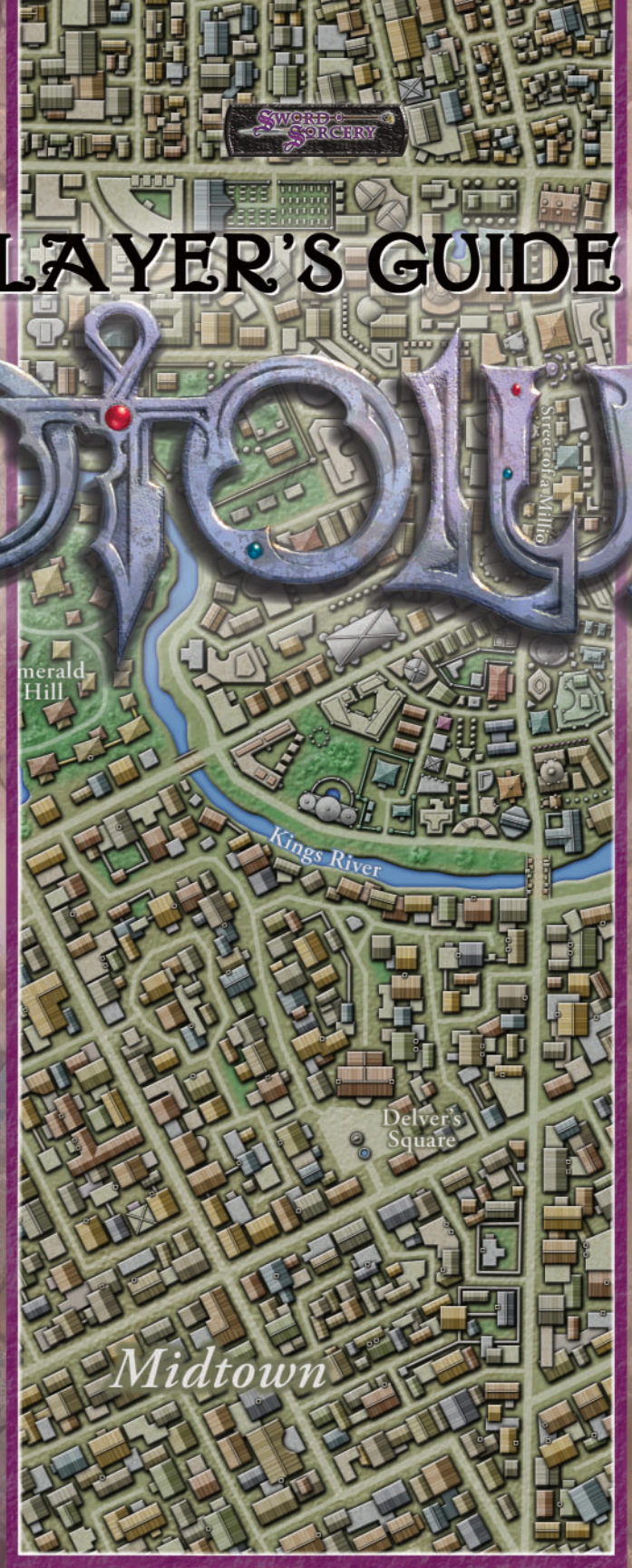
A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO

Ptolus™



d20 system

BY MONTE COOK

MALHAVOC PRESS®

A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO

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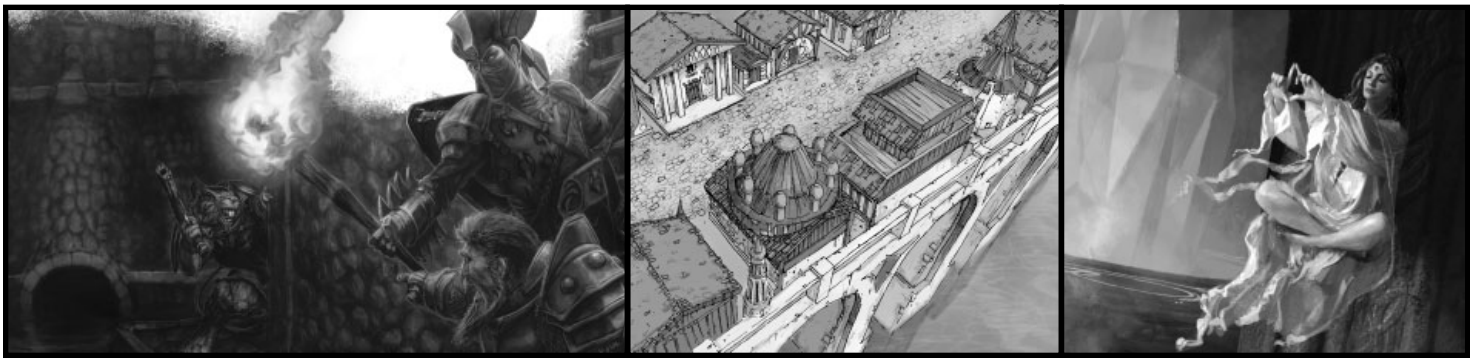
TABLE OF CONTENTS



Introduction

A Player's Guide to Ptolus

Welcome to the City 4
Campaign Feel 5
The City of Ptolus 5
Rulers 6
The Authorities and the Law .6
The Forces of Light 6
The Dark Side 6
The People of Ptolus 6
Districts of the City 7
The Docks 7
Guildsman District 8
Midtown 8
The Necropolis 9
Nobles' Quarter 9
North Market 9
Oldtown 9
Rivergate District 10
South Market 10
Temple District 10
The Warrens 10
The Undercity Market 10
The Look of Ptolus 11
Noble Houses 11
Organizations 12
Balacazar Crime Family . .12
Brotherhood of Redemption 12
The Conciliators 12
Delver's Guild 12
Dreaming Apothecary 12
The Fallen 12
Fate Weavers 12
The Forsaken 13
Healers of Sacred Heat . . .13
Inverted Pyramid 13
Keepers of the Veil 13
Killraven Crime League . . .13
Knights of the Golden Cross 13
Knights of the Pale 13
Longfingers Guild 13
The Malkuth 13
Order of the Fist 14
Pale Dogs 14
The Shuul 14
The Sorn 14
Sisterhood of Silence 14
The Vai 14
Viridian Lords 14
Religion 14
The Church of Lothian 14
Important Individuals in Ptolus .15
People From History 18
The World (and Beyond) 18
Outside the City Walls 18
Customs 18
History 19
Two Emperors 19
Life Under the Empire 19
The Empire Today 20
Timeline 20
Creating a Character for the Ptolus Campaign 22
Common Races 22
Minor Races 23
Other NPC Races 24
Names 24
Character Background 24
Character Classes 25
Level 26
Magic 26
Spells 26
Blessed Children 26
The Wintersouled 26
Equipment 26
Firearms and Technology 27

City Map

Districts of Ptolus 16–17

Character Sheet

For Ptolus PCs 28–29

Appendix

Legal and Open Game License . .30

INTRODUCTION

Ptolus is meant to be the d20 System in microcosm. It embodies all that is fundamental to the game, but it does so in the space of a single city. That means there are dungeons to explore as well as townsfolk to interact with. There are strange magical mysteries to discover, demons to fight, and even dragons. Ptolus is truly a city of adventure—player characters don't have to leave it to embark on amazing adventures.

Ptolus is the union of some aspects of real-world medieval Europe (as real as is fun) with the rules and flavor of the d20 System. When I wrote in the Third Edition DMG that merchants might hire wizards to use *detect thoughts* and *see invisibility* to deter crime, and that bars might post signs forbidding detection spells so the patrons can relax, I was thinking of Ptolus.

The Ptolus Campaign is the d20 rules with the volume turned all the way up. I created this world with the game rules in mind. The conceits of the game were the conceits of the setting. The feel of the rules was the feel of the city. If the rules suggested that something might happen a lot, then in Ptolus, it happened a lot. The effects of 1st-level spells come as a surprise to no one here. Tanglefoot bags, *rings of protection,* and a druid's animal companions are taken for granted.

I loved it when one day a player of mine said, "I *polymorph* myself into a troll and run out into the street after the thief."

Another player said, "Dude, you can't go out there like that!"

And the first player replied, "Don't worry about it! This is Ptolus—they see this stuff all the time."

I knew then that the first player really *got* Ptolus.

We'd talk about how a City Watch patrol that found an entire city street blocked by a *web* spell wouldn't be mystified but instead annoyed—the guards knew from experience what a pain it was to hack through the stuff. (The risk of fire is too great to burn the webbing.) In the end, unless it was a busy or important street, the Watch most likely would just let the spell's duration run out.

The people of Ptolus have seen this kind of magic all their lives. That doesn't cheapen it or render spells humdrum—magic was never so common as to make Ptolus feel like a modern setting with magic in place of technology. The players just learned to understand that the folk of Ptolus lived in a world where the Third Edition Core Rules governed their lives. Even if fewer than one in a hundred people were spellcasters, by the time Ptolus natives grew to adulthood, they'd have seen spells cast, monsters summoned, and so on.

Player characters, having spent their lives in Ptolus—or at least in the same world as this city—certainly know a fair bit about the place. Whether you are a player or a DM, this *Player's Guide* is where you start getting to know Ptolus and the world of which it is a part. The guide is pulled straight from the pages of the forthcoming *Ptolus: City by the Spire* book to give you a quick overview of what the city has to offer. Of course, it doesn't go into any of the secrets of the setting: Those are for the DM to reveal as time goes on.

All the material in this guide represents common knowledge available to city residents or visitors to Ptolus. Every player should have a copy of this guide to learn about the place and get a good feel for the setting. This *Player's Guide* is required reading for a player creating a character for the Ptolus Campaign. DMs should read it, too, as it summarizes much of the general information about the setting. Everything in the full *Ptolus: City by the Spire* book (August 2006) builds from the information found in this guide. After reading it all at the beginning, players will want to refer to this material throughout the campaign as well.

Those who seek to delve even deeper into Ptolus can check out the full book or the PDF excerpts being released online at <www.DriveThruRPG.com>. (See the last page of this guide for details on the full book.) In addition, you can find out more about Ptolus and download free game material at the official website <www.ptolus.com>.

In the meantime, welcome to Ptolus!

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A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO PTOLUS

A city of mysteries, secrets, and dark histories, Ptolus lies forever in the shadow of a towering stone spire reaching impossibly high into the sky, itself an enigma and a reminder of evil long past. In Ptolus, the supernatural is expected and treachery lies around every corner—or is it that the supernatural lies around every corner and treachery is expected? Either way, the city of Ptolus abounds with danger, magic, intrigue, and above all, adventure.

FROM MY CAMPAIGN TO YOURS

In my original Ptolus Campaign, the characters started out not as Ptolus natives, but as a group of unrelated people waiting in line to gain entrance through the city gates.

This guide is designed to introduce you as a player to the fundamentals of Ptolus, so that you can create and run a character with plenty of knowledge about the world. The city is rich enough in detail that it's difficult to absorb it all at once, so keep this information handy as a reference while you play in the Ptolus Campaign—and be prepared to discover that the information you learn in these pages is only the very briefest overview.

WELCOME TO THE CITY

You are a native of a port city called Ptolus, or you have recently arrived there. Native or not, you know a few things about this city—it is not without a reputation, to say the least. To call Ptolus a dynamic place with a strange and varied identity is to understate the situation greatly. Only now are explorers truly discovering how ancient the city really is and unearthing details of its varied history. Ptolus is where that strange breed that calls itself "adventurers" congregates. It's a place where people are as concerned with what lies below the ground as they are with what's above. This is like no place else in the world.

Ptolus lies in the world of Praemal within the bounds of a very old Empire unsure of whether or not it has toppled. Three different emperors claim the throne, and portions of the once great realm cleave off like icy shards from a melting glacier. This decaying society looks upon previous centuries and sees grander, more civilized, and certainly better days. Progress seems on the decline—skills and lore that people possessed just a few hundred years ago are lost now.

But this is not a time to lose hope altogether. This civilization, older than our own real-world cultures, is more sophisticated than our own in some ways, but less so in others. A myriad of races and peoples have come and gone, creating an intricate (and sometimes confusing) amalgam. Good struggles against evil, and law against chaos. But the shadows only threaten the light—they do not yet consume it.

Not so long ago, the first men and women who would one day be called "delvers" returned from exploring the catacombs below the city of Ptolus laden with gold and magical treasures. Today, hundreds of new would-be delvers pour into the city each month, hoping to strike it rich like others before them. Most never crawl up from the realms below, but adventurers keep arriving with dreams of gold and fame. Those who do emerge back into the light bring with them tales of surprisingly vast reaches of natural caverns and

ancient hewn passages, perhaps dating back to the dark days when this area lay in the thrall of the terrible Skull-King, Ghul, and the region was pocked with winding warrens and subterranean chambers created by his dark armies. They also tell of the horrors that dwell outside the life-giving reaches of the sun: unknown monsters and devious demon-minded things with a cunning unknown to human-, elf-, or dwarfkind. In the city, entire industries have evolved quickly to service the needs of these adventurers. In the shadow of an unnaturally tall, ancient spire with a very dark past, a whole new form of economics, politics, and social structure struggles to be born.

Creatures and individuals (good, evil, and otherwise) that normally remain in the shadows are drawn to this large gathering of adventurers and magic. The needs of the delvers prompt renewed devotion to magic, science, and religion. As the Empire of Tarsis dies, Ptolus—for years a backwater town on the edge of civilization—is quickly becoming the center of something much larger than itself. Omens and prophecies of children born with strange birthmarks surface in the city with increasing frequency. No one yet knows exactly what, but something is happening in Ptolus. Something new stirs in the city… and that something is very, very old.

CAMPAIGN FEEL

Ptolus is an urban campaign setting. However, it is also one that deals with dungeon delving and subterranean exploration. In your own Ptolus Campaign, you can probably expect about a fifty-fifty split between dungeon adventures and urban adventures. The latter involve a surprising array of organizations and of individuals that live in this less-than-typical fantasy city.

As a setting, Ptolus should prove a somewhat realistic interpretation of a place in which dungeon explorers really do plumb the depths of a gigantic underground labyrinth filled with treasure, monsters and traps. As much as possible, many standard tropes of fantasy adventures, including "dungeons," are presented in a fashion that makes sense.

While late medieval culture provides one building block of the setting, it's not the focus that you might think it to be. The Core Rules are that focus. So, while Ptolus is based strongly in historical reality, many notions from real-world history that often hold true in other campaigns (most adults don't believe in monsters, everyone's bewildered by magic, you never see lizard men walking down the street) are not present here. Instead, Ptolus is a campaign where the Core Rules and all that they imply hold sway. That means "monsters" are common. Wizards are everywhere. Lots of people walk around in plate armor. Humans strolling down the street rub shoulders with elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, half-orcs, and even stranger beings.

