

ARKUS



A 5E SETTING PRIMER

Discover monolithic trees, parallel universes, and mechanical marvels in this campaign setting for 5th Edition Dungeons and Dragons.

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

My name is Will Savino, and I am a DM and RPG content creator. I initially designed the world of Arkus for my home campaigns, but I later decided to create this document explaining how you too can create Arkus campaigns and characters. This PDF is a living document, and will continue to be either updated or supplemented with additional homebrew content in the future. If you have any questions about the world, the document, or its creators, please feel free to reach out to me! I'm [@Music_d20](#) on Twitter, and you can also email me at will@wsavino.com.

Arkus was designed from the ground up to be a strange and unique campaign setting that fosters creative DMing as well thought-provoking tactics and roleplaying from players. The idiosyncrasies of Arkus are meant to facilitate campaigns that pose questions about environmentalism, colonialism, equity, sacrifice, and justice. While that's my admittedly lofty goal, in practice, it's also cool to just go on an adventure on a giant tree.

In exploring this document, you may discover themes or elements that are eerily similar to events, groups, and ideologies from our own world. This is intentional. While roleplaying is a satisfying mode of escapism, I find it is also a useful way to grapple with complex issues that are anything but imaginary.

While I encourage DMs to explore these themes in narratively compelling ways, I would urge caution when tackling any content that might upset your players. As a DM, you have a responsibility to foster a safe and comfortable play space. If your players don't want to wrestle with troubling themes of exploitation and generational trauma, *you should avoid those themes in you games*.

While this setting is totally playable as is, I also invite DMs to borrow any elements they enjoy from this setting and place them into existing worlds. Roleplaying games are inherently modular, and I see no reason why threndls could not exist in other campaign settings, or why [copyrighted materials] from other worlds might find their way into Arkus. Personally, I always prefer to play in fully homebrew settings, but I scavenge *mercilessly* from other fantasy writers. Please borrow from me the way I have borrowed from them.

ARKUS

GIANT TREES AND A SPLIT TIMELINE

THE ARKS

Far above the Shifting Soils that plague the empty wastes, great monolithic trees known as Arks are home to countless creatures and civilizations. Atop the tropical palm Ledvas, elves wield resonant sorcery to pilot vibrafonds through the clouds. In the bark of coniferous Storth, firbolgs and halflings lead peaceful lives, smoking sap and harvesting megafruit. On the winding cactus Auctama, tabaxi and orcs have forged a delicate truce to protect against a common enemy.

The largest and most populous Ark is the dragon blood tree Enark. Its branches are so dense that rivers, lakes, and farmland all exist in the soil that slowly collects from the occasional mudrain. Those who live atop Enark would be forgiven for forgetting that they're on a tree at all. Enormous ironwood cities are powered with interplanar energy, and a conniving central government is always looking for new sources of magical power.

For eons, residents of the various Arks lived in isolation from one another. From the heights of Enark, few had even seen the other Arks, other than those who lived close to the tips of the branches. To anyone living on a smaller Ark, Enark was constantly in view, and all they could do was wonder who or what stood atop it. Those who dared venture to the floor of their own Arks were quickly swallowed up by the Shifting Soils, a tidal force that immediately buries anyone bold enough to attempt travel by land.

It wasn't until the elves of Ledvas mastered resonant sorcery that the Arks became connected. By harvesting palm fronds, the elves could create flying longboats, able to generate lift through vibrations in their leaflets. Though the elves were first to master the skies, it was the gnomes of Enark who sought to conquer the world around them. First tapping into uninhabited Arks for resources, they quickly turned to violence and occasional "diplomacy" in their efforts to constantly expand.

All the while, strange forces linger within the trunk of the Arks: not just dwarves, but alien creatures intent on conquest and destruction.

Arkus is a land of omnipresent mystery, intrigue, and seedy politicking. Religious orders, governments, and extraplanar forces vie for control. Bizarre magics influence almost every aspect of everyday life: from arkblood servants, to unpredictable Leafgates, and the dangers deep in the trunks of the Arks. An adventurer is just as likely as to negotiate a ceasefire between rival Enark branches as they are to stumble into an alternate reality filled with dead trees and ghostly monstrosities.

THE CLEAVE

Enark sits in a perilous balance. Five centuries ago, the dwarven king Dorim Belgir mined deep into the trunk of Enark, eventually stumbling on the Heart of the tree. Overcome with curiosity and greed, he struck into the Heart with his pickaxe. In that moment, an unprecedented cataclysmic force rippled through the plane and split reality into three distinct timelines.

- In the first timeline, the blow from King Dorim's pickaxe killed the Heart (and therefore Enark) in one fell swoop. The tree withered, the people died, and vile forces that had lain dormant deep in the trunks of the Arks conquered the entire plane.
- In another timeline, the Heart rejected King Dorim's pickaxe, and Enark itself cursed humanity with infertility. In time, humans, dwarves, elves, and most of the other races of the world became extinct, while mysterious fey creatures thrived alongside the healthy flora.
- The third timeline is where the majority of most Arkus adventures take place. King Dorim's pickaxe became firmly and permanently implanted in the Heart. In order to keep Enark healthy, the gnomes, dwarves, and humans ceaselessly maintain an artificial pump that distributes life-giving ironblood throughout the Ark.

This split in reality is known as "The Cleave," and the three timelines are known as "Blackleaf," "Greenleaf," and "Silverleaf" respectively. While travel between the three timelines is possible by various means, time travel is decidedly not. The Cleave cannot be undone, and it has shown the people of Silverleaf just how high the stakes are when it comes to protecting their home.

In the Silverleaf timeline, the people of Enark persevered. Thanks to gnomish ingenuity and dwarven fortitude, the Vasculants can methodically monitor and regulate the distribution of ironblood throughout the Ark. By diverting some ironblood for their own means, the gnomes were able to channel powerful magic, as well as craft arkbloods, humanoid servants made of bark and steel. With the help of the arkbloods, the people of Enark built great magic cities, hubs of learning, industry, and the arts.

In your campaigns, Blackleaf can stand in for Shadowfell and Greenleaf for the Feywild with very minimal tweaking. As such, it should be possible to introduce vampires, eladrin, shadar-kai, and many of your favorite creatures from the 5th edition multiverse into your Arkus campaigns.

ENARK



KRELL

Fezni's Observatory

Old Midvale

Midvale

Krelltop

Lenetton

Farbranch

KRELLFORK

Aeolhiss

Avinshire

Ghe Zizira

TRUNKTOP

Ledward River

PALM WHARF

ELZANDRA

Zizira Basin

Sprike Barracks

Bark Range

Nezla Ruins

Elzandra Tunnel

Overlook

WITHERLIOD

STONESEVER

The Nighthouse

Arkblood Memorial

Grimdocks

THE RACES OF ARKUS

Although most of the traditional races of Dungeons and Dragons have a place in Arkus, many of them occupy unique roles given the strange geography and history of Arkus. Those that are not listed in the following pages are not strictly forbidden, but caution is advised when introducing avian or aquatic characters, as they may be poorly balanced for the setting.

ARKBLOODS

Constructed from ironwood, ironblood, and gnomish ritual magic, arkbloods were created to serve Enark. Keeping the Heart healthy is a herculean task, and despite all of their technological advancements, the one resource the gnomes lacked the most was labor. Arkbloods were created to rectify that fundamental logistical hurdle and aid the Vasculants in their neverending responsibility to the Ark.

Though crafted to be the ideal servant, the unpredictable nature of ironblood as a life force is such that many arkbloods reject their orders and seek out lives of their own. For the first few decades, the Plum Knights would violently decommission any rogue arkblood, but an unlikely alliance between these constructs and the Church of the Ironblood Heart resulted in a successful rebellion. These days, gnomish artificers still create new arkbloods, but those who wish for freedom are allowed to leave the Vasculants.

Arkbloods use the warforged traits from *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.

DWARVES

The dwarven capital lies directly beneath that of the rest of Enark. Inner Trunktop is home to almost all of the dwarves of Arkus. Once a mighty city of stone, the city is now threaded with tangled pipes and loud engines, constantly supporting the Heart of Enark. Most dwarves are Vasculants, laborers tasked with manning the various machines in the trunk, though many dwarves also have religious responsibilities or are tasked with protecting the Heart from the forces that live beneath it.

There are roughly as many dwarves as there are gnomes, and their society is equally complex. They are granted limited autonomy by the Enark monarchy, and are directly governed by the Church of the Ironblood Heart. This theocracy is largely benevolent, and few dwarves object to their laws as almost all dwarves are followers of the Church.

Some dwarves do inevitably leave the Trunk, and many who do enlist in the Sprike or Plum Knights. Due to their bulky physique, they are considered ideal candidates for either role, especially when compared to their gnomish counterparts.

ELVES

Elves are native to Ledvas, the second tallest Ark. This narrow palm tree has very limited surface area, and so the elves adapted to be dextrous and careful, building their homes perilously atop the fronds.

Elves have always had an inferiority complex in Arkus. While it is true they were the first to take to the skies, it was the gnomes who were able to construct flowstones which eliminated the need for resonant sorcery.

Unsurprisingly, elves are the most likely to become adventurers. Not only do they have mastery of flight, but they also have a chip on their shoulder. They look down on gnomish industry and seek instead to unravel the mysteries of the world through exploration and daring alone.

The elves of Ledvas have had a treaty with Enark since the earliest days of flight. Gnomes and humans are not well-suited to living on Ledvas, but they are still beholden to the elves for access to vibrafonds. As such, the two Arks have been at peace, despite their vastly different worldviews.

HALF-ELVES

Half-elves in Arkus are forbidden from living on Ledvas. Many elven leaders are old enough to remember a time before elves and humans regularly intermingled and are therefore incredibly weary of those "tainted" with human blood. Half-elves are openly accepted in Enark, and the Ledvasi disdain is universally considered backward, offensive, and outdated.

The Enark monarchy greatly values half-elves, as they're considered a precious symbol of the alliance between Enark and Ledvas. As such, half-elves are often granted positions of power that continue to elude humans.

GOBLINOIDS AND OTHER MONSTROUS RACES

Monstrous creatures primarily originate in the trunks of the Arks or from the adjacent timelines. Beyond those locations, the most common place you might find such monsters is on the dangerous plains of Auctama, the ruins of Elzandra, or the region known as Stonesever, where foreign creatures are beginning to gain a stronger foothold on Enark. The truth is that anytime a Leafgate opens, any number of creatures may sneak into Silverleaf and eventually inhabit some forgotten keep or abandoned temple. Additionally, some monsters spawn spontaneously from withered portions of Enark.

Any monstrous adventurer will be under sharp scrutiny, but the very nature of Arkus is such that most folks are prepared to expect the unexpected. Despite canonical alignments, no race in Arkus is inherently good or evil, and all individuals are free to explore the full range of the moral spectrum.

GNOMES

While there are only one-fourth as many gnomes as humans on Enark, they have an outsized impact on the tree. Gnomish artificers design all ironblood infrastructure, craft all arkbloods, and erect flowmills. Most gnomes live among the upper class, and tend to live in the larger cities of Enark. Though they are often characterized as selfish and self-righteous, few would deny their crucial contribution to life on Enark.

Enark has been officially ruled by the gnomish royal line since The Silverleaf War, and the gnomes have used this seat of power to maintain a perpetual stranglehold on Enarki government. While it is true that gnomes have been prosperous and powerful for ages, it's not entirely clear which came first: gnomish ingenuity or the incredible privilege that comes with accounting for the majority of the ruling class.

Enarki gnomes tend to believe in the Bifold. It's not clear whether the advancements in biotechnology result from core gnomish beliefs, or whether religion is a way for gnomes to justify the difficult choices they have made for Enark.

