin to their collection, while many naturalists protest this, citing the fact that it seems to be the only one of its kind.

Sphinx – Audos Reach houses some of the most learned scholars in the land, and superstitious locals say that there is a reason they have the answers to everything. According to the story, an ancient and wise creature called the sphinx lives in the mountains to the west and occasionally helps the scholars of Audos Reach.

Spider King (Ettercap) – In the Spinwood a wolf pack can kill you, a poisonous vine can kill you, and the spiders can kill you. The least pleasant fate by far is the spiders. Those reports coming from Spindlegrove traders say that the number of spiders in the forest has doubled in the last few years. Further, the Spindlegroves say that there is some kind of arachnid demon responsible for this: a twisted creature that lives in the darkest and dankest parts of the forest, preying on any creature who stumbles into its lair.

Swamp Witch (Green Hag) – While the lizardfolk are the most populous inhabitants of the Shield Marsh, they are far from the only ones to call that place home. One of the most infamous dangers of the swamp is the swamp witch, a twisted old hag who has a hut in the deep parts of the marsh. She is bitter and mean and dangerous to meet, it's said.

Terraphage (Purple Worm) – The Oujang Desert is many miles wide and it is unlikely that travelers will meet such a creature as the earth-eater (or terraphage, as scholars name the creature). Despite the low chance of meeting this creature, it remains one of the primary reasons that large caravans don't

traverse the desert. The worm is hundreds of feet long, burrows through the ground and swallows oxen whole. The inner maw is ringed entirely with teeth and it will shred anything that crosses its path.

The Leviathan (Purple Worm) – The leviathan has been a feature of the Serpent's Sea since anyone can remember, and is in fact the source of the area's name. The leviathan is a serpent a hundred feet long with needle-sharp teeth and a voracious appetite. While it seems to spend most of its time sleeping on the ocean floor, uncountable ships have been torn to shreds by its thrashing, with whole crews being swallowed or drowned.

The Tremorbeast (Ankheg) – Farmers in the plains north of Highchurch have had reason to complain in the last few seasons. Entire crops are eaten, animals slaughtered and fences knocked down, with the only trace being a patch of disturbed earth. These farmers report that the ground shook for a moment, and when they emerged to find the source of the disturbance they found only troubled ground and missing animals.

Notable People:

Boscoe Bradeus (Harborhead) – A single smoky bar in Harborhead is frequented only by those who are brave enough to visit, or stupid enough not to avoid it. The bar's name is the Smokeroom, and those who drink there are the Smokers. The proprietor of this establishment, and leader of the illegal gang that meets there, is Boscoe Bradeus. Boscoe is an ex-sailor (some say ex-pirate) that settled down in his mid-thirties to run a tavern. He is now a grizzled fifty year old who looks to have been keel-hauled a few times in his life. His face is craggy and salt-stained, his hair is white entirely and kept in fierce chops down to his chin. Boscoe has a foul mouth and a foul temper, and even the beer he serves is below-par.

Brother Hordun (Monastery of Illias) – Brother Hordun is the head of security at the Monastery of Illias. An imposing man of six foot seven, he isn't widely built, simply solid. The guards of the Monastery tend to move about without armor, so Brother Hordun is usually seen carrying only a spear taller than himself. He is a member of the hired temple guards, but as head of the contingent the priests saw fit to give him honorary membership in their order.

Captain Gurch (Bandit's Roost) – On Spar Isle, in the fortress at the center of Bandit's Roost, lives Captain Gurch. He is, at least in name, the lord of all the pirates that ply the Odane Ocean. However, since retiring from piracy himself some three years ago he has become more a merchant and governor, less a pirate lord.

Chaplain Grover (Highchurch) – By long tradition the leader of Highchurch has the title Chaplain. Chaplain Grover is young and new to leadership, but seems to have taken Highchurch well in hand. His strong ties with the religious and secular members of the upper class have helped him keep trade moving and incidents to a minimum.

Chief Jaled (Copperton) – Chief Jaled is Copperton's wealthiest man, owning some third of all the mines in the mountains. As such he is also the most powerful man in the town. Widely regarded as petty, jealous and domineering, he is nonetheless respected as a shrewd and vicious businessman.

Constable Merick (Harborhead) – The position of Constable in Harborhead is not one many men aspire to; constables go missing far more frequently than seems safe and the work is thankless. Constable Merick was thus picked from those who were foolish or ambitious enough to want the position – common consensus places him in the 'foolish' category. While he has been in command of the guard

crime has increased by a quarter. Politically he seems savvy enough to keep his job – if just for the moment.