In a way, this campaign is "the d20 System rules with the volume turned all the way up." Creating this city did *not* involve building a fantasy world first, then adapting the rules to make it work. Just the opposite, really. As a setting, Ptolus has been under the influence of the Core Rules for a long, long time. The things that make d20 fantasy unique—the prevalence of magic (including the specific spells we all know), the ever-increasing power of individuals, and the creatures of the MM—have shaped the reality of Ptolus. And because I used this setting as a playtest backdrop as I worked on the design of the Third Edition Core Rules, Ptolus influenced the d20 System rules as well. This is a setting steeped in game history and significance.

That doesn't mean Ptolus contains nothing new, however. As the city developed, new material grew out of the process. The firearms, creatures, spells, races, and foreboding atmosphere all came very naturally.

The Ptolus Campaign is a fantasy that some would label "dark," although it's as much about rising up out of the darkness as living within it. It is clearly an urban fantasy, for the campaign takes place entirely within or beneath the city of Ptolus—a place with a vast history of dark secrets waiting to be discovered.

THE CITY OF PTOLUS

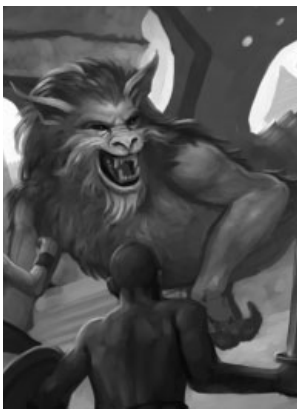
Ptolus is a major city of about seventy-five thousand people. It is located in the land of Palastan near a large bay on the southern end of the Whitewind Sea. The place was established to serve as the port for an important fortress built at the time of the Empire's foundation, a citadel called Dalenguard. More significantly, however, it lies in the shadow of an impossibly tall (almost three thousand feet) and thin pinnacle of rock known simply as the Spire. The Spire and its surroundings seethe with mysterious legends and rumors. These tales tell of ancient battles waged and cities erected on the site, of demons and dark lords, of forgotten kings and mighty wizards. Many such stories might be at least somewhat true, for recent developments have revealed vast complexes beneath the city.

Of late, Ptolus has become a city of adventurers. Treasure-seekers flock there to explore and plunder the labyrinthine structures beneath the streets, which they call the "Dungeon." If the stories are correct, these catacombs include:

1. The sewers of the city.
2. Vast stretches of subterranean passages and chambers created by Ghul and his minions (see "Timeline," page 20).
3. The remains of an even older city.

"Some place needs to be the worst place in the world. Why not here?"
—Brusselt Airmol, well-known rogue adventurer

Ptolus was created to be, first and foremost, a place where characters could have interesting and exciting adventures. It's designed to accommodate both urban- and dungeon-style adventures. The city's background provides a foundation for political intrigues, monster-bashing adventures, treasure-hunts, and even adventures involving demons, angels, and other outsiders.



For more on House Vladaam, Sadar, Khatru, and the other noble houses of Ptolus, see page 11.

The Commissar of Ptolus, Igor Urnst, is a war veteran and a military man. Even though Ptolus has not been threatened with attack in centuries, he has a very defensive-minded approach to running the city. However, at the same time, he is wise enough to know that the residents of Ptolus are not soldiers and that sometimes he needs to give them what they want to make them happy. This understanding makes him both efficient and fair, and he is extremely well liked.

The City Watch approaches any given situation with an appropriate response. To handle a bunch of rowdy drunks, the Watch captain sends some low-ranking guards. However, to deal with a rampaging monster or a group of unruly adventures, the captain sends well-equipped fighters supported by multiple spellcasters.

4. An abandoned underground dwarven settlement called Dwarvenhearth.
5. And levels that plunge incredibly deep below the present urban area.

Ptolus lies in a cool, rainy coastal region with harsh winters. It serves as an important port on the Bay of Ptolus off the Whitewind Sea and belongs to the Empire of Tarsis, although a growing faction in the city feels that Ptolus should declare itself independent.

RULERS

The city is ostensibly ruled by a council, at whose head is the Commissar, a representative of the Empire of Tarsis. The other main council members are Kirian Ylestos, the Prince of the Church, and the Mother Superior of the Sisterhood of Silence (see below). Other City Council members (with less influence) include guildmasters, the heads of the noble houses, and a few wealthy merchants. People of the town often refer to this body as the "Council of Coin," because money is a powerful and influential force among its members.

Guildmaster Delver Sorum Dandubal, also a council member, is quickly becoming another force to reckon with—almost a fourth main member—but the three forces controlling the council dislike and oppose him.

Truth be told, the real ruler of the city is the Commissar, Igor Urnst. The City Watch operates under his direct command from Dalenguard, a historic fortress that still stands in Oldtown. Urnst's group of advisors in charge of the city's defense and protection is called the Twelve Commanders. These include Lord Dorant Khatru of House Khatru, Aoska (a half-celestial), and other local luminaries.

THE AUTHORITIES AND THE LAW

To police the streets, the Commissar of the city commands a force of more than eight hundred troops and City Watch guards, including a few dozen elite individuals (captains, mages, clerics, etc.). While the constables in many of the Empire's cities are considered glorified street-sweepers with little competence or desire to actually enforce the law, this is not true of the experienced and well equipped guards of Ptolus, particularly those known as the Commissar's Men.

Nevertheless, this well-trained and well-paid force has its hands full maintaining order in the city. Helping to enforce the law is a special order of monks called the Sisterhood of Silence. These nonspeaking female monks patrol the streets and apprehend criminals, even though they are not—strictly speaking—sanctioned to do so officially. A male eunuch always accompanies a small unit of the Sisters of Silence to speak on their behalf.

However, neither the city guard nor the Sisterhood of Silence is willing to go down into the Dungeon and fight monsters. Nor are they likely to help against well-known and influential noble families such as House Vladaam or House Sadar, or powerful groups like the Church of Lothian or the Shuul (see page 14). Of course, those groups would never break any laws, so there's surely nothing to worry about. . . .

THE FORCES OF LIGHT

Aside from the law-enforcing authorities, both official and self-appointed, Ptolus benefits from the presence of various forces of munificence. Orders of knighthood like the Keepers of the Veil, Order of the Dawn, and Knights of the Pale uphold such concepts as benevolence and nobility. There are even angelic beings in Ptolus—more than anyplace else in the world—from aasimars to half-celestials to true angels. Many of these beings congregate in a place called the Pale Tower and call themselves the Malkuth. Paladins and clerics of good deities like Lothian, Gaen, and Navashtrom help Ptolus stand against the darkness as well.

And in Ptolus, the dark is deep.

THE DARK SIDE

Like every city, Ptolus has a dark side. Here, criminal lords command veritable armies of rogues and assassins, and war amongst each other as well as against the law. These criminals deal in extortion, smuggling, gambling, usury, and prostitution. Chief among these criminals are Menon Balacazar, leader of the oldest criminal syndicate in the city, and the newcomer Kevris Killraven. They are bitter enemies. Depraved assassins called the Vai hunt victims for money and to fulfill their own bloodlust.

But worse things lurk in Ptolus than simply criminals. Dwelling among the crypts of the city's graveyard are the death-loving Forsaken, so called because the rest of society finds them so abhorrent. Worse still, chaos cultists—in league with terrible inhuman things—plot the city's downfall and, in fact, the annihilation of the entire world to sate their lust for destruction. Lastly, and strangest of all, Ptolus is home to actual demons from the lower realms: Some are merely demon-blooded tieflings, but others are full-blooded fiends that call themselves the Fallen. These beings dwell alongside the Forsaken in a place called the Dark Reliquary.

THE PEOPLE OF PTOLUS

Ptolus is primarily a trade city, serving not only as a major port but also as a link between the northwest and the central portions of the Empire of Tarsis. About two-thirds of the population is human, with the remaining third being (from

most populous to least): Shoal elves, Stonelost dwarves, halflings, litorians, Grailwarden dwarves, gnomes, half-elves, centaurs (aram), orcs and half-orcs, and others—lizardfolk (assari), ogres, and far stranger things. (Some of those races might sound unfamiliar. Read on.)

DISTRICTS OF THE CITY

Ptolus lies between the Spire and the sea. The highest portion of the city, the Nobles' Quarter, is built on the base of the Spire. From there, the level of the city drops down a sharp cliff to Oldtown, and then down again into Midtown. The final cliffs at the edge of Ptolus drop into the bay, with the only area of dry land at the bottom of those cliffs occupied by the city's docks. Well-worn paths connect the various elevations and help make Ptolus very defensible (although the city has never been attacked).

The King's River flows through the city, spilling into an eroded chasm in the northwest corner and flowing down to the Bay of Ptolus near the docks. The bottom of the chasm, called the King's River Gorge, is eighty feet below the level of the ground on the north side, but more than two hundred feet below on the south side. The south side still holds the old city walls and fortifications. A bridge built atop two massive pillars, themselves erected atop natural rock columns, stretches across the King's River Gorge at a steep angle, leading into the area of the city known as Oldtown. Another bridge stretches across the chasm to join Oldtown with the Rivergate District. Although Oldtown is higher, the difference in elevation between these two districts is not steep, so the slope of this bridge seems far less noticeable than that of the other.

The Docks

Far below the level of the city's streets, the Docks rest at the bottom of the city's eastern cliffs on a narrow strip of land. The wooden buildings here sit slightly askew from one another, because the entire small district is built upon slowly sinking sand. Even the streets are sand. A dozen or more ships moor in the deep waters here at any given time. This is a particularly rough area of the city, thanks to the influx of sailors and its isolation from the other districts. A single winding road provides access up a steep incline to the city proper.

The Docks area is full of warehouses, shipyards, hostels, and taverns, all catering to sailors and merchants. Isolated from the rest of the city by the cliffs, sometimes it seems as though the Docks area has had to become its own little community. Many Ptolus residents live their whole lives without going there—but, of course, they probably haven't been to the Nobles' Quarter, either.

Crimes in Ptolus

While obvious offenses such as murder and theft are illegal in Ptolus, so are compulsion spells cast upon citizens (locals frown on charming *shopkeepers to get a better price) and spells of mass destruction cast within the city proper (no* fireballs *or* disintegrate*). Any spell with the evil descriptor is also illegal; in particular the authorities hate* animate dead *and other spells that bring more undead to the city. They also prosecute people severely for doing anything that spreads disease—including casting* contagion*. These and other crimes can be reported at the district's Watchhouse.*

See the map on pages 16–17 for a good look at the city's layout.

Buying Magic

People looking for magic items could do worse than come to Delver's Square in Midtown. In the square, one can find Myraeth's Oddities, a shop that buys magic items of all kinds and resells them. This is a good place to acquire miscellaneous items, as well as potions, rings, wands, and scrolls. However, Myraeth doesn't sell weapons or armor—for those items, try Rastor's or the Bull and Bear, also in Delver's Square. Like Myraeth's, they may have used magical equipment to sell. Just a few buildings down is Danbury's, a tavern in which one can find a representative of the Dreaming Apothecary, an organization that makes new magic items (see page 12). Across the street you can also visit St. Gustav's Chapel, a great place to obtain healing potions and holy items.

Guildsman District

Ptolus teems with guilds. Every type of artisan, smith, or other professional belongs to a guild of similarly trained and employed individuals. These guilds enjoy a strong voice in the City Council. This district in the south end of the city holds many tanneries, smithies, foundries, textile houses, grain mills, paper mills, brickmakers, bookmakers, woodworkers, and other production facilities, as well as warehouses, granaries, coalhouses, stockyards, and similar storage sites.

Not surprisingly, this district has a distinct odor.

Unless one works here, a local rarely finds a reason to visit, although this district sports a few taverns and other businesses catering to the working class. The Guildsman District's rough reputation prevents most people from frequenting the area at night. Those who live there often join a guild for protection.

Just a few of the guilds in this district include: Drapers' Guild, Goldsmiths' Guild, Herbalists' Guild, Ironworkers' Guild, Masons' Guild, Silversmiths' Guild, Tanners' Guild, Weaponsmiths' Guild, and Woodworkers' Guild.

The Sages' Guild, Shipwrights' Guild, a warriors' guild (called the Order of Iron Might), and a few others are headquartered elsewhere in the city.

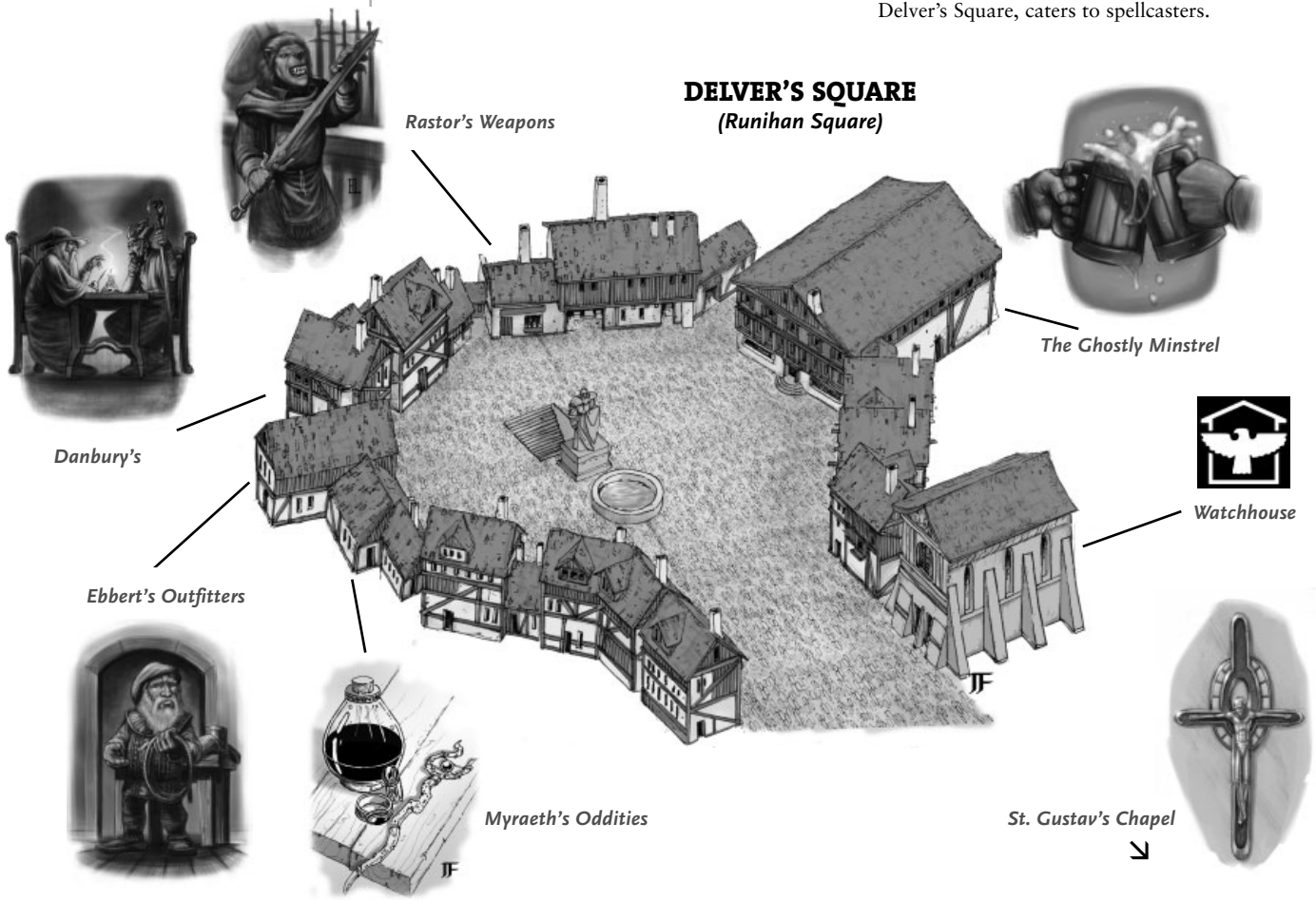
Midtown

As the central area of the city, Midtown is both a commercial and a residential hub. It is also where one finds many local entertainment offerings, in the form of pubs and taverns as well as theaters, dance halls, gambling dens, and more. Visitors looking for a place to stay usually find themselves directed here, as most of the temporary lodgings in the city are found in Midtown.