HALFLINGS AND FIRBOLGS

Halflings and firbolgs are native to Storth, a cedar-like Ark with intricate bark that is easy to traverse for these barefoot peoples. The two races live peacefully with one another and primarily live in huts carved into the trunk of the Ark. Resources are plentiful on Storth: the tree produces giant nuts, each of which can feed an entire community for a year. The tree also produces a sap that induces psychedelic effects when smoked. With ample resources and a sedentary lifestyles, many halflings and firbolgs are overweight compared to their counterparts in other parts of the D&D multiverse.

Until recently, the notion of "division of labor" was foreign to the people of Storth. Almost everyone would simply take what was needed and live in harmony with the Ark. However, demand for Storthsap as well as rich deposits of ironwood have made Storth the target for both Enarki criminals and Sprike raids alike. At present, the Short Table is debating a full military annexation of Storth. As such, halflings and firbolgs are attempting to make up for lost time in building up a military to protect themselves.

Notably, both halflings and firbolgs were spared by the Arks in the Greenleaf timeline.

ORCS AND HALF-ORCS

The orcs of Auctama are not fundamentally evil as they are in many settings. Instead, they have been forced to adapt to their harsh home, fending off endless attacks from the beasts who also call Auctama home. Ogres, owlbears, trolls, and giants are shockingly common in the both the winding hollow innards of Auctama as well as its vast plain known as The Unbroken. As such, orcs learned to adapt, adopting violence as a cultural touchstone purely out of necessity.

It's not clear who started the war with Enark. Perhaps the two cultures were both too powerful to risk letting the other go unchecked. Despite having little desire to leave their dangerous Ark, the orcs of Auctama have been forced to weather a neverending siege from a kingdom that swears it's attacking out of "preemptive self-defense."

ORXI

In Arkus, the term "half-orc" most commonly refers to the offspring of an orc and tabaxi, more commonly known as "orxi." Unlike typical half-orcs, orxi are covered in fur, have long tails, and are surprisingly lithe for their size. Players can use the same traits listed for half-orcs, or they can choose to increase their Dexterity by 2 instead of their Strength. They may also swap the half-orc's "Savage Attacks" for the Tabaxi's "Feline Agility."

HUMANS

Humans are native to Enark, and are also its most populous race by far. Though they have little direct power in the Enark government, they are the dominant cultural force. Their labor allows giant cities like Trunktop to prosper, and their contributions to the arts are unrivaled.

Humans are as diverse in Arkus as they are in our world; you are as likely to find a cruel branch Manager as a cheery hunter. Despite living shorter lives than most other races of Arkus, they are viewed as both wiser and more logical than the long-living elves (who are seen as stubborn) or the ruling class gnomes (who are seen as short-sighted).

Humans are the least religious race in Arkus, with many considering themselves to be merely "spiritual," and praying to no particular deities in particular. This is at least partially the result of the difficult work-life balance common to most human laborers.

TABAXI

Perhaps no creature of Arkus is better suited to their home Ark than the feline tabaxi. Perched along the great winding cactus thickets of Auctama, most tabaxi never feel a need to step foot on the wide expansive plain known as the Unbroken. The upper branches have everything they need: megafruit, easy prey, and plenty of needles against which to scratch their backs. Their sharp claws and keen senses render the harsh and bizarre terrain practically harmless.

Tabaxi communities are organized by tribe. While there is the occasional skirmish over territory, the defining feature of tabaxi society is the Kung, a regular meeting of the various tribes where sharing of excess food or other resources is strongly encouraged. While this system is far from formalized, the voluntary nature means few tribes have reason to object, and participation all but guarantees that the other tribes will look out for one another. As such, the impacts of short-term famine are often mitigated.

Most tabaxi tribes have begun to contribute fighters to the war effort. As combat between Auctama and Enark intensifies, the need for cooperation between tabaxi and orcs has never been greater, and though the two races have rarely interacted in the past, their now steadfast alliance has been a surprising boon to both societies.

THRENDLS

Twisted vines and sinewy thicket shaped into humanoid form, threndls are not born but grown, emerging as saplings from the soil. While Enark has been known to spontaneously generate a number of sentient creatures, threndls are by far the most common. Appearing less like dryads and more like wicker mannequins, threndls' vacant eye sockets may come off as inhuman to some, but their leafy hearts feel emotions as strong as any other Enarki race. Some threndls blossom in a stunning display of flowers that change with the season, while others present as a constant writhing mass of rattan knots.

The accepted understanding is that threndls are akin to white-blood cells for Enark, produced out of necessity to fight against illness and disease. Indeed, threndls have a healing presence on the tree, gradually reversing any withering in their presence. When the tree was young, there were plenty of threndls to protect against the occasional mold or blight, but as gnomish and dwarven exploitation of the tree began to increase, the need for threndl healing quickly outpaced their numbers. The Cleave greatly exacerbated the issue, and now threndls are in such high demand that the Short Table dictates precisely where threndls are required to live.

SENTIENT PLANTS

Though threndls tend to be soft-spoken and gentle, they can

become incredibly violent when nearby plants are threatened. While most residents of Enark have a good (if distant) rapport with the local threndls, a single bad experience can taint one's impression permanently.

Many modern threndls consider Enark to be a deity as well as a parental figure. Their devotion to the Ark is both spiritual and familial, and threndls thus rarely embrace any form of organized religion.

THRENDL COMMUNITIES

Today, threndls typically live in the most blighted parts of Enark, notably Witherlimb, where damage to the tree is most severe. While threndls are happy to tend to the tree, the dire state of Enark in its most precarious branches weighs heavily on their conscious.

In Greenleaf, threndls are among the only original Enark races to have been spared. They are plentiful, live long lives, and generally act as peacekeepers between the various Fey creatures that call the Ark their home.

THRENDL NAMES

With no actual parents to name them, most threndls end up naming themselves. Most choose to do so only after detaching from the Ark at the end of their sapling years, and their names typically represent the plants to which they bear most resemblance, or to which they feel kinship. Some may adopt surnames as well, especially those who integrate into the rest of the Ark community.

Threndl Names: Arbor, Ash, Blossom, Buckeye, Chlora, Elderberry, Elwood, Flora, Hawthorn, Hazel, Ivy, Jacaranda, Laurel, Lily, Marigold, Olive, Peapod, Phloa, Redd, Silverseed, Teak, Woodrow, Xyla



THRENDL TRAITS

The spirit of the Arks flow through you, granting a host of abilities.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 2, and your Constitution score increases by 1.

Age. Threndls age proportionally to how much they've healed Ark withering. Before the Cleave, they routinely lived up to 800 years, but now they rarely live past 60. Those who live in Greenleaf or who have avoided the most blighted parts of Enark may still live as long.

Size. Threndls vary greatly in size, with heights ranging from 5 feet to almost 8, and weights ranging from 100 pounds of delicate leafy vines, to upwards of 300 pounds of dense knotted bark. Your exact height and weight should reflect the role you character plays in your party. For gameplay purposes, your size is medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Symbiosis. You gain proficiency in the Nature skill, and you are able to read any Enark runes you encounter. The knowledge you glean is up to the DM, but runes typically provide information about nearby creatures or locations, the state of the Ark, or more cryptic messages.

Additionally, you can cast Druidcraft at will.

Photosynthesis. You don't need to eat, but you do need to either be in sunlight or in contact with a healthy part of an Ark for 1 hour per day. For every day that you fail to do so, you gain one level of exhaustion.

Permeable Vines. The gaps in your vines grant you limited protection against certain types of attacks. Melee and ranged attacks against you that deal solely piercing damage are rolled with disadvantage.

Ark Defense. Whenever a creature deals melee damage to you or any plant within 30 feet of you, you can use your reaction to strike the creature with a viny fist. The creature must make a dexterity saving throw, the DC for which is equal to 8 + your Wisdom modifier + your proficiency bonus. A creature takes 2d4 bludgeoning damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a success. The damage increases to 3d4 at 6th level, 4d4 at 11th level, and 5d4 at 16th level.

You can use your Ark Defense a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum 1) between long rests.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and Primordial.

TIEFLINGS

Tieflings are rare, but not unheard of in Arkus. They originate from a few distinct sources: the offspring of a fiendish creature from the lower trunkwho has (against all odds) made their way topside and mated with a human, or more likely, the result of a union between a human and a creature from Blackleaf. Some infernal bloodlines also stretch back dozens of generations with no obvious traceable origin.

In Enark, tieflings are treated mostly with curiosity. The notion of "mixed blood" is of particular interest to gnomes, who suspect tiefling heritage might offer some insight into their own biomagical creations. Though rarely subjugated and persecuted like in other settings, tieflings do run a minor risk of being kidnapped for vile experiments. That said, they are otherwise welcome in society, and frequently take careers as Vasculants, as their darkvision and infernal constitution make them well suited to inner trunk work.

SOCIETY

MAGIC

There are two types of magic in Arkus: that which is inherently threaded into the world (the natural fiber of "the way things are") and the magic that is done *to* the world: wizardry that produces mechanical arteries, or sorcery that propels people through the sky. Both are common, but while the first is taken for granted, the second is always ripe for criticism. For every creature who praises advancements brought on by dwarven Vasculants, gnomish artificers, or elven explorers, there is one who laments the natural Arkus that has been lost.

Regardless of your party's class composition, alignment, or goals, you will inevitably encounter a great deal of strange magics in Arkus. This section acts an introduction to just some of the magic your characters would be familiar with.

VIBRAFRONDS

Suggested Music. "Via Vibrafrond" by [Music d20](#)

Before the cultivation of vibrafonds, the different Arks might as well have been different planets. Yes, they were visible to one another, but with no plausible means of traveling from one to the other, it was anyone's guess what actually happened on a tree other than their own.

The first elven resonant sorcerers "invented" vibrafonds largely by accident. It is an inherent quality of magical resonance that certain objects will occasionally oscillate in tandem with a sorcerer's blood. This property allows elven sorcerers to pilot the fronds their home Ark produces. A sorcerer attunes to a palm frond, and then can use their concentration to simultaneously vibrate the frond's leaflets, generating lift for the frond and anything sitting atop it.

For centuries, every frond required a resonant sorcerer as a pilot, but after the Cleave, Enarki flowstones (described below) quickly replaced the need for such a scarce labor force. Nowadays, resonant pilots are a luxury, and most vibrafonds are powered by flowstones.

A standard frond can be augmented with the equivalent of a ship's hull and carry crews of up to 20 people. While it is possible to outfit a frond with weaponry, most fronds are small enough that weight is a serious concern. Larger fronds are available, but require more power, and flowstones capable of fueling larger vessels are exceedingly rare. The fastest vibrafonds travel little more than 20 miles per hour.

FLOWSTONES

Arks produce fields of magical energy. This is the energy that causes the erratic motion of the Shifting Soils, the energy that grows threndls, and the energy that may have once given rise to all life in Arkus. After the Cleave, the three timelines ended up with three drastically different quantities of this hum of arcane power. Despite their planar separation, some of this excess energy slowly drains out of Greenleaf, through Silverleaf, and ends up in Blackleaf. This process is called "Blackflow" in Common, and it's an invisible but omnipresent force.

Gnomish artificers first detected Blackflow soon after the Cleave, and they were able to construct the first flowmills not long after. These large, magnetically tuned mills spin at glacial paces, but are able to siphon off and harvest the constant influx of energy drifting between the planes. At the base of each flowmill, a magnetic generator captures this energy into flowstones, a sort of arcane battery. The stones themselves are relatively common in the trunks of Enark and Storth, but the charge is incredibly valuable.

Flowstones are used for all manners of magic and technology in Arkus. They power vibrafonds without the need of a sorcerer, they fuel the pump and arteries that keep Enark healthy, and they're used in the creation of arkbloods that help to build the cities and infrastructure that most Enarki citizens take for granted.

