THE ART OF
MAGIC
The Gathering®
IXALAN

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Deeproot Champion ➤ Raymond Swanland

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The Art of *Magic: The Gathering*®
Ixalan
VIZ Media Edition

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Credits—Wizards of the Coast®
Writing: James Wyatt, with an appendix by Cynthia Sheppard
Based on Prior Work by: James Wyatt, Kimberly J. Kreines, Ari Levitch, Cynthia Sheppard, and Christopher L'Etoile
Art Director: Dawn K. Murin
Cover Art: Tyler Jacobson
Graphic Design: James Arnold
Magic Creative Team: Jenna Helland (lead), Doug Beyer, Sam Burley, Christine Choi, Kelly Digges, Tyler Jacobson, Kimberly J. Kreines, Chris L'Etoile, Ari Levitch, Alison Lührs, Dawn Murin, Cynthia Sheppard, Mark Winters, James Wyatt, and Kieran Yanner
Magic R&D Leads: Mark Rosewater and Erik Lauer (Design Architects), Mark Globus (Product Architect), Ken Troop (Operations Director), Aaron Forsythe (Senior Director)
Brand Management: Elaine Chase (Vice President), Mark Purvis (Senior Director), Adam B. Colby, Liz Lamb-Ferro, April Glass, Matthew Danner, Chris Tulach, Kristyn Grim, and Courtney Kim
Franchise Creative Director: Jeremy Jarvis

Credits—VIZ Media
Lead Designer: Sam Elzway
Designer: Adam Grano
Senior Editor: Joel Enos

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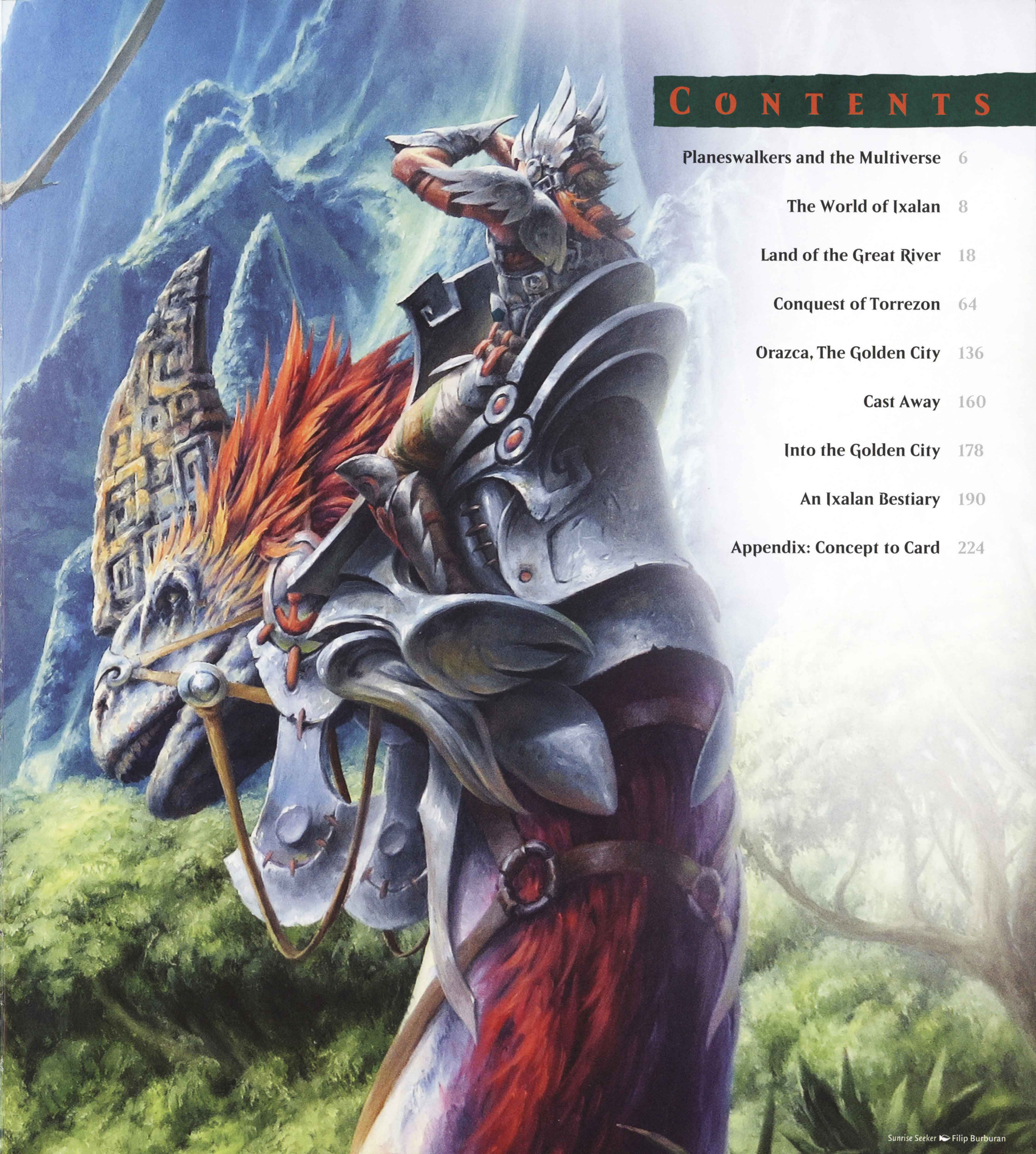