Midtown is home to both Tavern Row and Delver's Square, where many employers seeking to hire adventuring parties can post their announcements. It also has a few shops and plenty of residential areas, such as Emerald Hill, where most elves choose to live, and Narred, a centaur neighborhood.

Besides the Delver's Square shops that adventurers frequent (Rastor's Weapons, the Bull and Bear armory, Ebbert's Outfitters, and Myraeth's Oddities), those in the know also appreciate Saches clothiers on Yeoman Street and, of course, the Row Bathhouse. Potions and Elixirs offers a large stock of potions for sale.

The most popular adventurer hangout is the Ghostly Minstrel tavern and inn in Delver's Square. Many folks seem leery of both the Onyx Spider (on Tavern Row) and the Black Swan (which is mainly for dwarves). Danbury's, also in Delver's Square, caters to spellcasters.



The Necropolis

A city several centuries old tends to have a large graveyard, and Ptolus is no exception. The vast Necropolis in the city's northeastern corner sits on a few rolling hills, now completely covered with mausoleums, crypts, and graves. The entire Necropolis is surrounded by a wall, with guards posted at each of its four gates. These guards' primary duty is to warn people not to stay in the Necropolis after nightfall and to watch for grave robbers. Most people know that undead roam the Necropolis, but various churches and holy orders, such as the Keepers of the Veil, do their best to contain the menace.

Nobles' Quarter

Ptolus has no shortage of wealth or wealthy people. Technically outside the city's walls, the Nobles' Quarter, with its row upon row of manors and estates, climbs the city's western cliffs abutting the Spire itself. Travelers can enter the area only via a single avenue up from Oldtown that runs through the fortress of Dalenguard before reaching the Nobles' Quarter. The heights where this district now sits were easily defensible in the city's younger days; originally, all Ptolus residents could gather here in times of emergency, secure behind Dalenguard's stout gates. However, as time passed and the city grew, members of the elite class claimed these enviable heights for their residences, leaving the less wealthy to expand into the lower quarters.

The largest estates in this section of town belong to the ten noble families that have held power in the area—to one degree or another—for centuries. In addition to the homes of the wealthy and the services that cater to them, this district houses the Holy Palace, where the Prince of the Church lives; lately he is joined by his father, the Emperor of the Church, visiting from his eastern capital. The Nobles' Quarter holds the Crown Theater opera house, the Imperial Academy of Music, fabulous eating establishments, a floating apartment building, and other luxuries and sites of interest.

North Market

When one enters the city from the north, one is greeted with the sights and smells of a busy marketplace. Well-worn cobblestone streets are packed with vendors occupying wooden booths, pushing carts, or simply hawking wares they tote in massive baskets on their backs. Fresh foods of all kinds—fish and shellfish from the sea, fruit from the orchards to the north, and breads and pastries from the city being favorites—are available in any quantity. Other goods are for sale in small shops, tents, or from the backs of wagons. The City Watch patrols this busy area to keep thieves and pickpockets from running rampant. Rumor has it that the guards employ sorcerers to patrol the area invisibly, using spells to keep an eye out not only for traditional thieves, but for magically aided ones as well. They watch for invisible robbers, overt use of charm or compulsion magic, and similar tricks.

If you're looking for tasty baked goods, try Tavoh's Bakery; a good clothier, try Endle's Finery; for a fair weapon shop, go to Mitoren's Blades, although Rastor's Weapons in Delver's Square (in Midtown) is probably better for traditional arms. A small firearms emporium called the Smoke Shop opened recently as well.

Oldtown

Ptolus was founded three centuries ago as a small community surrounding a fortress called Dalenguard. The fortress' original purpose was to keep the area clear of evil creatures drawn by the power of Jabel Shammar, the citadel at the top of the Spire. It also sought to watch over Goth Gulgamel, the fortress halfway up the Spire built by Ghul, the Half God. Dalenguard was constructed more than seven hundred years ago, just after the defeat of Ghul, to serve as a symbol of the union of elves, dwarves, and humans in that war.

Over time, the community grew into an important port, and the need for Dalenguard as a wilderness bastion waned. Today the old fortress is still used by the Imperial-appointed ruler of the city, the Commissar, and the area surrounding it on the city's near west side is known as Oldtown. It sits atop a ridge higher than most of the rest of Ptolus, but still lower than the Nobles' Quarter.

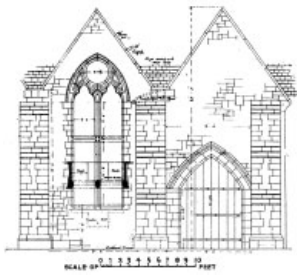
The stone and marble buildings of Oldtown reflect a grander, earlier age. Graceful columns, majestic entrances, tall stone towers, and buildings of three or even four stories are common sights here. Yet all bear the signs of age and wear. Today many of these buildings house the bureaucracy the Empire forces upon the city. Still others are museums or homes for the wealthy (those not quite wealthy enough to live in the Nobles' Quarter). There are wonderful theaters, auditoriums, and even a grand Arena in this large district of the city. The Arena provides a spot for tournaments, fairs, and sporting games of all sorts. Nearby, the Inverted Pyramid mages' guild sponsors a magical ball sport simply called "the Mage Game," held in an indoor coliseum in Oldtown.

This is where citizens go to get licenses, like those needed to carry a firearm. The City Courts are located here, and as are the City Council's meeting chambers. Both the Delver's Guild Library and Maproom (but not the guild's main office) and the City Library are here. Oldtown

Ptolus Architecture

Visitors to Ptolus will discover a melange of architectural styles. Many of the buildings—especial official Imperial structures—represent traditional Prustan designs from the east: imported marble facades, tall columns, and grand entrances. On the other hand, local Palastani influences are visible on nearly every street. Characteristics include much simpler and more practical designs, use of local stone and wood, and insulating siding materials.

Of course, the predominant style changes from district to district, and even from block to block within the same area. But overall, Oldtown and the Nobles' Quarter appear heavily Prustan, while the markets, Rivergate, and the Guildsman District are generally Palastani in style. Midtown is a good example of a blend of styles, plus some more exotic architecture of elven, gnomish, and halfling design.



This structure shows a blending of Prustan style (soaring facade, tall windows, prominent entry) with Palastani influences (local brickwork, economical design).

Imperial Identification Papers and Citizenship

The Empire of Tarsis requires all citizens and noncitizens to carry identification papers. Display of these papers, which the Empire issues to all residents, is required for purchases over 100 gp. Guards and other officials also can demand to see one's papers at any time. Identification papers include a person's name, race, place of birth, current residence, occupation, and a general physical description. Forgeries are fairly common.

Almost all humans within the Empire automatically become citizens at birth. This is also true of most dwarves and many elves. It is more difficult, but not impossible, for members of other races to gain citizenship status; they are not automatically citizens. Citizens enjoy legal rights that noncitizens do not, as well as greater protection under the law.

has a fair number of parks, monuments, and other touches of class and beauty.

Rivergate District

Strictly a residential area, the Rivergate District is as close to a "middle class" neighborhood as Ptolus gets. It is located on a rise of land, surrounded by cliffs on all sides except the northeast, where a steep slope mostly free of buildings and covered in trees rolls down to the North Market and the main North Gate. Its residential cul-de-sacs—called "burrows" by those who live here—each boasts its own unique architectural identity.

South Market

To locals, the North Market is simply "the Market," while this area is the "South Market." Unlike its counterpart, the South Market is not an open-air marketplace. It has fewer vendors dealing out of carts and more established shops and places of business. Goods usually cost more in the South Market, but a buyer is far more likely to find trustworthy and reliable salespeople here. This is also where one finds the city's commodities markets and the headquarters of large merchant organizations, such as the Rogue Moon Trading Company. As in the North Market, many of those who work here also live here; the district has substantial residential sections.

The South Market is newer than the North Market and has more artisans and industry than its counterpart. You're more likely to get something made to order in the South Market, as the store selling leather goods, for example, is probably also a leatherworker's shop (such as Donnel's, a friendly dealer in leather goods). Nonstandard races or those with special physical needs when it comes to clothing should check out Maran's Odd Sizes. Navaen's Bowcraft is a fine place to buy bows or arrows, and those looking for a real treat should stop by Ramoro's Bakery.

Temple District

Although the worship of Lothian, the official Imperial deity, is the dominant religion of the city, Ptolus' cosmopolitan residents revere hundreds of other gods as well.

Temples, churches, shrines, and small monasteries fill this district in the north central part of town, with the Street of a Million Gods (a bit of an exaggeration) running through it all. Even the Blessed Bridge across the King's River here has small shrines built upon and into it.

The district stretches east and west from the Street of a Million Gods. Notable sights include St. Valien's Cathedral for worshippers of Lothian and the Priory of Introspection, where the Sisterhood of Silence is based. Although clerics are the most common representatives of the many gods, a number of temples support monks and paladins as well. The Temple District has a single bar, Taggert's, which is also a temple to Ollom, god of the keg.

The Warrens

The Warrens in the eastern part of town is a terrible slum sick with poverty and crime. Rumors say that the City Watch won't go down into the Warrens. The streets here have no names, and most of the buildings aren't marked—the place is not friendly to outsiders. Some visitors may have experienced a little theft or crime in the city, but it's nothing compared to what goes on in this district. Some place the headquarters of the Vai within the Warrens. Others whisper of a crime lord named Jirraith and his gang of young thieves called the Pale Dogs who really run the place.

THE UNDERCITY MARKET

Although not actually a district of Ptolus, the Undercity Market, accessed by a wide staircase in the middle of Delver's Square, is the place to go for most adventuring gear (although Ebbert's Outfitters in Delver's Square is a handy one-stop shop with good prices). Looking for potions? Try Urnst, Alchemist. For scrolls, try the gnome wizard Neridoc Bittersong, who runs a booth in the market under the sign "Arcane Scribe."

Also located here is the Delver's Guild, an association that provides assistance in the form of maps, reference material, and equipment to explorers of the ancient dwarven city, Dwarvenhearth, and other areas below the streets of Ptolus.

Nearby are entrances into the sewers as well as tunnels leading into "the Dungeon," as adventurers call it. The Chamber of Longing is a nearby landmark that features a strange statue of a huge hand and serves as an occasional meeting place for adventurers, because everyone knows where it is. One can access the profoundly mysterious and magical Mirror Maze from the market as well.

The presence of the Delver's Guild makes the Undercity Market a center of employment relating to Dungeon exploration. Those looking to hire adventurers frequently post bills in the guild's meeting hall (much like the post in Delver's Square). A number of market establishments hire out scouts, guides, porters, and guards, as well as skilled labor to pick locks, cast spells, and perform other necessary services.

As the city grows, more people have begun to live in and around the Undercity Market and throughout the underground levels. This is particularly true of races not always welcome elsewhere—minotaurs, lizardfolk, orcs, and so on.

THE LOOK OF PTOLUS

Ptolus looks a little like a Germanic city from the late medieval period. The buildings usually have stone first stories with wooden upper stories. The main exception is Oldtown, where many buildings are more classical in design, with impressive, Roman-style facades and marble columns.

It rains more often than not in Ptolus—at least, that's the way it seems. Winters are cold, grey, and wet, but summers are dry and mild. Occasionally, a cold, razorlike wind comes off the Bay of Ptolus, but usually it's quite calm. The smell of sea salt fills the air, when it's not overpowered by the stronger odors of such places as the leatherworking shops, slaughterhouses, and breweries of the Guildsman District.

One always feels the presence of magic in Ptolus. A spellcaster flies over the city, a mephit scurries down an alleyway bearing a message, or some adventurer walks down the street followed by his manticore companion.

The touch of the technology that built the Empire of Tarsis is found here as well, although its influence wanes with each year as fewer people rely on its comforts or remember its secrets. Still, aeroships, some with steam-powered engines, fly overhead from time to time. The City Watch employs firearms, and local defenses include cannons watching over the harbor and within Dalenguard. Leaflets printed on presses with movable type distribute news and information. In a few places, steam-powered pumps help clean out the sewers, while in others clockwork machines power heavy doors that protect wealthy estates.

NOBLE HOUSES

Ptolus has ten noble families, all of whom enjoy special status by ancestral right. Although the Empire does not officially recognize their titles, Ptolus is far enough removed from the heart of Empire that local traditions and beliefs still grant the noble houses hereditary seats on the city's ruling council. Plus, most of them are quite wealthy, and with affluence comes influence. The noble houses were once the seats of real power in the area, serving a dynasty of kings that ruled the entire region of Palastan before the Empire took over. (That's where the King's River gains its name.) The noble houses are as follows:

Abanar: A mercantile house, Abanar is very wealthy but not well regarded. Dered Abanar is the very old head of the house. There is much controversy now among his many children as to who will take control when the elder Abanar is gone.

Dallimothan: Often called "House Dragon," the members of this house dress in dragonscale armor, use dragon regalia, and are said to even truck with dragonkind. House Dallimothan, led by Kirstol Dallimothan, remains a powerful and wealthy force in the city.

Erthuo: Scholars and gentlefolk, House Erthuo normally avoids confrontation and rarely gets involved in squabbles between other houses. A family of elves and half-elves belong to this house, headed by Peliope Erthuo, a half-elf.

Kath: A wealthy house, Kath is known for its talented, glamorous, and attractive family. Devina Kath is the head of the house, which patronizes the arts.