LEAFGATES

Because the power that is trapped in a flowstone is extraplanar in nature, any complications that arise from the use of a flowstone may produce a Leafgate, an planar junction that is as likely to swallow an Enarki citizen and send them to a neighboring planes as it is to deliver a shadow demon to Silverleaf at the point of impact. Despite how drastic the consequences may be, these events are rarely catastrophic, and the Short Table has assigned a division of the Plum Knights known as the Cleave Warden the responsibility of containing any threats from these transient disturbances.

Inevitably, some creatures end up stranded outside their home plane thanks to Leafgates. In Silverleaf, many of these creatures end up in Stonesever, a branch that is known to cause flowstone disruptions, and is thus a hotspot for Leafgates and extraplanar refugees.

Those who wish to travel to the other timelines end up spending a large sum of money: such a feat requires both a charged flowstone (that will be destroyed in the process) and a monk who is able to safely and properly disrupt the flowstone. If executed properly, this process will open up a Leafgate to the desired timeline.

THE PUMP

After the Cleave, relations between the dwarves and the gnomes were drastically strained. The gnomish king (an ancestor of King Umner) chastised Dorim for his greed and incompetence. Regardless, the two peoples quickly set aside their differences with the shared goal of bringing Enark back to health. Both sides claim to have invented the pump, but it was undoubtedly a joint venture. Some hypothesize that the technology was actually stolen from creatures in the Lower Trunk (described in greater detail below).

The pump is an artificial circulatory system for Enark, an infinitely complex machine that keeps the Heart pumping ironblood throughout the trunk and out to the branches. It requires enormous amounts of labor to keep active, and its infrastructure extends to nearly all parts of Enarki life. The pump is powered by flowstones harvested in distant fields, it pumps ironblood through the home of the dwarves, and various veins and arteries help the Heart to deliver energy to each and every branch.

In many ways, the pump is still an inferior substitute for a healthy Heart. Many branches (notably Witherlimb) don't get the ironblood that they require, and the need for constant labor and maintenance means that a portion of the Enark population must be conscripted to work in miserable conditions. These workers are known as Vasculants, and they're an important faction in any Arkus campaign.

However, the pump is considerably more efficient at distributing ironblood than the Heart was pre-Cleave. Theoretically, the entire Ark could maintain a constant surplus of ironblood thanks to the pump, but so much ends up diverted for gnomish manufacturing that large swaths of Enark remain blighted to this day. Nevertheless, this manufacturing allows for the creation of additional arkbloods, and therefore more efficient ironblood extraction, and so on.

RUNES

The slowly morphing bark of Enark tells stories. Most bark grows in natural patterns, but occasionally, they take the shape of intricate runes. Threndls are able to read these runes, and often can glean useful information about the local environment, the weather, or other details of natural significance. However, sometimes the runes tell a greater story: tales of past secrets, events still to come, or perhaps a glimpse into the magical inner workings of Enark itself.

Non-threndls often seek to understand the runes as well, but require the aid of a hallucinogen known as Storthsap in order to give meaning to the abstract shapes. Some attempt this as a hobby, but those who take it more seriously are known as Runists (described below).

Comprehending the semantic meaning of the runes is only the first step to deducing the larger message of the runes. Many will ascribe great meaning to the runes, and deeply symbolic interpretations abound. While most of the factual tidbits gleaned from runes are inherently provable, it is comparatively harder to discredit the more outlandish understandings of seemingly innocuous phrases.

IRONBLOOD

All Arks need a steady flow of ironblood to stay healthy. While no two Arks are the same, each has some sort of circulatory system that generates and pumps ironblood throughout. This is what keeps the leaves green, gives life to megafruit and threndls, and keeps the bark healthy and strong. When an Ark cannot distribute enough ironblood, it starts to wither.

Unfortunately, ironblood is also a precious resource for artificers and wizards. It is necessary to build arkbloods, it is used to craft power metals for weaponry and infrastructure, and it is used as an arcane regent for powerful spellcasters and alchemists. As such, the Short Table distributes ironblood meticulously, never letting a branch fully wither, but allowing for some degree of decay. This is seen as an acceptable compromise in exchange for the luxuries that ironblood provides.

While there is theoretically plenty of ironblood to keep Enark healthy, the fact that much is diverted is a constant point of contention among those who would like to see Enark returned to its former glory. Worse still, withered sections of Enark have been known to produce wicked creatures in lieu of threndls: animated skeletons, shambling mounds, myconids, and other potentially dangerous foes.



An example of an Enark rune. While a threndl would read this as "haven nearby," a runist might glean deep insight of cosmic significance

IRONWOOD

Mining on the Arks is a complicated ordeal. Veins of various ores exist in the trunks of the various Arks to differing degrees, but extracting those metals is a complicated procedure that involves mining, sawing, extraction, and then burning off the excess wood surrounding the ore. From there, the ores can be smelted much like in real life.

However, deep in the trunks of Enark and Storth, a precious substance known as ironwood can occasionally be found. A lode of regular iron ore will gradually crystallize and fuse with the surrounding bark, forming a uniquely sturdy alloy immediately recognizable by its gray and brown marbled texture.

Ironwood can be crafted much like steel or other metals, though ironwood armor, weaponry, and mechanical goods are particularly hardy as well as innately imbued with dormant magical properties. Ironwood weapons are particularly expensive, but function as silvered for the sake of overcoming resistances. In rare instances, artifacts made from this alloy may possess impressive and bizarre magical properties that are theorized to originate from the lifeblood of the Arks themselves.

The most important use of ironwood is in the production of arkbloods which require ironwood for their frames. Large sections of the pump also rely on ironwood.

MEGAFRUIT

While farming is entirely possible in the rich soil deposits of Enark, many of the other Arks rely almost entirely on megafruit for sustenance. Megafruit come in many varieties, some familiar, and other decidedly less so. Pumpkins 50 feet in diameter are a common sight near Farbranch, and Ledvasi diets are dominated by colossal coconuts and pineapples. High in the twisted limbs of Auctama, tabaxi feast on strange citrus, and in the tips of Storth's needly branches, halflings and firbolgs wield hefty picks in order to hack off shavings of nuts to roast for meals.

Given the laundry list of complications that arise from living on the Arks, the megafruit are perhaps the only reason that Ark civilizations are able to maintain a division of labor whatsoever. Without these copious and constantly refreshed sources of nourishment, species from Ark to Ark would struggle to cobble together a proper diet.

Megafruit is the product *only* of healthy Arks. While the exact connection between ironblood and megafruit is unknown, experiment after experiment has demonstrated that the healthier the tree, the more bountiful the megafruit harvest. While farming of more conventional crops was practiced on Enark prior to the Cleave, that devastating blow to the Ark's health meant that the people of its branches were forced to rely much more heavily on traditional agriculture after the Cleave.

MUDRAIN

For one or two days every spring, the heavens open up over Enark, unleashing a light but filthy layer of dirt and sediment upon every square inch of the Ark. Despite being a bizarre and disgusting nuisance, these periodic grimy drizzles are a necessary aspect of Enarki climate and geology. Without mudrains, all soil would eventually flow off the Ark, either picked up by wind or carried by the Ledward and Zizira rivers.

Despite replenishing the otherwise finite layer of topsoil, confronting the repercussions of mudrain is colossal logistical headache. As such, the civilizations of Enark have celebrated a holiday known as Evensweep every Spring following the mudrains. It is both a multiday celebration of Ark-wide unity, as well as a practical means of cleaning up homes and streets from the thick layer of grime left behind the by downpours.

RESONANT SORCERY

In Arkus, some children are born with an innate connection to the vibration of the planes. Perhaps this is related to the undulations of the Shifting Soils, the swaying of the Arks in the wind, or some extraplanar phenomenon yet unexplained by those who study the cosmos. In either case, this gift gave rise to the use of vibrafronds, and therefore an interconnected Arkus.

Resonant sorcerers have always been rare, but what few records exist suggest that each generation has been "less resonant" than the previous. While this worries some, the use of flowstones has largely made resonant sorcerers merely an anomaly and a luxury. Still, those touched with heavenly vibrations are considered important cultural ambassadors, particularly in Ledvas, where the phenomenon is most common and most treasured. Resonant adventurers are valued members in Enarki society, a symbol of the bond between Enark and Ledvas.

The following sorcerer subclass is presented for use in Arkus or other settings:

SORCEROUS ORIGIN: THE RESONANT

To say you are an anatomical anomaly would be a wild understatement. Your blood, your muscles, and your psyche resonate at the same frequencies as the planes themselves. Maybe you were born during an earthquake, maybe you've learned to control your chronic seizures, or maybe you're just a gifted dancer with rhythm in your soul. No matter the cause, your innate physical connection to the world allows you to tap into the Weave and grants you special abilities to perceive and manipulate your surroundings.

ACOUSTIC ATTUNEMENT

At 1st level, you gain proficiency in Wisdom (Perception) checks, and when you make a Wisdom (Perception) check that relies on hearing, you add double your proficiency bonus. Additionally, whenever you are touching a wall or door, you can hear as though you were on the other side of it.

Furthermore, your acoustic fortitude grants you heightened focus. You can add your Charisma modifier to any saving throw to maintain concentration so long as you can hear the source of the damage.

In Arkus, you are also able to pilot vibrafronds without the use of a flowstone. This requires you to be attuned to the vibrafrond.

SONIC FORCE FIELD

At 6th level, when you are targeted by a ranged weapon attack, you can use your reaction to disrupt the flight of the projectile via pinpointed sound waves. When you do so, add your Charisma modifier to your AC for this attack. You must choose to use this feature before the DM says whether the attack roll hits.

SONIC BOOM

Also at 6th level, you learn the *blindness / deafness* and *silence* spells, which don't count against your list of sorcerer spells known. If you already know either spell, you may choose one additional spell from the sorcerer spell list.

When you use *blindness / deafness* to deafen an enemy, you can expend 1 sorcery point per enemy targeted to wield sonic vibrations to deal additional force damage. You must choose to do so before knowing whether the creature succeeded its save or not. When you use this feat in this way, the creature takes 3d6 force damage if it fails its save or half as much if it succeeds.

While concentrating on *silence*, you can spend 1 sorcery point to deal 1d8 force damage as a bonus action to every creature that is within the radius of the spell.

ECHOSENSE

By level 14, you can use the acoustics of your physical environment to innately sense your surroundings. If you are able to hear, you can fully perceive your whereabouts up to 30 feet away. You are aware of the location of any hidden or invisible creature within this range.

RESONANT ASCENDANCY

At level 18, you've attained mastery over transmuting the physical world through your innate resonance, granting you the following features:

- You gain resistance to force and thunder damage.
- You can cast *silence* at will without using a spell slot.
- You can now walk on any liquid surface—such as water, acid, mud, snow, quicksand, or lava—as if it were harmless solid ground (creatures crossing molten lava can still take damage from the heat).
- You can cast *Passwall* without using a spell slot a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). You regain any expended uses when you finish a long rest. When you cast *Passwall* using this feature, the casting time is 1 bonus action, and the passage lasts for 1 minute or until you decide to close it.

GOVERNMENT

ENARK

The Enarki Government operates with drastically different rules at different tiers. At a high level, Enark is a monarchy, ruled by a succession of gnomish kings. These kings have willingly ceded some power over the centuries to a council of advisors known as the Short Table. At the branch level, Managers are democratically elected and have large amounts of leeway when creating and enforcing edicts.

THE ENARKI MONARCHY

Despite the intricate hierarchy of overlapping jurisdictions, Enark is fundamentally a monarchy, and it is currently ruled by King Jeryn Umner. This line of kings has existed since long before the Cleave, but the kingdom of gnomes has only been the official rulers of Enark since the Silverleaf War, a struggle for power in the early days of post-Cleave Enark.

As Enarki society has grown increasingly complicated, the logistical headache of managing the Vasculants, foreign wars, threld relocation, arkblood construction, and political dissent has led to a series of reductions in the King's official powers. The monarchy has willingly endowed its handpicked council the Short Table with many of the responsibilities that the monarchy once handled on its own.