Davien Montad (Copperton) – Davien is the brawniest, boldest and most eligible miner in Copperton. He does his own smithing, is well read, never speaks ill of others and in every way seems to be a perfect man. There are those who have grown suspicious of Davien, given that he has been the town's most eligible young bachelor for some twenty years without seeming to age or take any interest in the women that flock to him.

Dereck Carpenter (Isford) – Dereck Carpenter is the Headman of Isford, and fiercely competitive in everything he does. He competes with other people, other towns, etc. He owns a part of a copper mine and won't use iron or steel if he can avoid it. He owns a lumber tract and won't use wooden objects not cut from his trees if he can help it. His things are the best things!

Derek Miller (Isford) – Derek Miller is the Guildman of Isford, and the antithesis of Isford's Headman. Miller is fastidious, simpering and limp-wristed. He is often sneered at for being more an accountant than a leader, but seems somehow to keep his position and never have any real opposition.

Emery Sturbeck (Luxton) – Traditionally the best known and most powerful figure in Luxton is the lamp-lighter. Sturbeck is a middle-aged widow with three boys who has taken over the lighthouse since her husband died. While some in the town say a woman can't take care of such a vital duty, she's been proving them wrong for near on ten years.

Grenla (Highchurch) – The witch-woman known as Grenla is a constant source of irritation to the inhabitants and leadership of Highchurch. While her practices fly in the face of every religious tradition the town has, she gets results and is seemingly indispensable. Her potions and poultices work better than even the most learned priest's, and she has a strange way with children. So while townsfolk feel strange going to her for help, when there is no-one else she is who they turn to.

Herr Andretti (Harborhead) – Herr Andretti runs Harborhead, as much as any one man can. His offices and bureaus (of which he is so fond, being a bureaucrat) take care of most of the day-to-day business of running a bustling port town, but Herr Andretti still hasn't been seen sitting calmly since he inherited the position. His days seem to consist entirely of running from place to place with an armful of parchment sheets and a dozen attendants.

High Priest Eremoor (Monastery of Illias) – Eremoor is a truly old man, blind in one eye and losing sight in the other. He cannot walk unaided, takes his meals as weak broth and weaker ale and he can no longer lead services in prayer. The only reason he has not been removed from the office is that he was once so very beloved. The worry around the Monastery is that Eremoor will die without passing on his knowledge and position to another priest and there will need to be long and arduous processes enacted to choose the next High Priest.

Paden "Pay Day" Teedum (Isford) - Boss Kreed's second in command at the Lumber Guild. Teedum lacks imagination but compensates for that with single-minded efficiency and focus. He handles the day-to-day of the lumber consortium, making payments, getting contracts sent where they need to be, assigning cutting teams, scheduling floats down the river, and arranging strong-arm tactics and extortion when and where they're necessary.

Sil Silang Sucosh (Shield Marsh) – While the lizardfolk have a very loose system of government, there is always one who is larger and stronger than the rest. Right now that is a massive black-scaled female

named Sil Silang. She is aggressive, rash and harbors a deep resentment for any creatures that are not forced to live in a horrid marsh.

The Learned Vandrick Moorhausen (Audos Reach) – While Audos Reach operates without much in the way of leadership or any kind of vertical system of government, really, the only person who could be said to have more power than any other is the treasurer. Vandrick Moorhausen is little more than an up-jumped mathematician, but since he holds the purse-strings for such things as acquisitions of new materials and literature, he has some sway with the other members of the Reach.

The Lich King (Demogol) - The iron people, the iron lands, the iron towers of Golir are all under the omnipresent and tireless hands of the Lich King. His true name has been lost to time. All that's known is that he emerged some hundred years ago and united the villages of Golir into a single nation. He is a stormy and silent monarch of the stormy and silent land. He is, of course, deceased. His ties to the land are strong, but his unlife requires the sacrifice of one maiden, "untouched by mortal man," each year at the winter solstice. This woman he weds, and on their wedding night she dies, and he lives another year.

Thuldrin Kreed (Isford) - The head of the Lumber Union, Kreed is an evil, bitter man. He runs the guild with a tight fist and intimidation. No one in the Guild really likes him, but then nobody denies that he gets results. Sometimes you need a bad man to do a good job.

Organizations:

The Brotherhood of Merchants (Harborhead) – The lifeblood of Harborhead is the trade that moves through. From over the sea and from the north and even from across the desert merchants arrive to trade their goods. The Brotherhood of Merchants is an organization sanctioned by the kingdom and the city. They maintain docks, provide loans and keep records of debts, sell insurance on shipments, hire and dispatch guards for caravans and set prices on certain commodities. The Brotherhood of Merchants may well be the most powerful organization in the city.