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Sunrise Seeker ➤ Filip Burburan

Foreword

What would Cortés have said if the first thing he'd encountered after landing in the Yucatan and cockily burning his ships had been packs of angry dinosaurs? And not just dinosaurs, but huge, magical dinosaurs under the sway of a powerful native population none too keen on being conquered? Now imagine yourself in Pizarro's head, misdirected by a cunning group of merfolk weaving the very seas and elements against him. Lost in the dangerous waters off the Peruvian coast and unable to make landfall beyond the dark jungles of the Amazon, what might he be thinking?

I was hooked on the world of Ixalan when Jenna Helland, our creative team lead, started her pitch to me with this summary: "Vampire conquistadors meet Aztecs with dinosaurs." Ixalan is a plane brimming with classic themes spiced up with the *Magic* team's signature originality. On the one side you have a rich historical topic people around the world know well: the Spanish conquest of Central and South America. But now you have to turn the whole narrative on its head. Vampire conquistadors battle on the high seas against a rogue federation of pirates. In the jungles lurk mighty dinosaurs tamed by the magic of a powerful empire looking to increase its power. And pitted against them all are the enigmatic merfolk who protect the waterways of Ixalan as they guard a dark secret—a glistening, magical city of gold that promises great power and even greater peril.

Truly one of the greatest joys of my short time with Wizards of the Coast has been getting to know the worlds we create. From the gothic noir of Innistrad to the steamy jungles of Ixalan, our writers and artists weave an amazing tapestry rich in history, culture, story, and—of course—magic. As you pore over these pages and take in this rich collection of art, I hope you have as much fun as each of us at Wizards had while we created this world. Ixalan is a delight for the senses filled with surprise and suspense, and it is rich in fantasy storytelling potential. Bon voyage—just watch out for those dinosaurs, and best not to take directions from any merfolk along the way!

—Christian Cocks
President, Wizards of the Coast

Sailor of Means ➤ Ryan Pancoast

What is *Magic: The Gathering*®?

Magic: The Gathering® is a tradable card game (TCG) where players build collections of cards, assemble decks, and battle against each other. Abstractly, the game represents a duel between powerful mages, each casting mighty spells and summoning monstrous creatures in an effort to defeat the other. These mages are called Planeswalkers because they possess the rare ability to travel from plane to plane within a vast Multiverse, and their great power comes from their ability to draw on magic from all those planes.

Planeswalkers and the Multiverse

The Multiverse is a boundless expanse of worlds. These worlds, called planes, are as different from each other as one living being is from another, varying in size and shape, inhabitants and environments, and even the laws of physics and magic. The existence of magic, though, is a common factor that unites all the known planes.

For most inhabitants of any given plane, that plane is the full extent of existence. Esoteric speculation might posit the existence of other worlds, but such concepts are only theoretical. Only a handful of people on any given world knows the reality: that all the planes are suspended together in a void called the Aether, or—more poetically—the Blind Eternities. Only one person in a million is born with the potential to travel from one plane to another, and only a fraction of those with the potential actually manage to ignite their sparks and become Planeswalkers.