At present, King Umner is largely a figure head, but he still has the final say on issues of Enarki security and large public works. He is tolerated in Trunktop, but as his power diminishes, so too does his popularity.

THE SHORT TABLE

Suggested Music: "The Short Table" by [Adventure Music](#)

Much of the decision making on Enark falls to the Short Table, a council of five trusted advisors to the King. Of these advisors, one has historically been a dwarven representative from The Church of the Ironblood Heart, but the rest are gnomes: a mix of scholars, wizards, and friends of the royal family.

Since much of Enarki society is planned centrally, the Short Table has enormous influence on life on the Ark. Their decisions ultimately determine ironblood allocation, labor assignments, and magical research funding. Any one of these choices can have an incredible impact on one branch over another, and the Short Table regularly wields their power as a bargaining chip when trying to encourage the branches to act in favorable ways.

The Short Table also controls the Plum Knights, the primary peacekeeping force acting within the bounds of Enark. It would be disingenuous to call the Plum Knights merely corrupt. Rather, their priorities are set by the Short Table, and that often results in the Knights acting blatantly against public interest.

BRANCH MANAGERS

Each of Enark's branches has the authority to elect Managers to enact edicts that are upheld solely within the confines of a given branch. This was the one concession the gnomes made to humans in the Silverleaf War. While the gnomes ultimately won the war for power, they knew that the humans could use their sheer numbers to cause massive riots if they were granted no ability to govern themselves.

Managers vary wildly from branch to branch. In industrial parts of Enark, most Managers enact pro-business legislation that they believe enriches their constituents. In the more agrarian branches, a Manager might prioritize limits on vibrafond usage so as to minimize the risk of Leafgates.

Ultimately, branch Managers have a surprising amount of authority to shape the policies of a given branch. This, however, is also a curse. The influence of these positions invites rampant interference from the Short Table, who regularly work to undermine the Managers and install puppet leaders.

INNER TRUNKTOP

The dwarves of Enark forfeited many of their rights when King Dorim Belgir damaged the Heart. The dwarven monarchy was dismantled by Dorim's successor, and dwarves were required to follow Enark law. However, as the Church of the Ironblood Heart gained influence after the Cleave, the Short Table saw an opportunity. This belief system largely aligns with the wishes of the gnomes: namely that hard work and Vasculant unity would lead to dwarven prosperity.

As such, the Short Table has allowed the Church of the Ironblood Heart to assert a great deal of political power in Inner Trunktop. Dwarves and other Vasculants are still subject to most Enark-wide laws, but the Church has some limited authority to make decisions for citizens of the trunk.

LEDVASI ELDERS

Elven culture places immense value on the wisdom of old age, and so Ledvas is controlled by the oldest members of its most prominent families. Because the culture of Arkus as a whole has changed at an increasingly rapid pace, the Ledvasi elders have been slow to meet the evolving needs of Ledvas. The worldview of the elders has changed sluggishly compared to that of the rest of the world, and therefore Ledvas has not adequately adapted to the changing sociopolitical landscape.

Younger generations of Ledvasi elves, particularly those who have traveled and seen the rest of the world, have grown increasingly impatient and frustrated with the outdated views of their community leaders. Many have debated an organized effort to reshape the political structure of Ledvas, but that would require not only political upheaval, but familial infighting as younger generations wrest power from their parents and grandparents.

STORTH

As far back as records exist, there has been no formal government on Storth. The Ark provides bountiful resources, and disagreements between halflings and firbolgs are handled internally on a case by case scenario. As the external demand for Storth's resources has grown, however, there has been an increasing need for more formal governance. The creatures of Storth have begun to form militias, but with little centralized planning, these have proven minimally effective.

In your campaigns, consider how a known threat might impact the evolution of Storth political power. The constant pressure from Enark might open the door to a despot, or it might be the galvanizing push that Storth needs to assert greater power in Arkus.

RELIGION

The technological advances of Enark have allowed many to embrace an attitude that the world of Arkus is fundamentally *knowable*. If there are Gods, they seem to rarely interfere in the day-to-day lives of Arkus, and as such many Enarki have abandoned religion altogether. Some remain vaguely spiritual, but the notion of all-powerful deities is not the universally accepted reality that it is in many other settings. That said, there are a number of faiths that exist in Arkus, and these beliefs do grant paladins and clerics divine powers, though the nature of those gifts is left up to the player and DM. A table of the various Gods and faiths is provided below for ease of reference and character creation.

CHURCH OF THE IRONBLOOD HEART

Both a religion and a government, the Church of the Ironblood Heart is the dominant force in Dwarven culture. They view Enark itself as a divine power that will bless the people of Enark in return for prayer and nourishment. This is an admittedly convenient doctrine for a people who are largely responsible for keeping the Heart healthy.

Whereas the Runists seek to heal Enark because that would be righteous and good, the Church of the Ironblood Heart has a more "transactional" relationship with the Ark. Through faith and good acts, members of the Church seek to entice the Heart into bestowing power and greatness unto the dwarves and Vasculants. In their teachings, Enark is a powerful force, but also a rational figure that is apparently willing to accept favors.

Most members of the Church are dwarves, although some non-dwarven Vasculants have adopted the religion, and it's not rare to find believers topside as well. While not all Vasculants are true believers, every one of them has absorbed a great deal of the Church's teaching thanks to the interweaving of faith and labor within the trunk.

RUNISM

Dismissed as "cultish" by detractors, Runists embrace the occasionally abstract inferences that are made as a result of reading Enark runes. Their optics are often a strike against them, as Runists rely on psychedelic drugs in order to gain a greater understanding of the wishes of Enark. Unlike most other Arkus religions, Runist gatherings are highly informal in nature, with most practitioners simply deciding that a given drug trip counts as church service for the week.

The worldview of Runists revolves around the fact that Enark is a fundamentally good and sentient creature that must be healed. They view the pump as an affront to the natural splendor of the tree, and wish to learn how to fully heal the Heart through runic teachings. This naturally leads to some antagonism between Runists and members of the Church of the Ironblood Heart.

Many humans have flocked to Runism in recent years, as gnomish technological advances have left them feeling aimless and frustrated. While all threndls are capable of reading runes, few have adopted this faith, as they prefer to take the meaning of the runes more or less literally. The rise of Runism has also fueled the warmongering spirit that is likely to lead to a full annexation of Storth. The need for a constant supply of Storthsap has made this military action all but inevitable.

THE BIFOLD

The most popular belief among gnomes in Enark is that the ideal form of humanity is the synthesis of technology and the spirit. They believe that mechanical efforts such as the pump and the creation of arkbloods are worthy of praise, as they take society toward a unified future wherein every aspect of daily life is a fusion of physical reality and magical or mechanical augmentation.

Bifold culture strongly influences the day-to-day life in primarily gnomish towns such as Trunktop and Krell. Believers embrace twin Gods Mexus and Jivanus.

Mexus is the God of magic and technology. In Arkus, these two concepts are so intrinsically linked that most have trouble distinguishing the difference. Mexus is depicted as a being of pure clockwork, an automaton who helps gnomish machinery run smoothly.

Jivanus is the Goddess of flesh and the spirit. She is typically depicted as a naked gnomish woman, sometimes bathed in blood, sometimes emitting an aura bright light. This is seen as neither lewd nor disturbing, and is instead considered glorious and empowering.

On rare occasions, someone might embrace one God or the other without adopting the full Bifold ideology, though this is considered sacrilege, and anyone who holds such a view is likely to keep it to themselves.

LEDVASI

The elves of Ledvas are tritheistic, believing in a trio of Gods that represent fundamental aspects of Ledvasi life: The Still, The Stir, and The Sting.

The Still is the God of trees, alcohol, and the hearth. He is depicted as a drunken, bark-skinned elf, enjoying life in his heavenly flying hut. Though the elves of the outside world are perceived as daring adventurers, the majority are actually homemakers, cultivating megafruit, brewing liquor, and raising families in their treehouses. As such, The Still is the most popular of the three on Ledvas itself.

The Stir is the Goddess of music, flight, and the stars. She is depicted as the partner of The Still, a natural born adventure who commands the winds directly through her Hau'lo, a painstakingly bred miniature palm leaflet that can be performed similarly to a harmonica. She is the patron deity of elves who have left Ledvas, either adventuring through the skies, or relocating to other Arks.

The Sting is the Goddess of violence, curiosity, and love. She is depicted as a shapechanging woman who is romantically bound to both The Still and The Stir. The elves of Ledvas don't believe in marriage, but they do believe in life bonds, and a single elf can be romantically bonded to any number of other elves. The Sting thus represents the brave spirit that is embodied by all of the boldest elves: willing to fight for what's right, to prod at the mysteries of the world, and to love unencumbered by strict customs.

GREENFOLK

Belief in the Greenfolk is the most common religion in Storth, though it is also gaining traction on Enark, and among the Fey creatures of Greenleaf. The "Greenfolk" are patron spirits of everyday items, events, concepts, and anything else for which someone could ascribe truly minor godhood.

Diety	Province	Suggested Cleric domains	Symbol
Enark (Ironblood Heart)	Prosperity, power	Forge, Order, Knowledge	The Heart encased in the pump
Enark (Runism)	Health, serenity, insight	Life, Light, Nature	Ornate rune
Mexus	Magic, technology, ingenuity	Arcana, Knowledge, Order	Silver gear
Jivanus	Body, soul, reality	Grave, Trickery, War	Two drops of blood
The Still	Calm, alcohol, hearth	Forge, Life	Bottle emitting smoke
The Stir	Music, flight, stars	Light, Tempest	Hau'lo (palm frond instrument)
The Sting	Violence, curiosity, love	Death, Knowledge, War	Long bow knocked with 8 arrows
Greenfolk	Miscellany	Arcana, Nature, Order	Upside down V
Dorim Belgir	Progress, greed, fate	Death, Grave	Pickaxe

There's a Greenfolk for trees, for leaves, for sticks and mud. There's a Greenfolk for every day of the week. Most who believe in the Greenfolk would be lucky to remember the names of more than two dozen at a time. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that beliefs are never compiled on paper, and are instead passed down orally. As such, differences in interpretation, nomenclature, and customs vary wildly, even between two halflings who live right next to each other.

Clerics who serve the Greenfolk typically serve the whole body instead of one specific spirit.

BELGIRISM

Without a doubt, the most important figure in Arkus history is King Dorim Belgir. The degree to which The Cleave has reshaped Arkus society cannot be overstated. That said, there are some who take His life to be even greater than that of a particularly consequential king. Belgirism is the belief that King Dorim was a messianic being.

The exact nature of this belief differs from believer to believer. Some are simply thankful for the lives they have and attribute that to the King's actions. Others think He did not go far enough in Silverleaf, and wish to live in Blackleaf where the Cleave successfully destroyed Enark. Unsurprisingly, many of the creatures of Blackleaf have embraced this belief and worship Belgir as a sort of infernal God.

Belgirism is strictly prohibited on Enark and is punishable with prison time. Those who are guilty of proselytizing the faith are liable to be hanged. That said, the promise of power from such a powerful being is enticing, and pockets of Belgirism are suspected across the Ark.

RELIGION AND ALIGNMENT

While the Greenfolk are painted as cute playful, and Belgirism as dark and tainted, believers of these faiths aren't as rigidly distinct. Some would commit atrocities in the name of the Greenfolks, and some Belgirists live lives of charity. Don't be quick to judge someone based on their faith alone.

BACKGROUNDS

The following optional backgrounds are provided to help you design a character that is tied to a particular aspect of Arkus life. All of the existing backgrounds can be reflavored to fit into this setting, but these additional options will hopefully allow you to better roleplay archetypal Arkus characters.