The Brotherhood of Pilots (Harborhead) – When a ship comes in to Cotter's Bay it pauses to check with a member of the Brotherhood of Pilots. In most cities that feature a pilots' guild, the pilot is taken aboard and guides the ship into safe harbor. In the case of Harborhead the pilot is largely unnecessary due to the safety of the bay. Instead the Brotherhood of Pilots check the ship for contraband and compare the ship's maps and logs against their own. In essence, the Brotherhood of Pilots are charged with enforcing customs and tariffs.

The Brotherhood of Shipwrights (Harborhead) – In any port town the vocation of building ships and boats is respected, and Harborhead is no different. The Brotherhood of Shipwrights holds some sway in town, though it is largely through financial means. Their Brotherhood runs a bank, two shipping interests and a speculation business that functions as a primitive stock exchange.

The Historians' Guild (Highchurch) – The Historians' Guild of Highchurch is a small and insular organization that maintains family trees, historical records and an extensive library of law volumes. They operate out of a now-defunct chapel of Obeccai, with offices on the first level and records in the basement. The third floor is currently rented storage for a second-hand store down the road. While the Historians' Guild is small and holds little say in the governance of the town, they have a great wealth of information at their fingertips.

The Learned Men of Audos Reach (Audos Reach) – Audos Reach is one of the foremost colleges and libraries in the province, and the Learned Men are very proud of that fact. They allow only men into their organization, though they will take female students. Entry into the Learned Men requires that one complete a full course of training – taking up to three years – and then pass a grueling series of tests. The monks of Audos Reach began as royal historians. They collected vital histories and stored them in a kind of bunker. A young warrior applied to become one of the librarians ages ago. He was turned away at the doors. Instead of despairing he stayed out in the elements to knock on the door every day and ask again. While waiting outside the library he practiced his own exercises to stay strong and alert. When the library was attacked by bandits he fought them off single-handedly. The librarians accepted him into the order and asked him to teach those who were able to defend themselves. This was the beginning of the temple guards of Audos Reach. These days as many apply to become temple guards as librarians. Audos Reach is the font of unarmed martial arts in the eastern territory of Kirtania. The temple guards practice with fists and spears.

The Monks of Illias (Monastery of Illias) – In the King's Cross Mountains is one of the last temples to Illias, the god of mercy and protection. The Monks that live there are healers, spiritual leaders and penitent wandering priests. Anyone may come to the temple for sanctuary and healing, and they are expected to repay the temple only through menial labor and participation in services.

The Isford Farmers' Consortium (Isford) – The Farmer's Consortium of Isford is a loose kind of governing council. The council is composed of the farmers, ranchers, woodworkers and traders of the village, and usually occupy themselves with ensuring that the town continues to profit and avoid squabbles.

The Pathfinders (Harborhead, Highchurch) - A guild spanning much of the world, and with deep roots throughout western Kirtania, the Pathfinders are more of an old boys' club than anything else. Pathfinders provide connections for each other, safe houses, information, that sort of thing. It's wise to know some people who know some people. The group has clubhouses hidden in most major cities, and is constantly scouting for more. They have secret knocks, identifying pendants or rings or lapel pins, and the clubhouse's access is usually through the back room of a tavern or rickety stairs behind a butcher's shop. The Pathfinders are about as close as it gets to a guild for adventurers, and so they count many members that travel for profit, or have retired from adventuring, or sell valuable and exclusive items, etc. They endeavor to be the connection that every adventurer needs to every other adventurer. Membership is difficult to come by - you must be vouched for by three members in good standing, and must bring something new to the guild that they have never seen before. Members run the gamut of skills, ages, races, and even alignments. While it may seem tough to work with openly evil brothers they know that the Pathfinders are a necessary tool and that it's best to have friends in this world (the chaotic evil people aren't really team players anyway, and nearly never apply for membership).

The River Drivers' Guild (Isford) – While the name of the guild implies that this organization is wholly concerned with river trade, the truth is that it is the ruling body of Isford. The guild is composed of river drivers, miners, refiners, woodworkers and traders. They aim to keep the town prosperous and calm.

The Sea Clan (Bandit's Roost) – The Sea Clan is nothing more or less than a brotherhood of pirates and their families. While the clan is technically not all family, they treat each other as such. The clan features equal parts sailors, traders, smugglers, pirates and common people of the Spar islands. They are ruled by Captain Gurch, though he is just the first among equals.