Khatru: Famous for its military leadership and martial prowess, House Khatru is made up of arrogant boors and self-righteous warriors. Dorant Khatru is the current master of the house.

Nagel: This old, charitable, and altruistic house has recently fallen on hard times. Fransin Nagel is mistress of this rather minor house. She and her family are the enemies of House Sadar.

Rau: Foes of House Khatru, the Rau have a reputation as rogues, pirates, and scalawags. The house has a fair number of spellcasters as well. The head of the house is Verrana Rau.

Sadar: Known for its long line of mages, this house—which some call the House of Shadows—is quite powerful. Its leader, Lord Renn Sadar, has a strong association with the Inverted Pyramid arcanists' guild and shadow magic. They are enemies of House Nagel.

Shever: Known for its skill with machines, House Shever made a great deal of gold long ago, but until recently was fading in influence. Now with strong ties to the Shuul organization of technophiles, the house is on the rise again. Thollos Shever is the head of the house.

House Abanar is unique among the ten noble houses in that it allows wealthy citizens to buy their way into House membership. A minor noble title costs 10,000 gp. The other houses look upon this practice with disdain.

The Midtown Partisan

The folk of Ptolus love to gossip with each other about the nobles and their activities and intrigues, and to read about the latest high-society affairs in the various broadsheets available about town. For example, there is speculation that Peliope Erthuo has taken up with some mysterious new love interest and that the half-mad members of House Vladaam scheme to destroy House Nagel once and for all.

After painting this portrait of the Vladaam family (see next page), local artist Tulian Kremps disappeared mysteriously, leaving behind a notebook filed with indecipherable ravings.

Menon Balacazar is one of the most feared men in Ptolus—not for his personal power, but because of the might of his criminal organization.

Adventurers weary of dealing with the "What do we do with the prisoners?" situation can simply take their monstrous captives to the Brotherhood of Redemption. Not only will the Brothers attempt to "rehabilitate" the captives, but they will pay a reward, too. Urlenius the ogre-mage was brought in by a group of delvers years ago and now is a well-respected priest of Navashtrom.

People of Ptolus do not bring up the Fallen or the Forsaken in polite conversation. Most think of them like a nearby hive of wasps, hoping that if they don't disturb these undesirables, the dangerous groups won't threaten them. Certain stalwart orders, such as the Keepers of the Veil and the Knights of the Pale, believe otherwise.

Vladaam: An evil house, and very ancient, House Vladaam seems to have lost much of its power and influence in recent times. Iristul Vladaam is the current master of the house, although he has not actually been seen in the city for years. Most people whisper that demonic blood runs through the family's veins.

ORGANIZATIONS

Ptolus teems with various factions that all have their own agendas and secret goals. In brief, these include (but are not limited to) the following groups.

Balacazar Crime Family

Probably the most powerful crime family in the city, the Balacazars are certainly the oldest. Menon Balacazar is the aging head of the organization, with his son, Malkeen, serving as his second in command. Other siblings include at least two daughters. Arkhall Vaugn, an infamous wizard, works with the family.

The family funds a number of criminal endeavors, gaining profit from theft, extortion, smuggling, illegal gambling, assassination, and trade in slaves, drugs, and evil magic items.

Brotherhood of Redemption

An order of monks who believe that no evil is irredeemable, the Brotherhood of Redemption seeks to give any evil creature a chance to repent. Its members do not believe in "inherent evil." Specializing in rehabilitation, they operate in the Dungeon out of the Fortress of the Redeemed but maintain a surface headquarters in the Guildsman District. They make it known that they willingly accept any prisoners who are not of the major races—in fact, they'll pay a small bounty (5 gp per Hit Die) for evil creatures with a modicum of intelligence (in other words, an Intelligence score of 3 or above).

The Conciliators

The Church of Lothian runs an organization called the Conciliators, which consists of inquisitors dedicated to converting infidels, destroying a power called chaositech (which resembles both magic and technology), and stamping out evil. The group is headquartered in the Temple District.

Delver's Guild

For the last five years, the Delver's Guild has grown in influence, becoming both popular to join and wealthy. The Delver's Guild offers its members information about job opportunities and events pertaining to the exploration of regions below Ptolus. The guild also maintains the city's most extensive collection of maps of the underground realm and an impressive library for research.

Members receive passwords that allow them to access secret chambers within the underground regions. These secret chambers, called waystations, are stocked with food and simple supplies. High-ranking members gain retrieval insurance, which guarantees that, if they should die while exploring, guild members will retrieve their bodies and have them raised if possible (retrieval and raising paid for out of a special guild account funded by the insured).

The guild's membership hovers around eight hundred. In addition, there are said to exist at least four hundred delvers not affiliated with the guild. At any given time, about one-fifth of this total (about two hundred fifty people) is exploring the Dungeon.

It is estimated that for every ten delvers who go down each week, one does not come back. About one hundred new adventurers come to Ptolus and some twenty-five are raised from the dead every week. Since the Delver's Guild began keeping records three years ago, approximately eight thousand adventures died permanently while exploring the Dungeon. Another two hundred thirty have permanently retired, either in the city or elsewhere.

Dreaming Apothecary

The Dreaming Apothecary may be more legend than fact. Those in the know claim that a secretive group of spellcasters crafts magic items for people, making transactions with them magically in their dreams. Darker rumors accuse these powerful mages of keeping others in the city from making magic items for profit by coercion, backed up by their formidable magical might. Potential customers can reach the group at Danbury's in Delver's Square.

The Fallen

The Fallen are fiends also known as the "young demons," though few people care to dwell long on the question of who the "old" demons might be. The Fallen live in the Dark Reliquary of the Necropolis with their allies, the Forsaken, and follow the leadership of two demons whose names are only whispered: Raguel and Lilith.

Most people wish the Fallen were not in Ptolus but, for demons who dwell within the city's walls, they actually cause surprisingly little trouble. Few speak of them, but when they do, they often claim these demons are either waiting for something or quietly looking for something.

Fate Weavers

The Fate Weavers are a small group of prophets and seers who claim the ability to tell people's fortunes. Locals consider the group a front for prostitution.

The Forsaken

Those who value death and undeath more than life are called the Forsaken. Necrophiles, necrophages, and necrophiliacs, these disgusting people worship dark gods and consort openly with undead and the Fallen. They base their activities in the Necropolis.

The Forsaken are the sworn foes of the valiant Keepers of the Veil. A smaller subgroup within their ranks called the Licheloved carry out the will of dark death gods in ways that—it's said—even the other Forsaken find difficult to stomach. Another subgroup, the Torrens, are specifically anti-Lothianite.

Some of the Forsaken are living people who consort with the undead, while others are actually undead themselves. They particularly revere ancient undead called the Wintersouled, who reportedly built the Dark Reliquary. If any of the Wintersouled still exist, no one in the city knows about it.

Healers of the Sacred Heat

Healers, physickers, and surgeons who use a magical process involving heat to heal wounds, the Healers of the Sacred Heat base themselves in the Temple District and offer inexpensive healing. It's said to be painful, however. Theirs is not a place known to appeal to adventurers (who look for instantaneous and painless healing and have the gold to pay for it), but rather to locals for treating various chronic ailments.

Inverted Pyramid

The Inverted Pyramid is a mysterious and ancient guild of arcanists. Their membership roll remains shrouded in mystery, but it most likely includes the most powerful mages in Ptolus—and probably the world. For years they have wielded considerable influence in the city. Their headquarters is said to lie somewhere hidden from normal sight by powerful spells.

In days past, the Inverted Pyramid was a great foe of the Church of Lothian. When the Edict of Deviltry was issued centuries ago proclaiming all arcane spellcasting to be an evil act, a number of mages gathered to form a secret society dedicated to preserving themselves and their lore. Within the Inverted Pyramid, the members of this guild meet, store their valuable books and supplies, and craft magic items and other creations. The Inverted Pyramid concerns itself with preserving magical lore and all things arcane from those it believes would eradicate such knowledge.

Keepers of the Veil

The Keepers of the Veil is an order of holy knights dedicated to the destruction of undead, specifically free-willed spirits that should have remained on their own side of the great veil of death. Occasionally they ally with a smaller group called the Knights of the Pale.

The Keepers of the Veil possess a fortress, the Siege Tower, on the edge of the Necropolis. They strive to eradicate the curse of the undead from the world forever. Their co-leaders are Sir Beck Von Tibbitz and a Lothianite priestess named Phadian Gess.

Killraven Crime League

Kevris Killraven arrived in the city only recently, but in that short time this mysterious woman has created the second most powerful criminal organization in Ptolus. The league deals in extortion, prostitution, and illegal drugs. A number of non-humans work for Killraven—troglodytes, ogres, and many other creatures.

Although early on Killraven was rumored to have ties with the Shuul technophiles and the Sorn mages, most now dismiss such tales as nonsense.

It's fairly well accepted that Kevris Killraven is not a member of one of the major races. But as to what she really is, opinions vary widely. Folks presume her to be perhaps a medusa, a particularly intelligent harpy, or even a female giant.

Knights of the Golden Cross

An ancient order, the Knights of the Golden Cross, has remained alive through the extreme devotion of its members and their descendants. They oppose evil in all its forms, although they have a particular hatred for the wicked House Vladaam. They also revere the mysterious Elder Gods and serve as a focal point for the pantheon's re-introduction into society. The knights have a citadel in Oldtown. Their leader is an elf named Kaira Swanwing.

Characters interested in pursuing careers with the Knights of the Pale should consider taking the Knight of the Pale prestige class. Most members of the order are fighters or paladins, none of less than 7th level.

Knights of the Pale

The Knights of the Pale are a small order dedicated to combating supernatural threats, particularly demons and spellcasters. Although not an official organization of the Church of Lothian, they focus their whole organization on the veneration of Lothianite saints. Their leader, Dierna Hillerchaun, bases the order out of her home, a manor in Oldtown called the Bladechapel. The knights work with the Keepers of the Veil and the angelic Malkuth.

Longfingers Guild

This thieves' guild has enjoyed a long tradition in the city, but many say its day has passed in light of the growing power of other, broader criminal organizations. Its headquarters is said to lie deep below the city.

Characters thinking about joining the Longfingers Guild first must find the guild headquarters. This task involves either a lot of exploration below the city or a good deal of networking above the city. Obviously, most members of the guild are rogues, but not all of them are.

The Malkuth

The Malkuth are a mysterious group of celestials and half-celestials who live in the Pale Tower in Oldtown. Little about them is known, as they keep to themselves and rarely come out of their impressive abode.

"The Viridian Lords were keeping the peace in this region long before the Empire arrived, and we'll be doing so long after the Empire dies."

—Rechel Pattemon, Viridian Lord

Most people in the city are Lothianites, and most Lothianites attend religious services every Theoday. This means that the various churches in Ptolus hold services all day long to accommodate all the faithful. Many of the "devout" attend services because, if they don't, their employer may make them work on Theoday—piety means getting a day off from work.

Order of the Fist

Calling themselves the Order of the Fist, a small band of monks and fighters believes in action: setting a goal and doing whatever it takes to achieve it. Although members may differ in their particular goals—even in their outlooks on the world—they all agree on the importance of going for what you want in life. Their leader is Wynn Rabinall, a male human.

Pale Dogs

A gang of young thieves based in the Warrens, the Pale Dogs paint their fingernails black and often wear double rings. They follow a mysterious figure named Jirraith and may have connections to the Balacazars or the Vai.

The Shuul

Once a simple organization created to uphold the concept of order, the Shuul has grown over the years into a powerful force attempting to restore the prominence of technological devices such as firearms, clockwork devices, and steam technology in the city. Despite a predilection for machines, the Shuul do not reject magic, as one might expect. Instead they embrace it and see the union of magic and machine as the ultimate accomplishment.

Most members of the organization are humans and dwarves, particularly Grailwarden dwarves.

The Shuul maintain close ties with the Temple of Teun, the Mother of All Machines, as well as with House Shever.

The Sorn

Rumors say this quasi-legal spellcaster organization maintains a close association with the Shuul. Others say its real backing comes from Kevris Killraven. Its members favor the use of technology and mechanical devices to supplement their magic.

Sisterhood of Silence

Founded in Ptolus more than two hundred years ago, an all-female order calling itself the Sisterhood of Silence established itself as a major force for law and defense. While the order has since spread to other cities, the Priory of Introspection in Ptolus remains the central headquarters of the entire Sisterhood.

As their name suggests, the Sisters of Silence do not speak. Instead, they employ a cadre of devout eunuchs to speak for them. Among themselves, they use a complex set of signs, postures, and expressions to convey vast amounts of information quickly.

The Vai

The Vai is a wicked assassins' guild in Ptolus. Each member takes an oath to kill an intelligent creature every day. They are tied to almost every evil organization in the city in some way.

Viridian Lords

The men and woman calling themselves Viridian Lords are powerful, twisted rangers who haunt the wilderness of Palastan. These rangers have learned a way to fuse themselves with plants to grant themselves greater power and a stronger affinity for nature and the land.

RELIGION

In Ptolus, there is one religion and there are many. While the Church of Lothian remains the official religion of the Empire, tied closely to every aspect of Imperial government, many other far smaller and less popular religions exist as well. These faiths worship gods like the chaotic good Ahaar, Lord of the Air, a minor elemental sky god; the chaotic neutral Fifty-Three Gods of Chance, deities of chaos and randomness; Gaen, Goddess of Light, a popular lawful good deity; and the lawful neutral Teun, Mother of All Machines, goddess of technology. And these are just examples. Your DM can provide you with a full list, or you can work to create your own with the DM's help.

THE CHURCH OF LOTHIAN

Lothian was a mortal who lived about fifteen hundred years ago. He ascended to godhood based on his own good works and strength of spirit. Lothian today is the lawful good god of justice and purity. His followers usually take one aspect or the other (justice or purity), focusing on either Lothian's lawful or his good qualities. In his lawful aspect, Lothian is the Lawgiver. In his good aspect, he is called the Daykeeper. In either case, he remains a staunch foe of cruelty and destruction and harbors a particular hatred of undead. He promotes peace, harmony, and safety. His symbol is an ankh crucifix.

The Church of Lothian is the most powerful religion in the Empire, and thus in Ptolus. So closely tied are the Empire and the Church of Lothian that the head of the religion's hierarchy is known as the Emperor of the Church. Alongside the traditional secular Emperor of Tarsis, he rules over all Imperial lands and citizens. The Emperor of the Church normally lives in the far-off capital city of Tarsis but of late has been in Ptolus staying with his son, the Prince of the Church.

When it initially spread its influence across the growing Empire, the Church was far less tolerant of divergent beliefs and even of arcane magic than it is today. The Church of Lothian released the Edict of Deviltry centuries ago, proclaiming all arcane spellcasting to be an evil act. (The more enlightened modern Church rescinded the Edict.) In Ptolus, many different chapels throughout the city are devoted to Lothian. The Church maintains its headquarters in St. Valien's Cathedral in the Temple District.