FLOWMILLER

The average flowmiller occupies a role in society somewhere between farmer, engineer, and hermit. Their labor is highly technical, but the vast majority of flowmills are erected far outside of city centers. As such, those who operate these mills are usually educated in cities and then end up providing a fundamental service to society that leaves them largely on their own. The act of operating a flowmill requires a large amount of technical knowhow, but also enough survival instincts to survive in the farthest reaches of the branches.

Flowmillers are given huge amounts of responsibility and little oversight. One misstep in their process could lead to a Leafgate forming mere feet from their home. As such, many flowmillers have had strange and otherworldly encounters with mysterious creatures. Perhaps one of these events led your character to pursue a life of adventuring.

Skill Proficiencies: Survival, Arcana

Tool Proficiencies: Tinker's tools, alchemist's tools

Equipment: A pair of overalls, a wrench, a set of Tinker's tools, a flask of oil, and a belt pouch containing 15 gp

FEATURE: FLOWSTONE MASTERY

You are an expert on the mechanics of flowmills and flowstones, and you'd likely be able to repair one in a pinch. In extreme scenarios, you might even be able to tune a malfunctioning flowstone to a specific plane if a Leafgate is inevitable (or planned). At the very least, your specific set of knowledge will earn you a bit of respect from learned members of society.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Flowmillers are the product of both a great education and a backwoods lifestyle. You might exist anywhere on the spectrum from hoity-toity to salt-of-the-earth. Your time in isolation may have solidified your mechanical understanding of the world, or it might have introduced you to the value of nature and an agrarian lifestyle. If you have a family, you'd likely do anything to protect them.

RUNIST

Not everyone is meant for the hustle and bustle of city life. Hard work is a drag, and if you do any work at all, it's begrudgingly. There are deeper, more important truths to be studied among the bark of Enark. With the help of a bit of Storthsap, you'll be more than ready to start comprehending the teachings of the Mother Tree.

To a non-Runist, you are either a beacon of positivity, or an obnoxious space cadet. Your religion is viewed as a childish past time at best or a complete of failure of parenting at worst.

The opinions of others are of little import, however, for the needs of Enark far outweigh whatever petty gossip people spread. "Determined" is not the first word most would use to describe, but you are damn sure that you're going to learn how to heal the Heart once and for all.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Perception

Tool Proficiencies: Herbalism Kit

Languages: Primordial

Equipment: A set of common clothes, a long pipe with 5 doses of Storthsap, an herbalism kit, a journal full of runes you've transcribed, and 5gp

FEATURE: RUNIC INTERPRETATION

While you've yet to discover anything truly noteworthy, your adventure might take you to some more obscure runes. So long as you have enough Storthsap on hand, you can attempt to interpret the runes. The results may be something mundane, something profound, or something more up to interpretation. Your DM may ask you to do additional checks in order to comprehend the symbolic meaning of the runes.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Runists are seen to outsiders as lazy, unmotivated, and obnoxious. Of course, there are Runists who defy those expectations, but people see what they want to see. Consider why you're drawn to Runism. You may have had a mind altering experience with Storthsap, an inspiring exchange with a threndl, or simply a disdain for city life.

VASCULANT

Whether by choice, punishment, or simply the result of central planning, you've been tasked with maintaining the gargantuan machinery that sustains the Heart of Enark. It's a neverending task, and what's needed less than skill is numbers. Every day there are minor repairs to be made, raw materials to haul, and mine shafts to descend. All the while, you're fed the quasi-inspirational teachings of the Church of the Ironblood Heart.

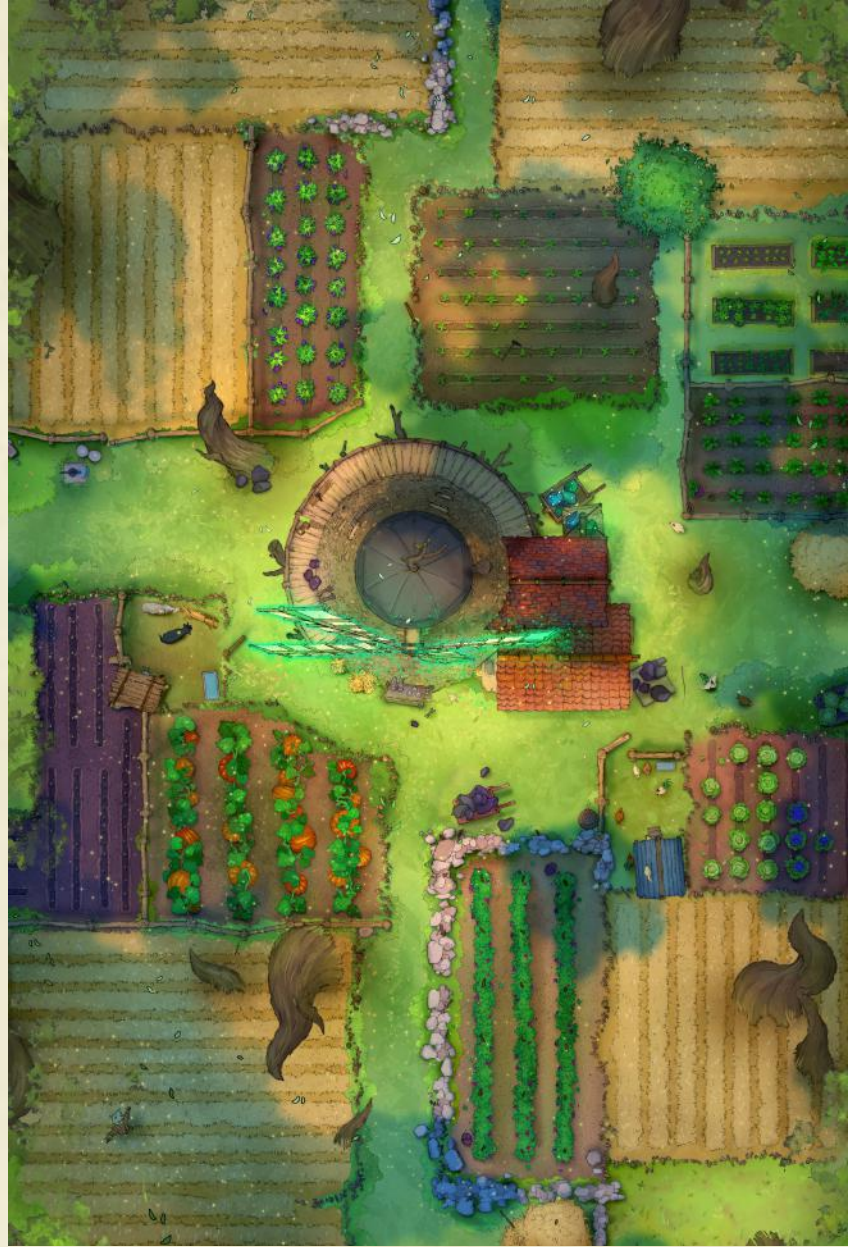
Perhaps you enjoy this life, or perhaps it's the only option for you. In either case, you've become adept at walking on narrow pipelines, withstanding the heat of the forges, and the sulfurous smells of the ironblood exhaust. If you're not a dwarf or an arkblood, you've befriended many, and you've internalized a good chunk of the Church's rhetoric, whether you believe in it or not.

Skill Proficiencies: Acrobatics, Religion

Tool Proficiencies: Smith's tool

Languages: Dwarvish

Equipment: A set of common clothes, a vial of ironblood, a set of smith's tools, a crowbar, a hammer, and 10 gp



A flowmill is equal parts homestead and mechanical operation. In the map above, a flowmiller cultivates a healthy Elzandra farm alongside her engineering obligations.

FEATURE: TRUNK ORIENTEERING

You've become expert at navigating the trunk of Enark. Where other adventurers might get lost, you know how to read the ironwood, the arteries, and the strange smells to know exactly where you are. In addition, you'll be permitted to enter parts of the trunk that would typically be off limits to non-Vasculants

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Vasculants are tough. They have to deal with awful working conditions, and they're still treated terribly. If you're a dwarf, you do it out of a sense of duty. If you're an arkblood, you likely did it to serve your masters. If you're anyone else, you probably only do the work because have had to. You likely have become disillusioned, jaded, and tired.

GEOGRAPHY

The world of Arkus is vast and complex; there are many Arks, the Shifting Soils, and a great ocean beyond the extend of the world as it is known. In addition, there are the two adjacent timelines and an extended cosmology. This section of the document outlines the branches of Enark, presents an overview of the other major Arks, and a bit of information about what lies above and below. Your campaign can certainly explore additional Arks, and future editions of this document may very well introduce more locations to the Arkus campaign setting.

ENARK

The largest tree, Enark's branches have a diameter of roughly 500 miles. While the majority of the population lives in large cities, most of the total area of Enark's topside is fairly sparse. For administrative purposes, the Ark is split into different branches, each of which has a unique culture and lifestyle. Enark is as diverse as it is vast.

TRUNKTOP

At the center of Enark sits Trunktop, the Ark's capital and most populous city. Trunktop is the seat of the Enarki monarchy, the base of operations for the Short Table, and the commercial and industrial hub for Enark.

Ritual Forges produce arkbloods, Plum Knights patrol the city streets sniffing out dissidents, and arteries and veins are woven into the trunk, a constant reminder of the society that lingers below. In the map of Trunktop below, Ritual Forges are highlighted to demonstrate their prominence throughout the city.

Trunktop is a primarily gnomish city, but it is also home to elven diplomats, human traders, and vagrants from all corners or Arkus. An entire adventure could take place in the streets of Trunktop. Intrigue abounds, and a party is never more than a few blocks away from a back alley deal to protect gnomish interests, or a Leafgate spewing wraiths into the city.

While technically a branch in its own right, the official Manager of the city is inevitably a puppet of the Short Table; there's no doubt about who's really in charge. Trunktop is described in greater detail in the next chapter.

INNER TRUNKTOP

The home of the dwarves, the nexus of the arteries and veins, and the headquarters of the Church of the Ironblood Heart. Inner Trunktop is actually just the first layer of the dwarven civilization. Smaller and smaller cities permeate the trunk of Enark all the way to the Heart which sits roughly one-fourth of the way down the trunk.



Inner Trunktop was once a glorious dwarven city, replete with titanic statues, stately courtyards, and glimmering jewelery workshops. Nowadays, every stretch of usable space is filled in with the infrastructure of the ironblood pump. People still live in Inner Trunktop, but the unfortunate reality is that it's little more than an industrial hellscape that happens to also house its workers.

The one outlier from the filth and squalor of the industrial undercity is the Church's preeminent cathedral The Fifth Chamber. This colossal superstructure is as imposing as it is alluring: Vasculant nonbelievers might be intimidated by its unmistakable militaristic appearance, while believers are inspired by the feat of Dwarven craftsmanship.

Most of wealthier dwarves live deeper down the trunk, where the permeation of arteries and veins is less omnipresent, and where tunnels to the edge of the trunk are more common. These windows to the outside world are a welcome respite to the pains of inner trunk life.

ELZANDRA

Both the largest and most sparsely populated branch, Elzandra is the agrarian heartland of Enark. While much of the branch is cultivated into small farming communities, most of the branch is still largely untamed; wild beasts abound and the mysteries of Enark's past lay dormant in ancient ruins from the pre-Cleave past.

Farmers cultivate both megafruit and more traditional crops. The region has considerable negotiating power with the Short Table due to their principle importance in food production. As such, this branch experiences minimal withering, and threndls are always present.

Elzandra is also home to the largest number of flowmills. These mills are far from populated communities so as to avoid interference, as well as limit the potential risk of a Leafgate.

PALM WHARF

Palm Wharf is both the trading hub of Enark and the home of its military. The Sprike is the force Enark uses to attack enemies such as Auctama as well as protect against any potential sieges. They are both trained and deployed from Palm Wharf, where great air docks launch vibrafonds for all purposes. Palm Wharf has earned its nickname "The Gateway to the Skies."