The Second Holy Cartographer's Guild (Harborhead) – The Church of Avaleya provides the political force behind the Cartographer's Guild, which is tasked with keeping, creating and acquiring new maps. Their grand purpose is to fill in all of the blank spaces of the world, and hopefully to make them safe for others. As such they have maps of the sea, land and caves of the area. The Cartographer's Guild chapter based in Harborhead has access to relatively complete sea maps everywhere south of the Serpent's Sea, sketchy maps of the Oujang Desert, poor maps of the Spinwood, and fairly complete maps of the rest of the area, though the King's Cross Mountains remain largely a mystery. The Guild is one of the primary sources of income for mercenaries and adventurers, as they often hire them to map out new areas and bring back both records of their exploits and samples of the local vegetation.

The Smokers (Harborhead) – The Smokers are a local gang of Harborhead, and deal mainly in petty thefts and small-change extortion. While they are not a threat at the moment, under the lackadaisical law-keeping of Harborhead they may become a greater danger. Young street toughs are already gravitating to the gang.

The Lumber Union (Copperton, Isford, Kassen, Mardintown, Marshford, Vayellane) – Lumber trade and shipment in the area around the Spinwood and Little Spindle are entirely regulated by the Lumber Union. The Lumber Union have the most contact of any outsiders with the Spindlegroves, who have put strict limits on how much logging can be done in the woods.

Churches and Gods:

The Big Ten:

The Great Hunter, Xvim the Spear: God of the bloody hunt. Blood for the blood god! Demands the hearts of prey (eaten raw in a religious ecstasy by his worshippers, tossed to the dogs on the first hunt of the year by those less devout). Occasionally takes an avatar, the horned hunter, and leads bloody and violent hunts under the full moon.

Harvest's Hands, Ceremar: Ceremar asks the smallest of sacrifices: the burned husks of corn, the chaff of the last season and the like, and the seed of men to fertilize her fields. Brings rain, good harvests and so forth.

Plaguelord, Umain the Healer: The god of doctors, medics, healers, sanitation workers and the plague. Can heal or harm and does so with seeming whimsy.

Jagus, The Jackal, Lord of Death: After death, weighs the hearts of the dead against his own heart to decide punishment - only those more pure than he earn paradise. Also commands the jackal lords, servants of the veil and deathlights. Maintains the boundaries of life and death, and the Well of Souls. Despises the undead (with the exception of vampires, who are not undead in the strictest sense and therefore are just not his problem).

Seducer, Senya, Reaper of Debts: The arbiter of vengeance, debts and love. Oh, and also lust. Senya commands hearts, presides over marriages (which are a kind of debt), gamblers and particularly romantic vengeance (preferably way out of proportion to the original slight).

Timekeeper, Protiorius, the Keeper of the Cosmic Almanacs: Protiorius changes the seasons, dictates when lives end, arranges natural disasters, ensures that the sun rises and the moon changes - the whole shebang. She's a kind of godly accountant and book-keeper, and has a vast (infinite) tome of the past, present and future.

Obeccai, the Learned One, Messiah of the Mind: Legendarily, the only living being to ascend to the pantheon of ten. Obeccai is the patron of all mages, educated people, teachers, craftsmen, etc. Anyone that places a high value on hard work, learning and practice pays homage to Obeccai.

God of the Grape, Mithron, Reveler: The dictate of Mithron is 'party,' who encourages his followers to drink, dine, dance, sing and entertain. The goal is not to subsume life in revelry, but rather to celebrate the joy of a fleeting existence.

The Shield and the Blade, Zhako, Warmaster: The great general of the sky that oversees all war. He leads the armies of the gods, and is a meticulous planner. Known as much for his mercy as his rage, Zhako is mercurial and harbors grudges and debts over decades (mainly so that they do not interrupt his carefully laid plans).

Winged Walker, Avaleya, the Perfect Messenger: Goddess of roads, travel and exploration, Avaleya is also the creator of the written word - which she invented to deliver messages. Avaleya blesses anyone that explores or seeks to broaden themselves through new experiences, as well as travelers and messengers of course.

The Great Pantheon includes thousands of minor deities, half-gods, powerful angels, saints, demon lords, dukes of hell, elemental spirits, ghosts – if an extraplanar creature has a CR of 18 or higher it's likely worshipped by its own church. Creatures with a CR of 11 or higher may be very locally worshipped. If a creature is worth worshipping it can claim a spot in the Great Pantheon.