A knighthood called the Order of the Dawn serves the Church of Lothian as elite defenders of the faith. While low-ranking members are warriors and fighters, the higher ranks include paladins and a few martial clerics.

In general, the Church of Lothian seeks to convert the heathen and protect and nurture the faithful. Far more than typical organized religions, the Church of Lothian remains involved in day-to-day government administration and the making (and sometimes enforcing) of laws. Lothian's priests serve as judges and officials in the government of the Empire.

Lothian grants the following domains to his clerics: Good, Law, Protection, and Sun. His clerics normally wear white and blue, although on high holy days they wear golden garments. Lothian's favored weapon is the longsword.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS IN PTOLUS

As a player in the Ptolus Campaign, you may find that your character has occasion to meet some of these important citizens.

Aoska. One of the Commissar's Twelve Commanders. A Malkuth woman with a unicorn horn growing out of her head.

Beck Von Tibbitz. Paladin and one of the leaders of the Keepers of the Veil.

Daersidian Ringsire. Well-known elf battle mage who rides a wyvern.

Dered Abanar. Head of House Abanar.

Devina Kath. Head of House Kath.

Dierna Hillerchaun. Leader of the Knights of the Pale. Lives in a manor house called the Bladechapel in Oldtown.

Doraedian Mythlord. Elven master of Iridithil's Home, an elvish sanctuary. Very influential in town.

Dorant Khatru. Head of House Khatru.

Ebbert Boltcrafter. Dwarf who operates an outfitters' shop in Delver's Square.

The Emperor of the Church. Holy Emperor Rehoboth, who claims to be the rightful temporal Emperor as well.

Renn Sadar. Head of House Sadar.

Fabitor Thisk. Cleric and pastor of St. Gustav's Chapel, which caters to adventurers.

Igor Urnst. The Commissar of Ptolus.

Iristul Vladaam. Head of House Vladaam.

The Iron Mage. Rarely seen in public. It's said that the Iron Mage is the most powerful wizard in Ptolus (he notably does not belong to the Inverted Pyramid).

Jevicca Nor. Human member of the Inverted Pyramid. Powerful sorceress.

Jirraith. Crime lord operating out of the Warrens. Runs the Pale Dogs.

Kevris Killraven. Female crime lord.

Kirian Ylestos. The Prince of the Church.

Kirstol Dallimothan. Lord of House Dallimothan. May be a dragon or half-dragon himself.

Malkeen Balacazar. Son of the crime lord Menon.

Menon Balacazar. Crime lord who also deals in necromancy and black magic, the trade of forbidden items, demonic slaves, etc.

Myraeth Tuneweaver. Elf who owns Myraeth's Oddities in Delver's Square. Sells odd trinkets, adventuring souvenirs, and minor magic stuff recovered from the Dungeon.

Peliope Erthuo. Head of House Erthuo.

Phadian Gess. A cleric of Lothian and one of the leaders of the Keepers of the Veil.

Rastor. Litorian who operates a weapon shop in Delver's Square.

Savane. Leader of the Shuul.

Sorum Dandubal. Guildmaster Delver and council member.

Steron Vsool. Human champion of Gaen. His heart glows so brightly that you can see it within his chest.

Tagel Unergart. Paladin of the Church of Lothian and head of the Order of the Dawn.

Tarin Ursalatao. Male human bard, uncanny in his charm.

Thollos Shever. Head of House Shever.

Urlenius, Star of Navashtrom. Ogre-mage cleric of Navashtrom, God of Harmony. Bears many *ioun stones*. Major representative of the Brotherhood of Redemption.

Verrana Rau. Head of House Rau.

Wynn Rabinall. High-level monk and leader of the Order of the Fist.

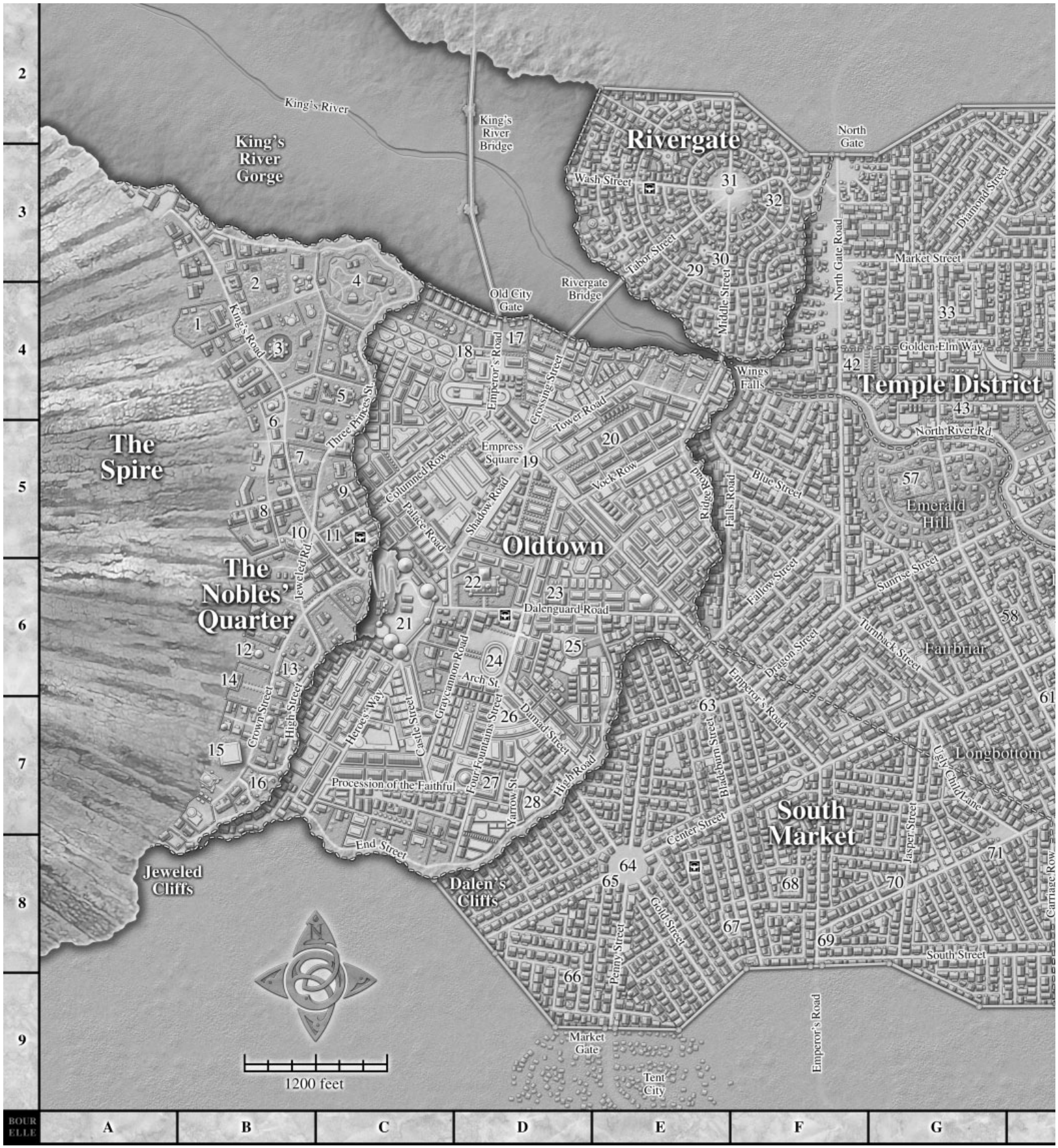
Zade Kenevan. Human bartender at the Ghostly Minstrel. Bald, thin, and gruff.

Sheva Callister is a well-known adventurer in Ptolus. She is retired, however, and has sold most of her equipment. She still frequents places like Delver's Square and the Undercity Market, though, and she still carries her infamous magical greatsword.

Daersidian Ringsire is a friend of Sheva's and a fellow adventurer. He is never seen without his adventuring partner, the halfling rogue Brusselt Airmol (see page 5). These two have made names for themselves with such diverse adventures as stopping an entire tribe of hill giants from raiding small communities outside of Ptolus, and infiltrating the manor of House Sadar looking for an artifact called the box of shadows.

Shibata is a well-known minotaur priest of Niveral, god of secrets.

The city map on the next two pages contains many important locales within the districts of Ptolus. However, your DM has access to many, many more locations discussed in the full Ptolus *book. If your character seeks a particular service or shop, or wants more details about the ones marked on the map, your DM can tell you what you need to know.*



Nobles' Quarter

1 *Rau Estate*
2 *Sadar Estate*
3 *Castle Shard*
4 *Kath Estate*
5 *Erthuo Estate*
6 *Nagel Estate*
7 *Dallimothan Estate*
8 *Rosegate House*
9 *Swordthrower's*
10 *Imperial Academy of Music (Conservatory)*
11 *Abanar Estate*
12 *Shever Estate*
13 *Khatru Estate*
14 *Holy Palace*
15 *Soaring Idyll*
16 *Vladaam Estate*

Oldtown

17 *Citadel of the Golden Cross*
18 *Pale Tower*
19 *Clock Tower*
20 *White House*
21 *Dalenguard*
22 *Imperial University*
23 *Administration Building*
24 *Arena*
25 *City Courts*
26 *Citadel of Might*
27 *City Library*
28 *Yarrow Street Forum*

Rivergate

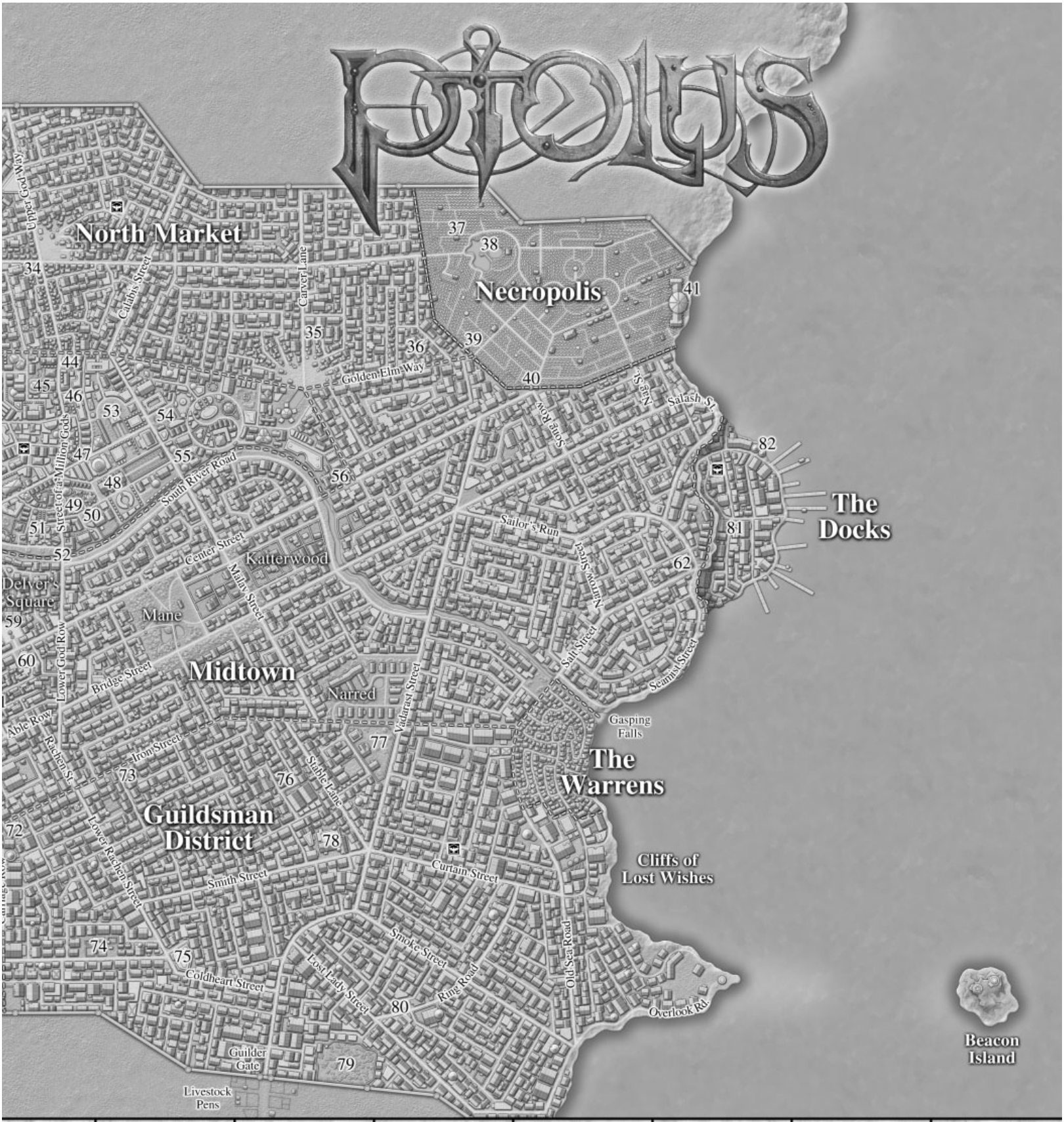
29 *Jangave Lesh's Training Hall*
30 *Barbarian Balloonists*
31 *Center Circle*
32 *Finelle's Pleasant Diversions*

North Market

33 *Red Stallion Pub*
34 *Mitoren's Blades*
35 *Smoke Shop*
36 *Zar'at*

Necropolis

37 *Hall of the Valiant*
38 *Clasthamus Isle*
39 *Siege Tower*
40 *Deathguild Headquarters*
41 *Dark Reliquary*



Temple District

42 Conciliators Chapterhouse
43 Temple of Teun
44 Celestial Conclave
45 Temple Observatory of the Watcher of the Skies
46 Temple of Asche
47 Order of the Fist Compound
48 Hall of Heroes
49 Temple of Ahaar
50 Temple of Navashtrom
51 Temple of Gaen
52 Blessed Bridge
53 St. Valien's Cathedral
54 Priory of Introspection
55 Temple of Excellence
56 House of Sacred Heat

Midtown

57 Iridithil's Home
58 The Griffon
59 Delver's Square
60 St. Gustav's Chapel
61 Onyx Spider
62 Fish Market

Watchhouse

South Market

63 Exotic Market
64 Star Crossing Plaza
65 Rogue Moon Trading Company
66 Golden Tooth
67 Mahdoth's Asylum
68 Fabric Market
69 Welcome Inn
70 Spice Market
71 Blackstock Printing

Guildsman District

72 Ironworkers' Guildhouse
73 Skull and Sword
74 Stockyards
75 Longdraught Brewery
76 Darkbirth Madhouse
77 Herbalist's Guild
78 Foundry
79 Midden Heaps
80 Masons' Guildhouse

The Docks

81 Savage Shark
82 Dockmaster's Tower

People today still do not say the name "Eslathagos Malkith" aloud, but refer to him only as the Dread One.