From the tips of this branch in the community of Overlook, Ledvas is easily in sight, and provides a glorious view. This vista gives Palm Wharf its name. Overlook, however, is an outlier, as the rest of the branch is highly industrial, mostly acting as either an inter-Ark shipping bay or as a barracks.

Unsurprisingly, Palm Wharf has developed a reputation as being the place an Enarki citizen goes when they are down on their luck, either to work on the frond docks, or to join the Sprike.

WITHERLIMB

Suggested Music. "My Life For Witherlimb" by [Music d20](#)

Ultimately, the allocation of a limited supply of ironblood means that some branches get less than they need. Witherlimb was historically the most damaged part of the Ark, so it was an easy decision when the Short Table had to determine who was going to get the short end of the stick.

While it is obvious to most that the Short Table could simply distribute more ironblood to the region, they have repeatedly shirked this responsibility, opting instead to relocate vast quantities of threndls and call on individuals to do their best to tend to the branch.

There is little industry to speak of in Witherlimb, and little agriculture as well. Displaced peoples often end up here, especially halflings and firbolgs who've abandoned their home Ark for fear of Sprike raids. Most residents make do with what little ironwood they can mine and produce small metal trinkets, pots and pans, or pipes for the Vasculants. The Short Table regularly interferes with Manager elections to ensure that the winning candidate harbors no pro-labor sentiments.

The omnipresent blight in Witherlimb has led to unprecedented spawning of wicked beasts; cesspools of rotten plant matter give birth to all manner of oozes, kuo-toa, and mephits. The Plum Knights typically ignore these threats, leaving residents of Witherlimb to fend for themselves.

KRELL

The ancestral home of the gnomes. This was once the seat of the Gnomish monarchy, but the various bureaucratic headquarters all relocated to Trunktop after the Silverleaf War. Nowadays, Krell is a mostly middle class community of artisans and artificers. Machinery is produced with the help of arkbloods, and citizens are typically able to benefit from a healthy economy and a tight-knit community. Most citizens of Krell have faith in the Bifold and appreciate the luxuries that post-Cleave Enark provides.

Krell is home to many of the premier institutions of learning in Enark, and most of Trunktop's leading mages and artificers are trained there.

Despite Krell's existing wealth, the branch also benefits greatly from Short Table interventions: ironblood and other resources are funneled directly to the gnomish homeland, and in turn, the branch is willing to enact whatever edicts that Trunktop deems appropriate.

KRELLFORK

Surrounding Krell on three sides, Krellfork is the most populated branch, with the cumulative quantity of residents in its various cities outnumbering even Trunktop. Humans are the dominant race in Krellfork, but it is also the most cosmopolitan section of Enark.

The humans of Krellfork regularly defy Short Table interference, and thus the rebellious branch has the loosest laws on the Ark. While this leads to a greater degree of freedom, it also means that crime often falls through the cracks, and many of the poorest residents of Krellfork don't have the safety net they'd have in other branches.

The residents of Krellfork would rightfully tell you that it is the cultural hub of Enark: home to dancehalls, Storthsap salesmen, and ornate architecture that stands in stark contrast to the utilitarian cityscape of Trunktop. Krellfork has rough edges, but most in the branch embrace these highs and lows. Still, seeds of discontent are sown throughout Krefollfork society, and if Enark is to have an uprising, this is no doubt where it will start.

The cities of Krellfork each have a distinct personality, making it hard to sum up the branch in a few sentences.

- **Midvale** is the current center of human resistance to gnomish rule. The city sits not far from its predecessor, now known as Old Midvale, the site of the climactic battle of the Silverleaf War. Although Old Midvale was razed, the rebellious spirit lives on in the rebuilt city. Midvale is the de facto headquarters of Te'allos, a group which is perceived more favorably here than anywhere else.
- **Aeolthiss** is the wealthiest city in Krellfork. Unlike Midvale, the residents of Aeolthiss are happy to work with the gnomes to ensure local prosperity. Licking the boots of the Short Table has granted the city plenty of access to ironblood as well as arkbloods to help with manufacturing. While Aeolthiss would love to be known for its thriving arts scene, most associate it with the omnipresence of its powerful crime families.
- Far from the farms of Elzandra, **Lenneton** is largely responsible for producing their own crops. With little in the way of manufacturing or entertainment, most of the residents of Lenneton are subsistence farmers. While residents of neighboring cities might dismiss Lenneton as dreary and boring, the folks who actually live there find it a peaceful respite. Rogue arkbloods often make their way to Lenneton to live simple lives free from the orders of their ex-masters.
- While the dissidents of Midvale rebel fruitlessly against gnomish rule, the residents of **Farbranch** have taken a different tack. Securing commercial and resource independence means that citizens of Farbranch aren't beholden to the Short Table. The local megafruit and ample tourism help the city to maintain a constant influx of gold, and though Trunktop has sent minimal ironblood to the city, the tree under Farbranch remains suspiciously un-withered.

STONESEVER

For reasons yet unknown, the area of Stonesever emits a disruptive force that causes flowstones to act unpredictably. As such, vibrafond travel is strictly prohibited in the branch, unless piloted by a resonant sorcerer. Nonetheless, the occasional careless travelers bring flowstones into the branch which inevitably malfunction and cause a Leafgate.

The branch is now a community of various Fey and shadowy creatures that have crossed over from the adjacent planes. Some have arrived here against their will and hope to find their way back via an unexpected Leafgate, but just as many arrive and decide to embrace their new home.

While the Cleave Warden is fully aware of the situation, they have not yet been able to plan a suitable containment procedure on a branch-wide basis. Travel through the region is possible on foot or horseback, but there is no telling what sort of creature one will encounter.

THE LOWER TRUNK

Anything beneath the the Heart is considered the Lower Trunk, and is generally not safe for explorers. Winding corridors, aquifers, and massive chambers wind their way from the Heart down to the roots, but these passageways also contain the creatures who have overtaken the Ark in Blackleaf. Drow, duergar, and other more exotic being call the Lower Trunk their home. It would take an extremely alluring reward to convince any adventurer to travel into these corrupt lairs. Despite how little is known about the Lower Trunk, some tell tales of advanced societies existing mere miles below the Dwarven home.

Below, a map of an illithid lair found in the Lower Trunk presents an example of one locale you might explore during Lower Trunk adventures. Deep in these laboratories, alien magic transforms helpless prisoners into hideous creatures. Some say that this illithid biotechnology influenced the creation of the pump. Needless to say, this raises questions about the nature of the pump's architects and its true function.

For gameplay purposes, the Lower Trunk can act as a stand-in for the Underdark in your Arkus campaigns.

LEDVAS

In the earliest days of elven civilization, life on Ledvas was incredibly precarious. Homes were carefully carved into the walls of the palm, and traversal around the edge of the trunk was only a last resort. However, over time, the elves adapted to their environment and built new cities on the fronds themselves. The extra-light wood from the trunk made for perfect flexible towns that could rise and fall in the breeze, attached securely to the massive network of leaflets.

It's a gut-wrenching experience for foreigners, but the elves have grown used to the gently swaying cities. Rope bridges, ladders, and slides connect the intricate web of leaflet dwellings. Luckily, the lack of arable land is of no concern: elves need very little to eat, and subsist perfectly fine off of a diet of megafruit and treetop game.

Though the elves are generally distrustful of the Enarki government, their centuries-old truce has proven valuable. Elves provide vibrafonds, which are easy enough to build, and the gnomes offer technological innovation and an assurance of peace.

STORTH

Unlike most of the other races of Arkus, halflings and firbolgs are more than happy to live in huts they carve into the side of Storth. As such, they've done little to alter their environment aside from shaping their cozy homes. Though not natural climbers, both races have an easy time walking along the edge of the cedar, as its dense and elaborate bark provides ample footing for trunk-side travel.

Storth is flush with natural resources, and has been the target of raids by both the Sprike as well as smugglers and raiders from other Arks. Mining operations harvest massive quantities of sap and ironwood, and there is constant vibrafond traffic between Storth and Enark.

AUCTAMA

The best way to describe Auctama's shape is to compare it to a fractal. A long cactus stalk gives way to a wide spiky plane roughly 80 miles across, and up from that, smaller cacti rise up, in turn yielding smaller cacti still. On the bottom most layer, known as The Unbroken, the orcs of Arkus live nomadic lives, seeking out game and remaining ever weary of the countless threats native to this Ark.

Up in the twisting cactus stalks above The Unbroken, the tabaxi live off of the megafruit that grow only in the highest reaches of Auctama. The winding thicket of cactus branches is the perfect environment for tabaxi to thrive, and for eons, they had little reason to ever descend to the Unbroken. However, the recent war with Enark has required the tabaxi and orcs to forge an uneasy alliance. The tabaxi are gifted fighters, and while their capricious attitude is not a perfect fit for the rigid orcish military, there is a mutual respect between the races.

GUARD ROOM

TO LOWER TRUNK

BRAIN LIBRARY

BESTIARY & ELDER BRAIN

BRAIN CHAMBER

DISPOSAL CHAMBER

CLEANSING CHAMBER

ILLITHID BESTIARY

THE LOWER TRUNK

◆ = 10 FEET

TRANSFORMATION CHAMBER

TADPOLE CHAMBERS

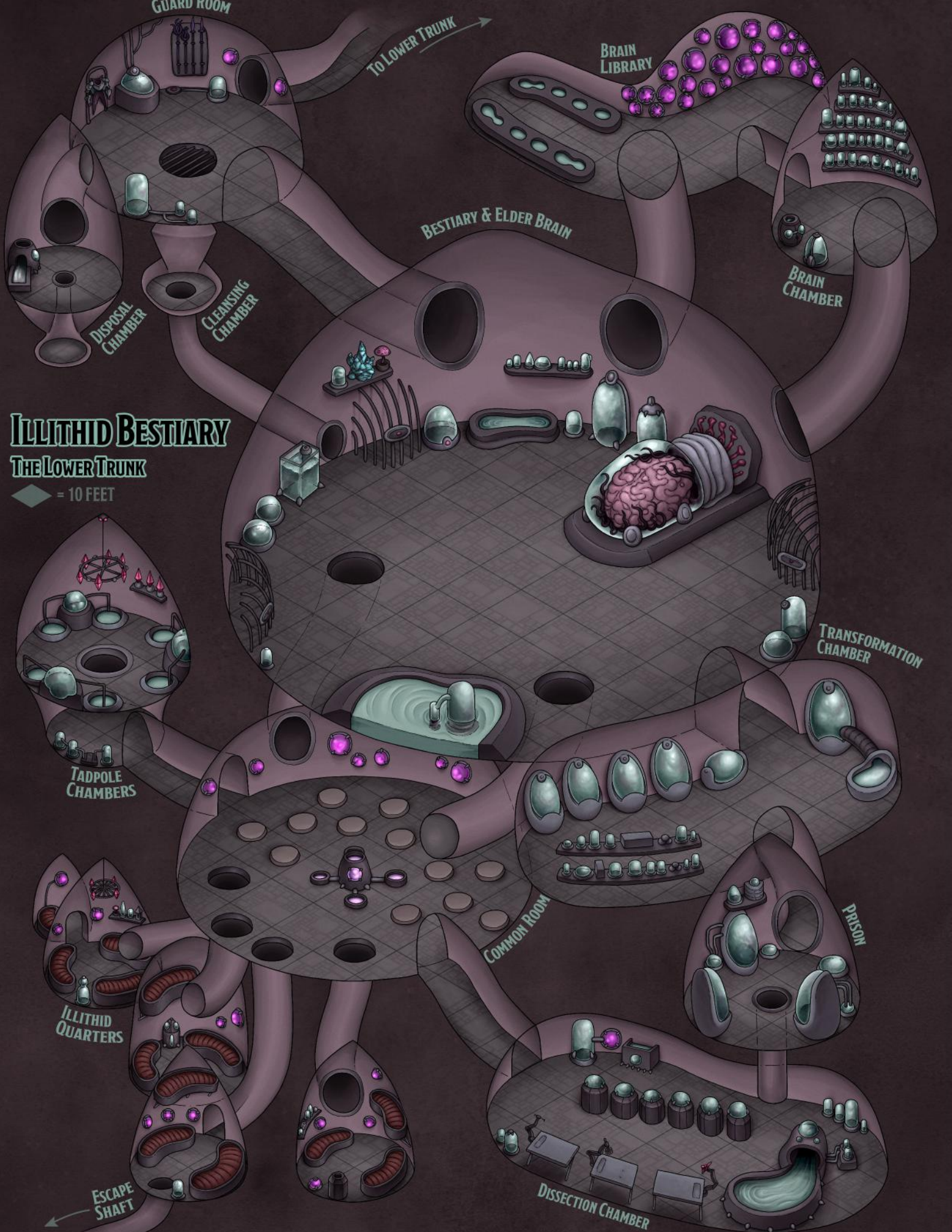
COMMON ROOM

PRISON

ILLITHID QUARTERS

ESCAPE SHAFT

DISSECTION CHAMBER



THE SHIFTING SOILS

It's no coincidence that the various races of Arkus have made their homes in giant trees with their own share of threats and dangers. The ground underneath these trees is a constantly churning maelstrom of flowing sand and mud. Like waves in a storm, the earth at the foot the Arks crashes into itself, swallowing anything that dares touch it whole. No one is sure the reason for this constant turbulence, but intrepid explorers have confirmed that it remains unchanged in all three timelines.