Often, this happens as a result of a great crisis or trauma. A near-death experience could ignite the spark, as could a life-changing epiphany or even a revelatory meditative trance. But once their sparks are ignited, Planeswalkers gain the rare ability to open a pathway through the Blind Eternities and pass from one plane to another.

The life of a Planeswalker is a life of choice and self-determination unrestricted by the boundaries of world or fate. Most Planeswalkers dedicate themselves to some personal mission as they explore the secrets of the Multiverse. Often, they discover the depths of their own souls in the process.

"There are moments when I feel I could fly like the sunwing. Far away I would soar, but always a golden gale pushes me back."
—Huatli

New Horizons ➤ Noah Bradley

Planes of the Multiverse

The full extent of the Multiverse is unknowable. Among the countless planes, these are only a small sample.

Dominaria

Home to the volcanic continent of Shiv, the time-shattered isle of Tolaria, and the cold mountains of Keld, Dominaria is the setting for some of the Multiverse's most brutal conflicts and home to some of its most powerful mages.

James Paick

Innistrad

On this plane, humanity is terrorized by vampires, werewolves, zombies, and ghouls. For centuries, the archangel Avacyn and her hosts protected the beleaguered humans, but then she turned on the people she was supposed to protect as alien madness seized the whole plane. Now she is gone, and the world reels from the consequences.

Jung Park

Ravnica

This worldwide cityscape holds countless grand halls, decrepit slums, and ancient ruins. Ten guilds maintain an uneasy peace in governing the various aspects of life in the majestic city.

Richard Wright

Zendikar

This land of primal mana is slowly recovering from the unnatural disaster of colossal predators from the Aether rampaging across the plane.

Sam Burley

Kaladesh

Kaladesh is a vibrant, beautiful land in the midst of an inventors' renaissance, teeming with creativity and optimism.

Daniel Ljunggren

Amonkhet

Five deadly trials await the people of this plane as they hope for a glorious death—and eternal glory in the afterlife. But their true fate lies in the hands of the sinister Nicol Bolas.