Players wishing to have characters from lesser-known lands might choose Kem, a place still reeling from ancient magical wars, or Ren Tehoth, a land thick with ancient ruins and mysterious stone circles. Players wishing to create characters outside of Ptolus with more mundane backgrounds might hail from Rhoth, a remote realm of farmers and ranchers, or nearby Palastan, whose inhabitants are mainly herders and fishermen.

To the vast majority of Ptolus residents, all good outsiders are simply angels, and all evil outsiders are demons. More specific distinctions seem pointless to anyone but a sage.

PEOPLE FROM HISTORY

Abesh Runihan. Defeated the lich Kagrisos as he rose to cast a spell that would spread a plague throughout the city. Runihan died in the process. A statue of him stands in Delver's Square (also known as Runihan Square).

Danar/Eslathagos Malkith. Creator of the Banewarrens and Jabel Shammar, the citadel atop the Spire. Also known as the Dread One.

Delian Von Tessel. The first Emperor of Tarsis.

Ghul. Creator of Goth Gulgamel, the fortress halfway up the Spire. Also known as the Half God and the Skull-King. Claimed to be the offspring of Eslathagos Malkith.

Parnaith. Wife of Danar and creator (along with the Wizard-Priests of Ni-Gorth) of the Seven Jewels of Parnaith: small demiplanes associated with the Spire and Ptolus.

Tacheron Kint. Famous delver and explorer.

Yrkyth Vladaam. Mad wizard who attempted to destroy the world by gaining access to powerful magic below the city.

THE WORLD (AND BEYOND)

Two moons hang in the night sky. Lunas is a large bluish-white orb, while Rogue is the smaller, more erratic satellite. Most people are well aware that the world is round and that the moons orbit around it, while the world circles the sun. (They do not, however, have any concept that the stars are suns or that other worlds might circle about them—but then, who's to say that's true?)

Learned folk know the world is made up of matter and energy (the essence of both of which can be expressed as air, earth, fire, and water) and that matter is made of particles smaller than a person can see. Magnetism, lighter-than-air gases, and other basic aspects of science are not unknown, either.

Most people know that the Ethereal Plane (called the "Ethereal Sea") is a magical place that shares the same space with the world but remains apart from it or "out of phase." The Elemental Planes are conceptual places based around the fundamental building blocks of matter and energy. The Upper Realms, Upper Planes, the Heavens, the Celestial Realm—these are all names for the place of ultimate goodness where angelic beings rule and good people go when they die. Most do not believe this to be the realm of the gods, however—the gods dwell in secret places within the world or high in the sky.

The Heavens' opposite, the Hells (or just Hell), the Pit, the Abyss, the Dark Realms, the Lower Planes, or the Nether Realms, exist in a similar metaphysical state. They are a place of demons and devils, where the evil go when they die to face eternal torment (or get their deserved reward, according to some). Plenty of evil gods and demons live right in the world, however, hiding in the shadows.

You will find no references in myths or legends, let alone in history, to people traveling to these realms beyond (except the Ethereal Sea). However, demons and angels do live in the world, clearly having come here from beyond. That such mystic places as the Heavens and Hells exist is beyond question.

OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS

Although the campaign takes place entirely within the city of Ptolus, there are, of course, lands beyond the city. Knowledge of these places may prove useful for designing your character's background, if you are not playing a Ptolus native. Your character might be from Tarsis, the oldest and largest city in the world and the heart of the Empire. Or you might run a barbarian from the Eastern Hordes beyond the Grey Mountains to the east of Tarsis. Your arcanist character might hail originally from the mysterious land of Kem along the Southern Sea.

The land surrounding Ptolus along the Whitewind Sea is Palastan, an ancient realm that stands on the verge of breaking away from the Empire. Its capital is Trolone. The people who founded the Empire, the Prust, hail originally from the Prustan Peninsula to the east. This is also where Grail Keep, home of the Grailwarden dwarves, lies.

These are only examples. Your DM can show you a map of the world beyond the walls of Ptolus and can tell you about all the interesting and sometimes exotic lands.

CUSTOMS

Below is a small sampling of cultural customs widely observed throughout the setting.

Brightfather's Day: This longstanding holiday is still observed every Fourteenth of Blessing, although its exact origins are now lost. Most religions have adopted it as a high holy day to revere an important god. All look upon it as a day of feasting, family, and making peace with enemies.

Dreamspeakers: Since ancient times, religious people have attempted to interpret the dreams of others, thinking they represented some sort of "sending" from a divine source. Today, dreamspeakers are minor fortunetellers or wise women who, for a small price, tell one the meaning of one's dreams. Many do not take these oracles seriously, but even believers admit that some dreamspeakers just make up their interpretations. Only a select few actually have any preternatural affinity with dream meanings.

Friendship Bands: Long ago, it became a custom to write one's name on a thin strip of cloth and wrap it around the index finger of an ally. This

sacred bond of trust displays your feelings of close friendship. It's said that in older times, kings used the bands as a way to demonstrate their support to their vassals (and, in turn, lesser nobles gave them to their liege to show loyalty). Essentially, the giving of a friendship band means, "I'll work with you/follow you/help you because I respect you."

House Gifts: Although not everyone adheres to the belief behind the giving of house gifts, it's practiced widely. It is held that every home develops a spirit, sometimes called a *luritas*. When coming to someone's home for the first time, or when invited formally, people bring the *luritas* a little gift—a shiny bauble, a coin, a tiny icon, or anything similar. The small object is placed upon a shelf always found near the entrance on an inside wall.

HISTORY

History, as it was taught to your character, centers about the formation of the Empire of Tarsis and the establishment of the Lion-Guarded Throne, its hereditary seat of power. However, be aware that history stretches for thousands and thousands of years before that—not that the Empire, in its arrogance, believes anyone should care about such "primitive" times.

TWO EMPERORS

To understand the Empire is to understand that there are truly two Empires: a spiritual one and a temporal one. When Delian Von Tessel became the first Emperor, he also named himself Holy Emperor of the Church of Lothian, which became the official religion of the Empire of Tarsis. After his death, his nephew Radlov Von Tessel took both positions, but quickly abdicated the role of Holy Emperor. Since that time, the same individual has never held the two seats of power and, in time, they have built very different infrastructures around themselves.

Although he controls no lands the way the Emperor of Tarsis does, the Emperor of the Church governs the spiritual lives of all citizens. The Holy Emperor has his own court, his own army, and his own vast treasuries. He has the power to pass laws and issue edicts, although they must involve spiritual matters, such as the Edict of Deviltry, issued in the year 560 IA to ban the use and practice of arcane magic.

LIFE UNDER THE EMPIRE

Unlike many empires, the Empire of Tarsis gained little of its dominion through conquest. A thousand years ago, the evil lord Ghul waged war against the rest of the world, his armies comprised of demons, undead, and horrible monsters. At that time, a group of humans called the Prust occupied the area around the city of Tarsis far to the east. When the Prustan forces from Tarsis came westward to the help defeat Ghul, they stayed, helping to rebuild and establish order. Following their terrible defeat in the Ghulwar, the folk west of Tarsis welcomed not only the Prust's help but also their advances in science. The Prust (and the Grailwarden dwarves of the same area) brought with them firearms, clocks, printing presses, and even steam-powered engines. They built roads, waterways, and well-ordered cities with running water, sewer systems, and postal services. Their laws were codified in a book called the *Vast Codex* rather than arbitrary. In short, life under the Empire seemed good.

The Empire, however, also brought with it strict controls. Various freedoms suddenly vanished in the name of maintaining order. Official citizens of

Even though a mug of ale in a tavern is cheap, most Ptolus locals still can't afford to frequent drinking houses. Neighborhood parties, in which everyone pitches in to buy a keg of cheap ale, are common. These parties usually involve a lot of dancing, music, and storytelling.

The Lion-Guarded Throne sits in the center of the Imperial Palace in the capital city of Tarsis. Its craftsmen used 25,000 gp worth of gold and other precious metals in its construction and spent collectively over one thousand man-hours on its relief work and ornamentation.

The Emperor of the Church lost the bulk of his army during the barbarian attack on Tarsis and now keeps only his Knights of the Dawn and bodyguards.

"The fact that the Empire is coming apart at the seams only shows that totalitarianism is an outmoded and inefficient means of governance."
—Helmet Itlestein, republican leader

"It doesn't matter to a fellow like me who's in charge. I still gotta work six days a week and break my back to support my family, no matter what."
—Harris Ralston, delivery man

the Empire achieved rights denied noncitizens, such as permits to own firearms. The Church of Lothian became the official religion of the Empire, and eventually the only allowed religion. Other faiths were persecuted, and ultimately arcane magic was demonized, restricted, and finally outlawed. Life became very complicated.

For hundreds of years, the Empire of Tarsis expanded its domains and influence. The Church of Lothian, or simply "the Church," became omnipresent within society. Emperors and empresses came and went. It seemed that the Lion-Guarded Throne was destined to rule the known world forever.

But slowly the pillars supporting the Empire began to decay. The Edict of Deviltry was overturned, and arcane spellcasting became legal once again (even before that, time's passage had brought with it more and more safe havens for the practitioners of magic—including the city of Ptolus). Other religions practiced fairly openly, and the Church of Lothian was no longer organized or powerful enough to stop them. Education worsened. Complex Prustan and dwarven devices wore down and were forgotten rather than repaired. If anything, the last two hundred years have seen a decline in science rather than its further advancement.

THE EMPIRE TODAY

The Empire teeters on the brink of disintegration. Barbarians from the distant east have defeated Tarsisan armies and ransacked Tarsis itself. Three different people claim the Lion-Guarded Throne, including the current Emperor of the Church, Rehoboth Ylestos.

The secular Empress Addares XXXIV is the cousin of the previous Empress Addares, who died with no children or siblings. No one currently holds the title Prince or Princess of Tarsis, therefore there is no heir apparent. Segaci Fellisti, a powerful and aged councilor who has survived six Emperors, now claims that only he is fit to rule in these trying times. Despite his non-Prustan heritage, his followers believe he has more right to rule than the Empress, whose blood ties to the original Von Tessels are convoluted at best. Addares now holds court in Dohrinthas, the city she has proclaimed as the new capital, while Segaci apparently has returned to Tarsis following its sacking. Meanwhile, the Emperor of the Church, now residing in Ptolus, claims to be the only true ruler with the title Emperor.

But outside of Tarsis, some see the fall of the Empire—if it has indeed fallen—as a good thing. The hereditary monarchies, long disenfranchised, now return to power as Imperial governors lose their influence. Like a disease overcome, the Empire is fading and life is returning to its state of a thousand years ago—but not without many indelible scars left behind.

TIMELINE

BE = Before the Empire of Tarsis
IA = Imperial Age

350 BE	The dwarves of Dwarvenhearth observe that someone has moved onto the Spire near their city and has begun building a fortress. Their spies reveal it to be Ghul—the Half God, the Skull-King—who claims to be the son of Eslathagos Malkith, an evil lord from the distant past. Ghul calls his fortress Goth Gulgamel and builds it by the labor of orcs he created (the Toruk-Rul tribe, whose name means "closing fist").
319 BE	Ghul's forces drive the dwarves from Dwarvenhearth.
292 BE	The Skull-King begins the Ghulwar, an invasion to conquer the surrounding lands. His forces include Toruk-Rul orcs, dark elves, tribes of evil men and dwarves, and monsters.
291 BE	Palastan falls to Ghul.
290 BE	The Sea Kingdoms fall to Ghul.
289 BE	Eastern Rhoth falls to Ghul, cutting off Cherubar to the far west from the rest of the continent.
288 BE	Ghul conjures forth a vast magical darkness called the Utterdark, which covers the lands he has conquered.
285 BE	The elves of the northern Moonsilver Forest fall to Ghul. They are taken to Goth Gulgamel and filter out again slowly as the Harrow elves—the blighted ones.
282 BE	The Elder Elves of Theridae stop the advance of Ghul's armies near the River Tonam.
281 BE	The Cold Quiet begins. Few pass into or out of the Utterdark.
152 BE	The Cold Quiet ends. The armies of Ghul issue forth from the Utterdark, composed of Toruk-Rul orcs, the even mightier Sorn-Ulth orcs (whose name means "bleeding breath"), ogres, trolls, giants, undead, and other monsters.
150 BE	The Elder Elves, now allied with the Stonelost dwarves (descended from those who fled Dwarvenhearth), drive back Ghul's armies.
87 BE	The elven wizard Khelaeson banishes the Utterdark.
86 BE	The elves and dwarves invade the realm of Ghul.
85 BE	The invaders take back the Moonsilver Forest and most of Palastan from Ghul.

84 BE Ghul calls forth the Squirming Horde, also known as the Shrieking Horde, and defeats the elves and dwarves. The horde, composed mainly of minor demons, lycanthropes, fiendish monsters, and incorporeal undead, follows the Elder Elves back to their homeland of Theridae and razes it.

71 BE The Stonelost dwarves, Shoal elves, halflings, and gnomes forge the Pact of Brightfather's Day with eastern forces—the Grailwarden dwarves and the Prustan humans of Tarsis—to ally against Ghul. They also gain allies from among the aram and the Cherubim elves, as well as a few select individuals—giants, unicorns, lammasu, and others.

61 BE The dark hordes of Ghul, weakened from a battle with an unknown foe, fall to the combined forces of the Brightfather Pact, bringing an end to the Ghulwar.

59 BE Goth Gulgamel falls in the harrying that follows the war. Ghul flees to a mysterious place known only as Orr.

55 BE The Great Seven—Uthegos (a dwarf fighter), Saerth (an elf wizard-rogue), Runshallot (a human cleric), Yllistro (a half-elf sorcerer-ranger), Kam (a halfling monk), Dionys (a human fighter-druid), and Eriskal (an elf rogue)—hunt down Ghul and destroy him in Orr.

50 BE With help from Tarsis, the people of the once dark lands begin to rebuild.

43 BE Construction of Dalenguard, a fortress the dwarves built for the Tarsisans, begins near the Spire.

41 BE Tarsisan outposts and garrisons dot the landscape, providing security and maintenance on the roads.

40 BE Construction of Dalenguard completed.

9 BE Delian Von Tessel becomes ruler of Tarsis. He christens his seat of power "the Lion-Guarded Throne" after his family symbol.

1 IA The Lion-Guarded Throne proclaims Imperial control over the lands around it. The Age of the Empire of Tarsis begins.

110 IA Despite magical aids, Delian Von Tessel, first Emperor of the Lion-Guarded Throne, dies.

386 IA Following the assassination of her husband, Empress Addares (Von Tessel) X makes it illegal to own a firearm without an official Imperial dispensation.