While stepping foot on the Shifting Soils means certain death for just about any humanoid race, there are certain creatures that call this their home: gricks, bulettes, and blue dragons, among others. Deep in the earth, there may be untapped resourced, underground civilizations, or simply neverending depths of roiling sediment.

Beyond the Shifting Soils, visible to some Arks as well as to explorers on vibrafonds, there is a great ocean known as The Deepdew. Though many have considered what may lie beyond it, any attempt to cross this ocean has resulted in adventurers either giving up or never returning.

GREENLEAF

When King Dorim struck the Heart, it is unlikely anyone could have known what would happen. However, the least likely outcome by far was that the Heart would simply refuse to be struck. No one was present to see exactly what occurred in this timeline, but adventurers have confirmed that the Heart remains at full health, and that King Dorim and his pickaxe are nowhere to be seen.

After the Cleave, the Greenleaf versions of the races became infertile, and almost all humanoid creatures have died out in the past 500 years. Those who travel to Greenleaf by Leafgates or other means are likewise unable to procreate on arrival. Curiously, halflings and firbolgs were spared in this timeline, and continue to thrive on their home Ark of Storth. A select few elves also resisted the curse, and their offspring took on Fey characteristics. While they simply call themselves Greenleaf elves, they might be recognizable in other D&D settings as eladrin.

Without the need for a constant supply of threndls, Enark began spawning stranger and stranger creatures from its branches: dryads, pixies, and satyrs to name a few. The tree thrived with an overabundance of natural magic, and plant growth expanded exponentially. The surplus of magical energy began subtly warping the plane, shifting space, light, and logic, creating irrational landscapes and pockets of wild, untamed, arcane chaos.

BLACKLEAF

The results of the Cleave in Blackleaf were possibly the most predictable: a greedy and powerful dwarf struck at the very core of a magical tree, and the world suffered for it. Blackleaf is the ultimate portent of what happens to Arkus if the environment is irreparably damaged. The trees die, famine becomes widespread, and the races of Arkus are replaced by the beings that lurk in the deep trunks. Worse still, the withered Arks begin to generate fouler creatures still, aberrant beings with features completely alien to those the plane once knew.

Blackleaf is a dark and wicked place, but it is not pure chaos. Societies of drow, vampires, and shadow dragons have reclaimed the withered Arks, built haunted fortresses, and revel in the putrid nightmarescape that they embrace as their home. Some plot to travel to the other planes to sow chaos, while others simply thank the stars to exist in the darkest version of an already bizarre world.

The blighted Arks have an extended impact on the rest of the environment. Poisonous gases spread across the land, and the sun (when it's visible at all), seems to barely illuminate the landscape.

THE COSMOS

In the daytime sky, the sun over Arkus (referred to interchangeably as "the sun" or "Arksol") washes light and warmth across the Arks. It waxes and wanes in intensity, but seasons vary little, aside from the yearly mudrains in Spring.

The night sky above Arkus is littered with stars and other astral bodies, and while scholars are not certain what exactly lies beyond the atmosphere, experimentation has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the arrangement of the Cosmos has profound effects on magic, alchemy, and the pump. Many magical procedures are only possible given the right cosmological circumstances. Cosmology has thus extended far beyond the realm of superstition or guesswork and is an incredibly useful study in its own right. Ritual Forges can only function when taking the arrangement of stars into account.

In Greenleaf and Blackleaf, it has been proven that the arrangement and movement of the night sky is drastically altered. The cause of this is unknown, but it points toward the Cleave having ripple effects far beyond the ramifications on the Arks.

THE DEEP ROOTS

In addition to Greenleaf and Blackleaf, there is at least one other known plane of existence. Though it is referred to as "the Deep Roots," it is not a physical location beneath the Arks, though that conceptualization is a useful metaphor. The Deep Roots are understood to be the source of all life, and the resting place of spirits. It is where Enark pulls from to create threndls and other spawned creatures, and it is where life force returns after death.

Both the religious and nonbelievers acknowledge the existence of the Deep Roots, either as a literal location one could travel to, or as merely a useful theoretical construct. Many believe the Deep Roots to be home to a host of benevolent or wicked entities of great power, but this may be simply a way of justifying myths that have yet to be explained by scholars.

NOTE ON TRANSITIVE PLANES

If your players require the use of the Ethereal or Astral Plane for various spells or class features, you can approach these as you would in the standard D&D multiverse.

LIFE IN TRUNKTOP, THE ENARKI CAPITAL

While hardly representative of Enarki life in general, Trunktop serves as an intricate and compelling setting for adventures, and any campaign in Arkus will be strongly influenced by the industrial and political influences of the Enarki capital. Not only is Trunktop the seat of the gnomish monarchy, it's also the industrial backbone of the Ark and the last line of defense against incursions from the Lower Trunk. This section of the Arkus Primer will give you a quick synopsis of the idiosyncrasies of everyday life in Arkus's largest city.

RITUAL FORGES

Suggested Music: "Ritual Forge" by [Music d20](#)

The most complex gnomish engineering is realized in Ritual Forges, complex factories that combine mechanical dynamos powered by flowstones with the magic of the cosmos. In order to take advantage of the magic of the stars, Ritual Forges are designed with highly configurable roofs that can focus or block out the light of astral bodies. By combining occult magic with meticulous engineering, gnomish artificers bring life to arkbloods, mass produce alchemical reagents, and fine tune the most intricate mechanisms used in the pump and flowmill construction.

Despite the complexity of the Ritual Forge, any given facility is manned by just a single artificer at a time. The majority of the mechanisms function autonomously, so the artificer is merely responsible for properly directing the cosmological powers that imbue the industrial products with their unique magical properties. Though this procedure falls on but one mage, this is some of the most complex magic known to Arkus, and those able to wield this power are among the most powerful people on the plane.

Ritual Forges are so central to the gnomish industry that all of Trunktop was designed to facilitate their productivity. The lush trees that pervade the city are carefully manicured to allow celestial light into the Forges. The city streets are built at regular angles, emanating out from the Aroktery, so as to not disrupt the passage of pipes leading up from Inner Trunktop and into these elaborate factories.

DRIVELINES

Drivelines are underground conveyor belts that are used to distribute food, goods, and raw materials across the city. If the shipment of products were carried around by carriages, the streets would be in a constant gridlock, and the need for beasts of burden would skyrocket. These drivelines allow for a smooth supply chain across the city. All businesses and even many homes have driveline access so that they can get everything they need without the need to haul it around themselves.

While drivelines drastically increase the efficiency of Trunktop supply chains, they also rely on huge quantities of ironblood, and are therefore a constant source of ire from those living outside the capital. Humans point to drivelines as a prime example of gnomish excess and wastefulness, and these small omnipresent delivery systems are frequently the target of minor Te'allos vandalism.

THE AROKTERY

The Aroktery is the oldest building in Trunktop, predating the Cleave by centuries. It is a patchwork fortress that was originally meant to withstand potential sieges from deep below Trunktop. Over the years, it has grown into a colossal, labyrinthine citadel that represents a hodgepodge of different cultures, designs, and purposes. Its most noteworthy function is to act as both the meeting place for the Short Table and the throne of King Jeryn Umner.



While superficially the Aroktery is the capitol building, its function extends far beyond governance. The superstructure has grown so massive that it's now also home to performance spaces, offices, workshops, and even regular residences. Some say the Aroktery is like a microcosm of Trunktop itself, almost entirely self-sufficient so long as the drivelines can deliver food to the markets. Because the Aroktery sat at the center of Enark long before the gnomes decided to build up Trunktop as the capital, it is by far the *least* centrally planned structure in the meticulously designed city. The perfectly organized streets billows out from its walls, but its structure is highly irregular and idiosyncratic, representing not only the recent gnomish additions, but the human and dwarven contributions to previous incarnations of the citadel.

While commoners live in all the nooks and crannies of the Aroktery, its most secure wings are guarded by the most decorated Plum Knights, protecting Trunktop's influential leaders, as well as collections of valuable art and magical artifacts.

PUMP SHAFTS

Just outside the city, the landscape is dotted with gaping holes serving as the entrances to Inner Trunktop. These deep mineshafts are braided with masses of veins and arteries, but ladders, spiral staircases, and winding ramps also allow travelers and caravans to descend into the dwarven city.

In addition to being crucial industrial nexuses, these shafts also form the core of Trunktop's defenses, forcing attackers into bottlenecks when sieging the city. In the event of an assault from within the Trunk, these shafts can be fully sealed.

BUILDING ARKUS ADVENTURES

The world of Arkus is a complex web of competing interests, historical trauma, and powerful magic fraught with moral ambiguity. Your players will be forced to make difficult choices, which will be all the more impactful if they're aware of the full context of their actions. This final section explores themes, factions, and matters of historical significance that are likely to inform any campaign set in Arkus.

THE SILVERLEAF WAR

The period immediately following the Cleave was chaotic and violent. At the time, Enark consisted of three distinct civilizations: the Kingdom of Gnomes, Inner Trunktop, and the human civilization known simply as the Branches. As the citizens of Enark began to understand the severity of the damage done to their home, some called for retribution, while others called for unity.

Though King Dorim Belgir was responsible for the Cleave, he was arguably also the catalyst for the creation of the pump. Despite his hubris, upon returning to the dwarven capital, he and his closest advisors decided to beg the gnomish King (then ruling from Krell) to aid the dwarves in healing the Heart. The gnomes agreed, and began building what is now modern Trunktop above the dwarven capital.

The need for labor and resources at the start of this construction was immense, and the gnomes did not yet have the arkbloods to aid them. As such, they demanded help from the humans and other races of Enark. Some were able to recognize the unprecedented situation and were willing to make great sacrifices to aid the wizards and artificers of Trunktop, but unsurprisingly, most humans were unwilling.

King Dorim and King Lerryul (King Jeryn Umner's grandfather) sent envoys to human cities, requesting able-bodied workers for the construction. As city after city refused, the combined forces of Trunktop began sending armies. Still, the people of the Branches resisted, and so King Lerryul instructed his knights to use force. What followed was The Silverleaf War.