Jonas De Ro

Lost Vale Florian de Gesincourt

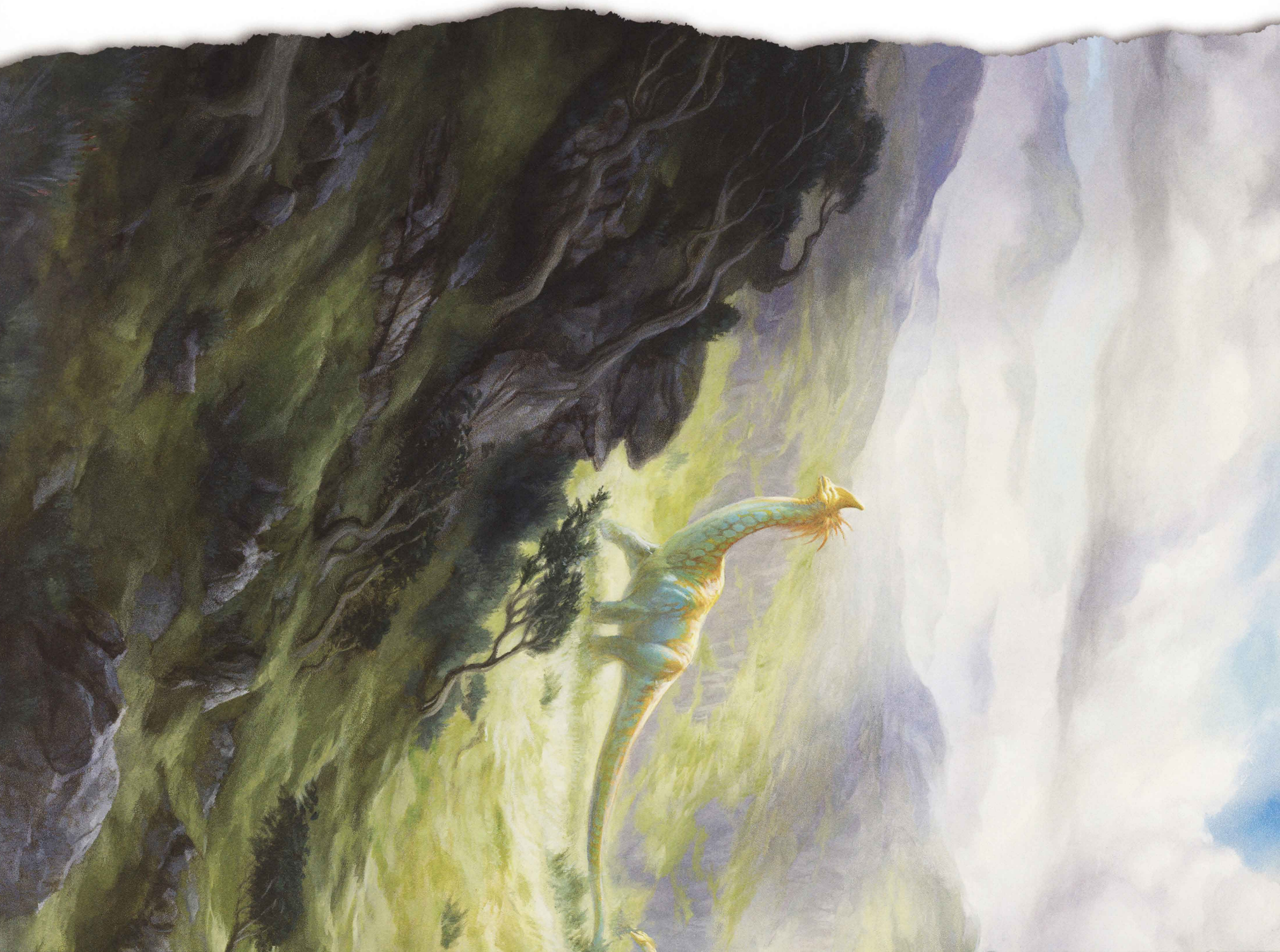
Ixalan

Four mighty peoples converge in a desperate search for a legendary city of gold, hidden deep in the heart of Ixalan. Vampires, dinosaurs, pirates, and merfolk vie for control of the city and the treasure it holds.

The Colors of Magic

All the planes of the Multiverse are suffused with mana, the energy that fuels magic in all its forms. Mana is intricately linked with the physical world, and different types of terrain produce different "colors" of mana. Most mages specialize in the use of one or perhaps two colors of mana and the particular types of magical effects that mana can create.

The World of Ixalan



Thunderherd Migration ➭ Lars Grant-West

Four Peoples

Deep in the heart of Ixalan's verdant jungle lies a treasure beyond imagining. Secure in the ancient golden city of Orazca, the Immortal Sun is an artifact of mythic power that promises boundless wealth, the strength of empire, command over nature, and eternal life. For centuries it was only dimly remembered, veiled in legend, but now legend has become reality, and all the peoples of Ixalan seek the Immortal Sun and the power it promises. They will stop at nothing to claim it for their own.

The merfolk of the River Heralds and the humans of the Sun Empire have shared the continent of Ixalan for ages, sometimes warring, sometimes in an uneasy peace. But outsiders—first the treasure-hungry pirates of the Brazen Coalition and now the sinister fleets of the Legion of Dusk—have disrupted that delicate balance of power. And as the Legion of Dusk seeks to conquer Ixalan, all four peoples are catapulted into a desperate search for the golden city and the treasure it holds.

Demolish ➤ Jesper Ejsing

Raging Swordtooth ☚ Izzy

Everyone wants to claim Orazca, but no one knows where it is. Even the River Heralds, who took on the task of protecting it from others who would use the power of the Immortal Sun for evil, have chosen not to remember its location lest they succumb to temptation themselves. Thus, the story of Ixalan is a story of exploration and discovery.

A whole world waits to be discovered. Ancient ruins from the Sun Empire's heyday can now be found, overgrown and half-buried, in the depths of the jungle. Sacred springs infused with magical power well up from high mountainsides. Hidden coves hold pirate treasures stowed by captains long forgotten. Brave explorers from all four peoples uncover such sites as they scour Ixalan in search of the golden city.

Drover of the Mighty ➢ Eric Deschamps

Sun Empire. The Sun Empire is a powerful civilization that dominates the eastern coast of Ixalan. The empire's fierce warriors are supported by priests who wield the power of the sun and command the mighty dinosaurs that inhabit the continent. A new ruler has brought the empire into an era of expansion, seeking to reclaim the lands in the continent's interior that it once held. The foreign incursion into the empire's lands sparks its people's search for the Immortal Sun, which they view as a potent symbol of their identity.