413 IA Ptolus—named after fragmentary facts from the distant past discovered by the loremaster Gerris Hin—is founded as a small port city on the edge of a large bay off the Whitewind Sea. It is built near the fortress of Dalenguard and eventually will encompass it.

c. 500 IA The demigod Raguel arrives in the world with a demonic host, seeking his divine parents. They find a home with the undead-loving Forsaken in the Dark Reliquary.

560 IA The Edict of Deviltry is issued, adding strict laws prohibiting arcane magic to the *Vast Codex*.

562 IA The First Inquisition terrorizes the Empire. The "Days of Blood" begin.

564 IA The First Inquisition ends.

598 IA The Second Inquisition begins, in particular looking for a group of arcanists called the Inverted Pyramid.

609 IA Despite tortures and horrible massacres, the Second Inquisition ends in failure. The Edict of Deviltry falls into disfavor. The "Days of Blood" end.

615 IA The leadership of Ptolus declares the city a safe haven for arcane spellcasters.

641 IA The Edict of Deviltry is officially overturned.

657 IA In a surprising move by the Church of Lothian, the Prince of the Church takes up permanent residence in the fairly remote city of Ptolus.

706 IA The Empire is in chaos, with three different people claiming the Lion-Guarded Throne. Empress Addares (Von Tessel) XXXIV attempts to move the capital to Dohrinthas, her longtime home.

708 IA The mysterious and ornately armored Urthon Aedar begin to appear in Ptolus, prophesying doom.

710 IA Tarsis is overrun by barbarians from the Eastern Hordes. Holy Emperor Rehoboth of the Church of Lothian flees to Ptolus to stay with the Prince of the Church, his son Kirian.

713 IA Explorers plumbing down into ancient Dwarvenhearth discover great treasures and begin bringing them to the surface.

714 IA The barbarians leave Tarsis. "Emperor" Segaci attempts to re-establish the Empire from its traditional capital.

717 IA Ptolus becomes the center of much attention as more and more would-be treasure-seekers plumb the depths below the city. Activities of so-called "chaos cults" increase. The potential for both greatness and danger has never been as intense.

721 IA Today.

The Ghulwar

The Ghulwar, which began more than a thousand years ago and lasted for three centuries, both shaped and scarred the present-day world. It was the unification of the races to oppose Ghul under the command of the Prustan armies that paved the way for the Empire of Tarsis to form and spread. Schoolchildren are all taught the history of this time, even though it was so long ago, because these events are considered vital to today's society. Even the uneducated know that the world came very close to falling into eternal darkness. Those who took part in defeating Ghul are still discussed in reverent tones.

A similar but far more ancient struggle—against the Dread One—is all but forgotten. Were it not for the presence of Jabel Shammar atop the Spire, most people likely would never have heard of this long-ago foe.

Humans make up around 70 percent of Ptolus' population. Elves are the next most common race, but constitute only 10 percent of the populace. After that come dwarves, halflings, litorians, gnomes, half-elves, centaurs, orcs and half-orcs, and lizardfolk—in that order.

Physically, the differences between Stonelost dwarves and Grailwarden dwarves are so slight, they are recognizable only by dwarves. However, Grailwarden dwarves usually dress more formally and are far more likely to wear spectacles than their Stonelost cousins (although not necessarily more likely to need them). Grailwarden dwarves hold themselves to high standards as regards their physical appearance, whereas the Stonelost dwarves are not as concerned with their looks and dress.

You can find a blank character sheet on pages 28–29 of this book.

CREATING A CHARACTER FOR THE PTOLUS CAMPAIGN

You will find the following information especially useful when creating characters for the Ptolus Campaign. Unless otherwise mentioned, use the Core Rules for all other character creation details. As always, your DM is final arbiter of what is allowed in the game.

COMMON RACES

All of the following races are available as player characters. They're also the most common NPC races.

Dwarves

Although most call them "dwarves," their own name for their race is Haurdir, the Stalwart Kings of Order. There are two great overclans of dwarves in the known world—the Stonelost and the Grailwardens—but rumor claims there was once another.

Dwarves, Stonelost

These are the children of the dwarves of Dwarvenhearth, said to be the greatest of all dwarven cities. Although their small villages lie scattered about the north, since the evil lord Ghul's forces drove them from their glorious city, they no longer have the centralized focus they once did. Hence the name Stonelost.

When Ghul fell and Dwarvenhearth was liberated, influential dwarven leaders would not allow their people to repopulate the city. No one knows why. Instead, the city was sealed.

Use the standard rules for dwarves when creating a Stonelost dwarf.

Dwarves, Grailwarden

Deep within the mountains of the Prustan Peninsula, the Grailwarden dwarves build large underground cities devoted to industry. Their name comes from their stewardship of the *White Grail*, one of three powerful, linked magical artifacts (the *Black Grail* and the *Unseen Grail* are the other two).

While the Stonelost dwarves—and the Stonemight dwarves of Dwarvenhearth before them—developed stalwart fighting skills by warring against evil humanoids and dark elves, the Grailwarden dwarves focused their attention on science, craft, and even magic. When creating a Grailwarden dwarf, use the standard rules for dwarves except that they enjoy no special bonuses versus orcs, goblinoids, or giants. Instead, they gain a +2 racial bonus to Profession (engineer), Craft (machines), Knowledge (machines), and Craft (alchemy) skill checks. Machine-based skills are introduced in *Ptolus*, Chapter 29: Technology.

Elves

Their ancient name *aduel deaistorm* refers to the seven "Races of Chaos," for once there were many more types of elf than one can find today (although the dark elves and Harrow elves are technically additions). Today, the Elder Elves are thought to be extinct. Elves have always preferred the deep woods or the open sea to the mountains or cities, magic over the mundane, the moon and stars over the sun.

When non-elves simply say "elf," they're probably referring to the Shoal elves, or simply the Shoal. Generally dark-haired, these elves are prevalent in the Sea Kingdoms, for they love the sea and ships. Some can be found in the Moonsilver Forest along the Whitewind Sea as well, but they care less for the cold, and so are fewer in number than those in the south. Shoal elves use the standard Core Rules for elves, plus they enjoy a +2 racial bonus to Profession (sailor) and their favored class is sorcerer, not wizard. The other exception is that elves in the world of Praemal need sleep, like humans and other races.

Unlike in the Core Rules, halflings and gnomes are technically distant elven relations. In fact, they were once considered elven subraces.

Gnomes

Frequently mistaken for halflings (or the other way around), gnomes are the rarest of the major races, particularly in Ptolus. Unlike halflings, they are more likely to consort with elves than with humans. They favor song and magic over just about anything else, often combining the two (in fact, some call them "loresong faen"). They dwell throughout the lands of Cherubar, Rhoth, Palastan, and the Sea Kingdoms.

Use the standard rules for gnomes with this race.

Half-Elves and Half-Orcs

Although understandably rare, these races are more common in Ptolus than in many other places in the world. Half-elves are always half Shoal elf, while half-orcs usually come from the Ornu-Nom tribes of Palastan and Rhoth.

Halflings

Although members of this race were originally called "quickling faen," humans named them "halflings" due to their stature, and the name stuck. They are small, fair, and nimble, but their childish size does not carry with it a childish demeanor. Although originally considered a type of elf, they do not have much contact with other races of elves—in fact, they interact more with humans. Nomadic halflings often move about in

roaming tribal caravans throughout the nearby lands of Rhoth and Palastan.

Use the standard rules for halflings with this race.

Humans

According to the elves and dwarves, the humans are the youngest of the common races. Despite this fact, they are the most prevalent of all intelligent peoples.

MINOR RACES

Far less numerous than the common races are the following peoples. You should not have more than one of these races represented in the PC group at any time. The DM can provide you with game information regarding any of these races.

Aram: The Dwarvish name for these folk is "centaur." These half-horse, half-human people are boisterous, arrogant, and boorish, yet many find them likable nonetheless. They live in both Palastan and Rhoth. Many have found their way into human communities—but usually as individuals rather than groups.

Elves, Cherubim: More common in the western mountains, these winged elves are frail but graceful even by elven standards. They live mainly in Cherubar, a land named for them. They are aloof (again, even by elven standards) and rarely travel outside their homeland.

Elves, Harrow: The parents and grandparents of these very rare individuals were tortured and changed by the dark lord Ghul almost a thousand years ago. Once Elder Elves, they now are misshapen and cursed, often displaying perverse magical powers. While not strictly evil, most seem continually besieged by some darker nature within, tugging at them to do wrong.

Litorians: Once masters of the Plains of Panish to the east, the golden-maned, feline litorians were scattered in the Wars of Fire thousands of years ago. Small prides hunt here and there in the wilderness, and occasionally a litorian attempts to fit into a human culture.

Lizardfolk (Assari): More common in the lands to the south, these saurians attempt to keep out of the affairs of other races but often fail. Their own myths say they originated in a vast, swampy forest that once covered most of what is now the Cold Desert, Palastan, and the Whitewind Sea. Sages indicate there are reasons to believe this is true.

Months of the Year

Newyear, Birth, Wind, Rain, Bloom, Sun, Growth, Blessing, Toil, Harvest, Moons, Yearsend.

Days of the Week

Theoday, Kingsday, Airday, Waterday, Earthday, Fireday, Queensday.

While Ptolus was designed to fully support the play experience as derived from the Core Rules, it also offers everything needed to play variant races as well, such as the minor races described here.

Ptolus is a very humanocentric city. However, compared to other cities in the world, it seems very cosmopolitan. Creatures like orcs and minotaurs, which would be considered monsters anywhere else in the Empire, actually make their homes right here in the city. It should be noted, though, that such creatures are by far the exception and face daily prejudice, discrimination, and hostility from other residents. Even far more common creatures, such as litorians (which make up 2 percent of the city's population) frequently face similar reactions.

"Every day, more eager young treasure-seekers come through the city gates hoping to find adventure and riches. Most of them leave Ptolus in coffins, yet still they keep coming."

—Zade Kenevan, bartender at the Ghostly Minstrel in Delver's Square

OTHER NPC RACES

While by no means comprehensive, the following list of races includes some of the more predominant nonplayer character races involved in the Ptolus Campaign. These races are unavailable as PC race choices without permission from the DM.

Aasimars: Graced with celestial blood in their veins, these fortunate scions of blessed creatures have a representative of Heaven as part of their heritage.

Elves, Dark: One must delve deep into elvish history to trace the origin of this splinter race of elvenkind. Mostly subterranean, dark elves are rarely seen, although the Stonelost dwarves say their people fought great underground wars with them before Ghul drove the dwarves from Dwarvenhearth. Sadistic and cruel, they revere evil gods who urge them toward conquest and dominance.

Minotaurs: Although most of them are quite bestial, some minotaurs are intelligent and civilized—albeit bloodthirsty by most people's standards. Most of these intelligent individuals are outcasts, although sometimes they become leaders. They often become powerful sorcerers or clerics as well.

Orcs: Orc myth contends that these creatures were birthed by an evil demon god, although some ancient texts claim they were created by an evil wizard. It is impossible to dispute, however, that the orcs who dwell in the area around Ptolus were modified and bred by the evil lord Ghul. The Toruk-Rul orcs are large, bestial, and ferocious. Their name means "closing fist" and they typify everything that people think of when they say "orc." The Sorn-Ulth ("bleeding breath") orcs are dark skinned and smaller than the Toruk-Rul orcs, bred for evil magic and stealth. Both of these greater orc tribes live along the coast of the Whitewind Sea.

The orcs who call themselves Ornu-Nom ("howling axe") never suffered Ghul's manipulations. They dwell in the wilderness throughout Palastan and Rhoth. The Ornu-Nom have a sense of savage nobility to them, but they remain the deadly enemies of humans and most other races.

Tieflings: These individuals have fiendish blood in some small but measurable quantity flowing through their veins. Tieflings are a rare but significant force in Ptolus.

The Unwanted: The city also is home to goblins, ratmen, and other undesirable elements. Most people consider these creatures more of an infestation than true inhabitants, though. These creatures contribute nothing to Ptolus, but they prey on its populace, stealing what they need to live.

NAMES

Since the dawning of the Empire, surnames have become popular, because the Prust have long used them. Prustan (Imperial) names sound Germanic or even Prussian. Other human names descend from such diverse cultural backgrounds that they can be almost anything. Some halfling names sound a bit like non-Prustan human names, while others hearken back to the race's distant elf ancestry.

Dwarvish names are short and somewhat harsh, often using diphthongs like "au" and "ou." Elvish names are long and grand, using diphthongs like "ae" "ai" and "oe." Both dwarves and elves often use surnames that are Common tongue translations, like Stonemate or Hammersblood for dwarves and Moonshadow or Wavesong for elves; many gnomes have a similar practice. Some elves—particularly those from the south—keep the Elvish translations of their surnames, like Lorenci or Vaenarum.

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

You are either from Ptolus or have come to the city from elsewhere. If you are a city native, think about what district you grew up in and where you live now. Think about some of the organizations involved in the city, and decide whether you have any affiliation with them or, more likely, aspire to have one (your DM may wish to have a say in this). If you are not a Ptolus native, the DM will help you create your background by providing details about the lands that surround the city. You should think about why you've come to Ptolus.

It also is the responsibility of the players to decide how the PC group forms. Some ideas:

- You've all come to Ptolus looking to strike it rich (or for other reasons), and you meet on the road and decide to work together.
- Two or more people in the group are family members or long-term friends already.
- Two or more of you met recently and discovered that your goals coincide enough to band together for mutual support.
- Some major patron has gathered you together for a specific task.

You can even work out a couple different reasons to join together into two or three small groups, then leave it to the DM to throw the groups together once you're in the city. In that case, at least some of your initial meetings will occur in-game, and you'll know some of the other PCs better than others.

Your DM can give you access to a larger map of the city of Ptolus than the one in this book, as well as a calendar to help you keep track of time passage, and various other visual aids.

Player Character Backgrounds

Here are some ideas to keep in mind as you create your Ptolus player characters.