Though the people of the branches had the numbers, the alliance of gnomes and dwarves had a leg up in both cunning and might. Ultimately, the two forces were evenly matched, and both sides feared an endless intractable conflict. The gnomes, however, knew that a perpetual war would all but ensure they would never be able to heal Enark. As such, they took drastic measures. While a major force of dwarves invaded Aeolthiss, a group of powerful gnomish wizards laid waste to Midvale, leveling it and slaughtering thousands. This wanton act of civilian violence drew the ire of everyone involved, even gnomish citizens, but it served its purpose. The War ended the next day, and the humans pledged to aid the gnomes and dwarves in constructing the pump. They also recognized the gnomish monarchy as the sovereign leaders of all of Enark. In return, the gnomes granted humans limited autonomy, and cemented their place as Enark's leaders of governance, industry, and military might.

WHAT HAPPENED TO KING DORIM?

After the war, King Dorim disappeared from public life and was succeeded by his nephew, King Armrig Belgir, who later dissolved the dwarven monarchy altogether. Armrig ordained himself the first Vasculord of the then newly formed Church of the Ironblood Heart, thereby cementing the theocratic rule of Inner Trunktop. Meanwhile, some suspect that King Dorim's guilt led him to a life of a penance, while others think he may have been murdered. Some believe he may have simply left for another timeline. The eventual fate of King Dorim remains a mystery.

THE SILVERLEAF WAR TODAY

When planning your campaigns, consider how the outcome and aftermath of the Silverleaf War has affected your party. Despite occurring almost 500 years ago, there is still animosity between humans and gnomes, and the charred remains of Old Midvale continue to be a blight on Northern Elzandra. Depending on their races, some of your players may have parents who fought in the war or at least lived through it. Are they happy with the outcome? Do they regret their roles?

TE'ALLOS

Enark sits in a perilous equilibrium; though the tree's health is stable and the government is functional, any minor catalyst could set off a chain reaction that throws the entire tree into disarray.

The most likely culprit of an Ark-wide sea change is Te'allos, the largest organized group of political dissidents in Enark. Spiritually descended from the human resistance in the Silverleaf War, Te'allos fights for both political freedom and equal distribution of ironblood to the various branches.

Te'allos is headquartered in Midvale, and the group often points to the destruction of Old Midvale as evidence of the illegitimacy of gnomish rule. Despite having seemingly noble goals, they are generally disliked and distrusted by anyone outside their ranks. Most feel that the gnomish control of Trunktop is a necessary compromise for the health of Enark and find Te'allos means unacceptable. Though members would probably challenge these claims, few would argue that their methods engender public trust.

In addition to spying, sabotage, and strategic assassinations, Te'allos has been known to disrupt the pump, occasionally killing Vasculants in the process. They have also cooperated with the orcs of Auctama to undermine gnomish leadership. Terrorism, sedition, and treason are crimes they have openly embraced.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND TE'ALLOS

Player characters may have ties to Te'allos, either as ranking members of the organization, or as staunch opponents of their goals and methods. Depending on the actions of your players, Te'allos may support their efforts or try to stop them at every turn. The organization can be a great foil to reveal just how far your players are willing to go to achieve extreme results.

TE'ALLOS BASE

The adjacent map represents a prototypical Te'allos Base. Masquerading as an unassuming storefront, a back stairway leads to a secret hideout and lab. Here, Te'allos operatives fiddle with gnomish reagents, experimenting with unusual alchemical processes in an attempt to craft dangerous explosive and other caustic agents. A previous explosive accident leaves the corner of this base badly damaged.

A hideout like this might be totally hidden from all but the most diehard Te'allos loyalists, but in a city like Midvale, it might simply be an open secret. The purpose of such secrecy might have more to do with protection from outsiders and law enforcement than from the community at large.

Simply gaining access to one of these hidden lairs can be the goal of a low-level adventure. Upon entry, will your players sympathize with the Te'allos struggle, or will they take issue with their radical methods?

THE PLUM KNIGHTS AND THE SRIKE

Enark's peacekeeping forces are split into two distinct bodies: the Plum Knights and the Sprike. Generally speaking, the Plum Knights are responsible for policing the people of Enark, while the Sprike are concerned with forces beyond their home Ark, although these jurisdictions do sometimes overlap in unexpected ways.

POLICING THE BRANCHES

The Plum Knights (named for the local megafruit near their headquarters in Krell) are both an omnipresent public service responsible for apprehending criminals, as well as a militant arm of the Short Table. There is little that a member of the Plum Knights is forbidden from doing, and with the explicit blessings of the leaders of Trunktop, it is nearly impossible to accuse one of wrongdoing.

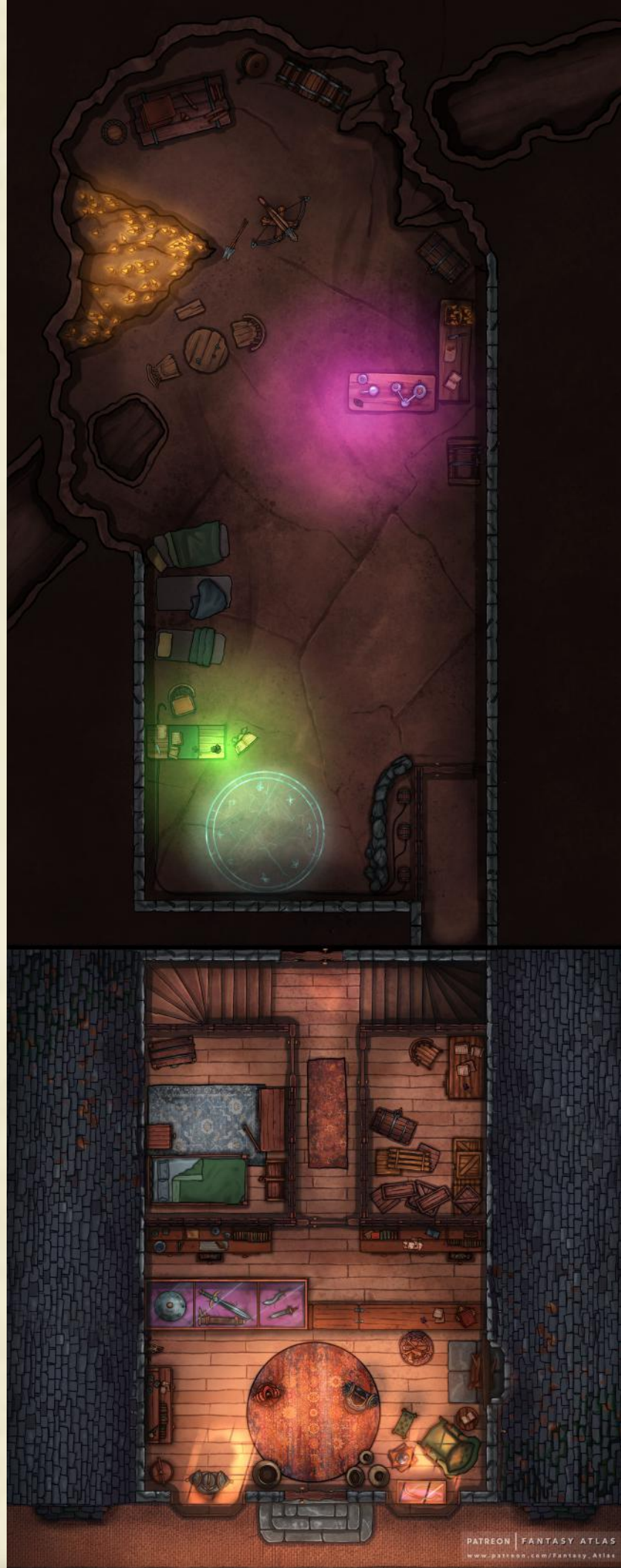
On paper, the Plum Knights are responsible for preventing crime and punishing criminals. In practice, they often disregard the crimes as legislated by Branch governments and instead pursue the political goals of the Short Table.

Plum Knights are outfitted with purple uniforms, and are generally well equipped with armor and weapons of their choice. As the political goals of the Plum Knights are so various, their numbers include a wide range of specialists, including by-the-books investigators as well as tuggish brutes and inconspicuous mages. Knights may come from any race, but most tend to be gnomes, dwarves, and elven expatriates.

THE CLEAVE WARDEN

One of the explicit goals of the Short Table is to minimize the risks that Leafgates pose, and those risks are *diverse*. In addition to destroying, banishing, or imprisoning wicked creatures from Blackleaf, the Short Table wants to see those responsible for Leafgates punished, those who escape to other timelines returned safely, and communities of extraplanar refugees contained.

For all of these goals, the Short Table employs the Cleave Warden, an arm of the Plum Knights. These officers are granted an enormous amount of freedom in how they approach their duties, and while Plum Knights in general are often criticized by the public, the Cleave Warden is respected by most, aside from those with strong ties to Blackleaf refugees.



Many members of the Cleave Warden are Specialists, elite officer with unique talents to tackle the unpredictable array of challenges their squads must face. Player characters who have ties to the Cleave Warden can consider playing a Sspecialist.

THE SPRIKE

The Sprike is Enark's military, responsible both for protecting against potential attacks, and fighting other Arks directly when needed. While the risk of a siege on Enark is fairly minimal, the odds of an eventual Auctama assault grow by the day. The Sprike will regularly conduct reconnaissance missions toward the tips of the branches in an effort to spot the yet unheard of Auctama attack squad.

Despite their seemingly defensive orientation, the Sprike is primarily in charge of raids. Because of the limited carrying capacity of any one vibrafond, most Sprike forces are small bands of elite soldiers who employ hit and run tactics on target Arks. On Storth, they protect Enarki miners against halfling militias, and on Auctama, they are an omnipresent force attacking indiscriminately against any armed group of orcs or tabaxi that they find.

ENARKI FORCES AND YOU

On Enark, there should be no assumption that "peacekeeping" forces are benevolent. While perpetrators of blatant crimes will be punished, the whims of the Plum Knights and the Sprike are highly dependent on the wishes of those who lead them. Consider for your adventures how these goals might intersect with those of your party.

BRANCH EDICTS

Despite the overwhelming authority of the Short Table, the Enarki Monarchy, and the power they wield via the Plum Knights and the Sprike, branch Managers do maintain the right to declare edicts that can drastically affect the way a branch is run. These edicts can range from mundane ("sale of ironwood goods shall be taxed at a rate commensurate with their value") to draconian ("a strict curfew shall be in effect for all non-humans") to the utterly bizarre ("all persons shall be required to wear a feathered hat while in public spaces"). Some edicts are an attempt to wrest a bit of dominance from the overbearing government in Trunktop, while others are simply an attempt at properly governing the populace.

Arkus campaigns are most enjoyable when edicts are stated clearly by NPCs, and player characters can properly express themselves by the ways in which they follow or subvert these rules. The edicts should reflect the culture of a given branch, as well as the degree to which the Short Table has infiltrated local government. As players' deeds become more well known around Enark, new edicts may reflect their actions.

While many other aspects of Enarki society are explained in this document, it is ultimately up to the DM to decide which edicts are appropriate for any given campaign. Perhaps these act mostly as "window dressing," expounding on the themes of a campaign, but rarely conflicting with the actions of the players. Alternatively, edicts can act as an additional layer of complexity as the players try to accomplish their goals. Maybe they have to sneakily break a few edicts in order to solve a great mystery, or perhaps the edict itself becomes the direct target of a party's ire.

ENFORCING EDICTS

The Plum Knights will only ever bother to enforce laws that matter to the Short Table. Many edicts will inevitably either contradict the wishes of the Short Table, or at the very least be of no concern to them. As such, branch Managers are often required to install their own governmental systems if they wish to enforce their edicts. Private police, community patrols, vigilante justice, and civilian arrests are all on the table depending on the cultural priorities of any given branch. If your campaign includes some noteworthy edicts, consider how a given branch manager might go about enforcing these rules without the help of the militant Plum Knights.