Background	Most Likely Classes	Benefit	Home District
Alchemist's apprentice	Bard, cleric, sorcerer, wizard	+2 Knowledge (alchemy)	Guildsman, Midtown, either market, Oldtown, Rivergate
Arena fighter	Barbarian, fighter, monk, paladin	Special contacts	Oldtown, Rivergate
Artisan's apprentice	Any	+2 Craft skill of choice	Guildsman, South Market
Carriage driver	Bard, fighter, rogue	Special contacts	Guildsman, Midtown, either market, Oldtown
City Watch guard	Fighter, paladin, rogue	Special contacts	Any but Nobles' Quarter
Clerk in office	Bard, cleric, monk, rogue, wizard	Special contacts	Guildsman, Oldtown, Rivergate, South Market
Clerk in shop	Any	+2 Profession (shopkeeper)	Any but Warrens
Conservatory student	Bard, sorcerer	+2 Perform	Nobles' Quarter
Gang member	Barbarian, fighter, rogue	+2 Gather Information	Guildsman, Midtown, Warrens
Gardener	Druid, fighter, ranger, rogue	+2 Knowledge (nature)	Midtown, Nobles' Quarter, Oldtown, Rivergate
Imperial soldier	Fighter, paladin, ranger, rogue	Special contacts	Oldtown
Laborer	Any but sorcerer or wizard	+2 Gather Information	Docks, Guildsman, Midtown, either market, Oldtown
Messenger	Any	Special contacts	Any
Sailor	Fighter, rogue	+2 Profession (sailor)	Docks
Servant	Any	Special contacts	Nobles' Quarter, Oldtown
Squire	Fighter, paladin, rogue	Special contacts	Nobles' Quarter, Oldtown
Stablehand	Any	+2 Handle Animal	Any but Docks
Temple acolyte	Bard, cleric, rogue, sorcerer, wizard	Special contacts	Midtown, Temple
University student	Bard, cleric, monk, rogue, wizard	+2 Knowledge skill of choice	Oldtown
Wizard's apprentice	Sorcerer, wizard	+2 Knowledge (arcana)	Midtown, either market, Oldtown, Rivergate

Background: This was the occupation the character had before the game started.

Most Likely Classes: Although any class can have any background, these classes are the most appropriate for the given background.

Benefits: As an option, the DM can award characters a benefit that reflects their background. Bonuses are competence bonuses. "Special Contacts" are people the DM creates related to the background; the PC can consult them for information or even assistance. If nothing else, using these contacts provides a +2 circumstance bonus to Gather Information checks made in the contacts' area of knowledge.

Home District: This is the district that a Ptolus native with the given background would call home (although not necessarily the district where his family lives or where he was born). If more than one is listed, the player may choose. The Necropolis is never considered a home district, even when it says "any."

CHARACTER CLASSES

Here are a few notes regarding how various character classes fit into the Ptolus Campaign.

Barbarians: Human barbarians likely come from the recent invasion from east of the Grey Mountains (known as the Eastern Hordes). There are no elven or dwarven barbarians (unless you've got a really interesting backstory).

Bards: This being an urban-based campaign, bards fit in very well. Minstrels with talent are well received in the city, where the taverns are outnumbered only by the temples. An organization of martial bards called the Knights of the Chord dwells in Oldtown.

Clerics: Clerics are, not surprisingly, among the most respected people in society. Clerics of Lothian have some political clout (but in turn have to cope with the Church's byzantine structure and politics). You can work with the DM to choose a deity appropriate to your needs.

Druids: A long time ago, there were many more druids in the area than there are now, and they belonged to a group called the Circle of Green. No major druid organizations exist anymore. Druids are mostly loners now, and—truth be told—aren't often found in Ptolus. They are almost certainly the least common character class.

Fighters: The campaign includes a number of orders of knighthood that you may wish to join one day. There is also the warriors' guild, the Order of Iron Might, to consider. Many fighters get their start in Oldtown's combat arena.

Monks: The monk tradition, it is said, comes originally from the far south. Now it is very pervasive, and orders of monks are quite common—usually dedicated to a particular cause or belief.

Ptolus offers specific organizations that various character classes can join. These groups have backgrounds, goals, and connections geared toward particular PC classes: the Inverted Pyramid for wizards and sorcerers, the Knights of the Dawn for paladins, etc. Ask your DM for more information about groups that might be appropriate for your character to join.

Your Arrival in Ptolus

If your character is not a native of Ptolus, you arrive at the city either through one of the main gates or by ship at the Docks. At the main gates, the City Watch will ask to see your papers and will demand an entrance toll of 2 cp. At the Docks, you'll also be greeted by the Watch, as well as by a low-ranking Imperial official who likely spends a little time looking over your belongings. Again, you'll be asked to pay a 2 cp toll, and you also might face other taxes or tariffs, depending on what you have with you.

Once in the city, you'll find the streets bustling with a staggering array of individuals going about their business. If you're hungry or thirsty, you'll find numerous vendors and establishments clustered close to the entrances to the city. They will be more than happy to take your coin. Since you're likely an adventurer, anyone you meet can direct you to Delver's Square, which lies near the heart of the city. There you'll find places to stay, gear to purchase, an entrance to the Undercity, and lots of other adventurers who can help you get started in your new delving career.

Unlike the way they are presented in the Core Rules, many temples treat monks as religious figures. In this way, they become like very different sorts of clerics, but remain representatives of a deity and a belief system.

Paladins: The campaign includes a number of orders of knighthood that you may wish to join one day. Also, look at the cleric's discussion above regarding religion, as most paladins in the campaign have a close connection with a specific deity.

Rangers: Rangers are uncommon but certainly not unheard of in Ptolus. Human rangers are likely to be from the Viridian Lords of Palastan. Elves are very often rangers, particularly elves from the Moonsilver Forest north of the city.

Rogues: While there is a major thieves' guild in Ptolus (the Longfingers), remember that as a rogue, "thief" is just one option. Rogues make excellent scouts, spies, and even merchants and artisans, due to their skillfulness. This may be the most common PC class in the city.

Sorcerers: Sorcerers were the first mages, born with magical abilities innate within their very blood. They command great respect. Many sorcerers aspire to join the Inverted Pyramid mages' guild, although no character can begin the game with such an affiliation.

Wizards: Wizards, as opposed to sorcerers, are extremely scholarly—they look upon magic as a science and attempt to learn its rules and utilize its loopholes. Because people acknowledge and respect their power, wizards often figure into the military, City Watch, etc. Elves are only very rarely wizards—they become sorcerers instead. A surprising number of Grailwarden dwarves are wizards in Ptolus. Many wizards aspire to join the Inverted Pyramid mages' guild, although no character can begin the game with such an affiliation.

LEVEL

The scope of the Ptolus Campaign is much like that suggested in the Core Rulebooks. Most people are commoners, and low level at that. At 4th to 5th level you've started to make a name for yourself. By 9th or 10th, you're "somebody." By 15th, you truly stand among the elite of the elite. Beyond that, you join the ranks of those the bards still sing songs about.

MAGIC

Not surprisingly, magic is prevalent in the Ptolus Campaign. It's as common as the Core Rules suggest. That is, magic remains beyond the reach of the common man, but certainly well within his observable world. One can say the same of monsters—while not everyone's seen a dragon, there's certainly no one who "disbelieves" in them. And most people have seen many other types of horrible creature in their lives. They're just far too common for locals to remain unfamiliar with them.

SPELLS

In a world this old, with magic having been common throughout history, there are literally thousands of magical traditions, theories, and methods. To reflect this heritage, all players with spellcasting characters should name their own spells and be able to describe the appearance of their effects fairly freely. One wizard might know *magic missile* as "Inoris' slap of retribution" and cast it as a slapping hand made of energy, while another calls it "daggers of death" and causes it to manifest as white-hot daggers flying through the air.

Further, players creating spellcasting characters should be aware that a few spells—mostly of a planar nature, such as astral projection or banishment, function a bit differently in Ptolus. Your DM can provide you with details, should you need them.

BLESSED CHILDREN

Blessed children are the "opposite" of undead. They are the spirits of people not yet born. Just as evil clerics call upon the undead, good clerics can call upon the blessed children for aid. In the Ptolus Campaign, the various *summon monster* spells make blessed children available for summoning.

THE WINTERSOULED

Once, long ago, there were no undead in the world, or so it is said. But through a great act of villainy, the veil between life and death was rent asunder, allowing the dead to enter the world of the living. The first of these are called the Wintersouled, and they remain among the most powerful of all undead. A small handful of them is said to dwell within the world to this day.

EQUIPMENT

Characters can buy and sell equipment costing up to 100,000 gp in the large city that is Ptolus. Standard gear is available throughout the city, although Ebbert's Outfitters in Delver's Square is a popular spot for adventurers. One can buy and sell magical gear in Midtown at Myraeth's Oddities—a shop run by an elf wizard named Myraeth and guarded by powerful wards and a couple of ogre fighters. Myraeth also buys other valuables (gems, jewelry, artwork, and so on) for a fair price and offers spell components and similar wares as well as resale magic items. The DM should determine at any given time what magic items Myraeth has on hand. For 100 gp per item he also can *identify*

LIVING IN PTOLUS

What does the average Ptolus resident know about his or her community? Here are some basics:

- Humans are by far the most common race in the city.
- The Ptolus year has 364 days, with twelve months and a seven-day week.
- The Ptolus climate is cool, with many overcast or rainy days.
- Commoner men typically wear white shirts and vests, sometimes with a wide-lapeled coat. Hats are frequently worn. They usually keep their hair short and their faces clean shaven.
- Commoner women wear dresses, often covered with an apron. They wear their hair long, sometimes styled up.
- The typical commoner earns 1 to 3 sp per day. A silver piece is often called a "shield" or a "shiny."
- There are no banks, as such, but you can rent out a small personal vault to store your valuables at places such as Hammersong Vaults in Oldtown.
- Buildings have glass windows that hinge open.
- Most buildings, but not all of them, have indoor plumbing, including privies that pump water in via hand pumps and drain it away into the city sewers.
- You can hire a messenger to carry notes and packages anywhere in the city. This typically costs 1 sp per delivery. There is also a magical messenger service.
- Carriages are widely available for hire to take you wherever you want to go. This service costs about 1 sp per trip.
- While no stranger to magic or monsters, the typical Ptolusite fears the undead rumored to stir in the Necropolis. Even more real, however, are fears of thieves, fire, and plague.
- The Ptolus City Watch is extremely competent. Despite this fact, the city has a terrible crime problem.
- Ratmen live in the sewers.
- Rumors speak of Cults of Chaos finding new members about the city these days.
- Imperial law requires that everyone carries identification papers. Written law favors citizens over noncitizens, but practical law favors the upper classes over the lower.
- Spells that make people do things they normally wouldn't, like *charm person*, are illegal in Ptolus. So are spells that create undead or spread plague.
- Most shops and places of business stay open as long as the sun is up, which means that business hours are longer in the summer than in the winter. Many are open seven days a week.

As an adventurer in Ptolus, your first mission might very well deal with the humanoid ratmen—diseased ratlike thieves that live in the sewer—that plague the city. Even as you prepare for your first adventure, you might look upward to the very top of that three-thousand-foot Spire rising above you. What dangers, what treasures, might still lie in the fortress at the top of the Spire? Will you ever be so powerful as to find out for yourself?

items brought to him, with a twenty-four-hour turnaround. For custom-made permanent magic items, people sometimes speak of the Dreaming Apothecary, but characters just starting out do not know how to contact this group.

A place called Potions and Elixirs, also in Midtown, has a large stock of potions for sale. A number of arcanists offer scrolls for sale all over town. A few other places sell potions as well, and most temples sell divine scrolls and potions to help fund their religion.

FIREARMS AND TECHNOLOGY

Unlike the Core Rules, in Ptolus characters have access—albeit extremely limited—to a slightly higher level of technology than what would be considered early medieval. This includes firearms, most commonly known as "dragon pistols" and "dragon rifles" (although there are other types as well). It also includes spyglasses, pocketwatches, spectacles, and powder bombs. In the city, player characters will find printing presses, hot air balloons, and even steam engines.

However, all these devices are rare and steadily becoming more so. Such advancements in science helped forge the Empire, but as the Empire declines, so too does the knowledge of how to create and maintain these wonderful devices. It is often difficult to purchase such items these days—although rumors abound of a place in the North Market called the Smoke Shop where they are available.

Using firearms requires a dedicated exotic weapon proficiency feat. Those who are particularly interested in technology will want to take ranks in Craft (machines) or Knowledge (machines).

Character Name | Race | Sex | Class | Level

Player Name | Alignment | Deity | Imperial Citizen?

Abilities and Hit Points

Ability	Score	Modifier
STR		
DEX		
CON		
INT		
WIS		
CHA		

Hit Points

HP

Saving Throws

	Total		Base Save		Ability Mod.		Misc.
Reflex (DEX)		=		+		+	
Fortitude (CON)		=		+		+	
Will (WIS)		=		+		+	

Armor Class and Initiative

	Total		Armor		Shield		Dex.		Size		Misc.
AC		=10+		+		+		+		+	

Touch AC _____

Flat-Footed AC _____

Armor Check Penalty _____

Spell Failure _____

Speed _____

Initiative Modifier _____

Base Attack Bonus _____

Grapple Attack _____

Melee Attack Bonus _____

Ranged Attack Bonus _____

Weapons

Weapon	Attack	Damage	Critical	Range
		Weight	Size	Type
Weapon	Attack	Damage	Critical	Range
		Weight	Size	Type
Weapon	Attack	Damage	Critical	Range
		Weight	Size	Type
Weapon	Attack	Damage	Critical	Range
		Weight	Size	Type
Weapon	Attack	Damage	Critical	Range
		Weight	Size	Type
Weapon	Attack	Damage	Critical	Range
		Weight	Size	Type

Feats and Abilities

Skills

Skill	Total	Ability	Ranks	Mod.	Misc.

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Equipment

Gear	Weight

Total Weight _____

Spells Known (or Prepared)

Level	Spell	Save DC
1st ( )		
2nd ( )		
3rd ( )		
4th ( )		
5th ( )		
6th ( )		
7th ( )		
8th ( )		
9th ( )		

Appearance

Personality

Background

Languages

Relatives

Organizational Affiliations

Home District and Street

Contacts in the City (Name/Location)

Personal Goals

Money

XP

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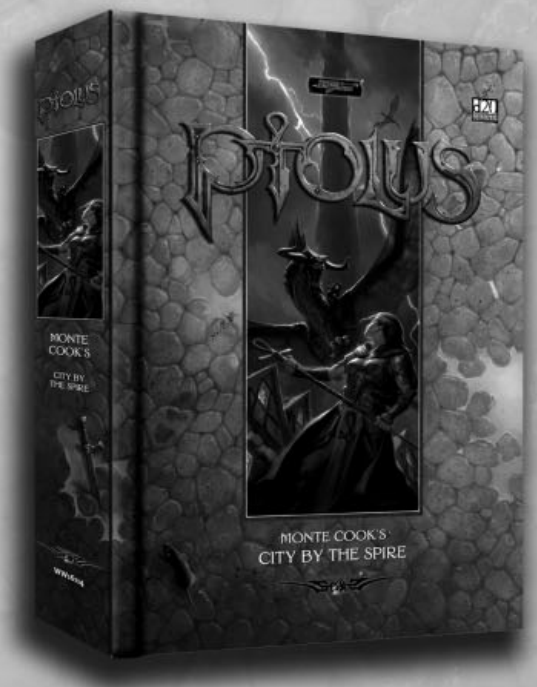

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