Mountain ➢ Raoul Vitale

Forest ➢ Raoul Vitale

River Heralds. The River Heralds are a collection of small, nomadic bands of merfolk who were the dominant inhabitants of Ixalan before the rise of the Sun Empire. They live in harmony with the land, and their shamans wield powerful nature magic to control the elements of wind and water. They believe that the power of the Immortal Sun is too dangerous for anyone to wield, even themselves, and so they seek to protect the golden city of Orazca and steer all intruders away from it.

Herald of Secret Streams ➢ Sara Winters

Shadowed Caravel ➪ Jason Felix

Legion of Dusk. The society of the Legion of Dusk is built around the rites and devotion of a powerful church, led by undead paladins who sustain themselves by drinking the blood of their enemies. After seven hundred years of war, as the legion marched across the entirety of the continent far across the sea, the vampires of the legion have come to add Ixalan to their territory. Certain leaders among them also seek the Immortal Sun, which is dimly remembered in their own legends as a source of true immortality—eternal life, in contrast to the endless undeath they now endure.

Sanctum Seeker ➪ Volkan Baga

Sleek Schooner ➢ Mark Winters

Captivating Crew ➢ Winona Nelson

Brazen Coalition. The Brazen Coalition was formed by sailors who fled across the sea to escape the advancing Legion of Dusk. These mariners originally sought to establish colonies on Ixalan and trade with the cities of the Sun Empire, but the Sun Empire drove them off and the sea captains turned to piracy and plunder. Now the coalition is a loosely affiliated group of pirate captains who seek to rule the seas and take their share of the riches of Ixalan—especially the Immortal Sun.

AZOR AND THE IMMORTAL SUN

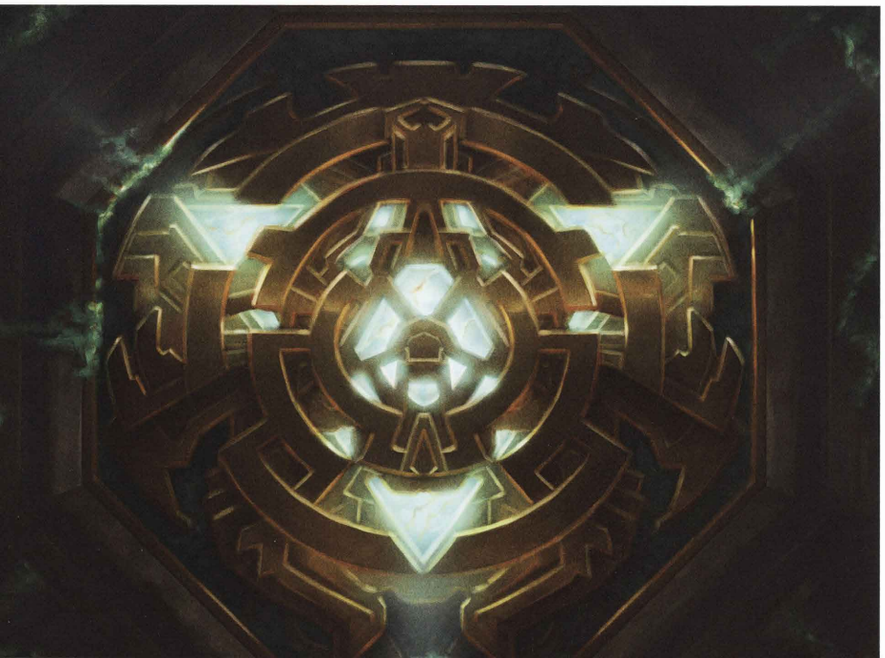
The history of the Immortal Sun is more complex than any of Ixalan's people know. The massive stone tablet was created ages ago by an ancient sphinx Planeswalker named Azor. On the plane of Ravnica, Azor is remembered as Supreme Judge Azor I, who established the rule of law to maintain peace and balance among the ten guilds of the city-plane, and who authored the original document known as the Guildpact. The Azorius Senate continues to perform the primary governmental functions on Ravnica to this day, creating and enforcing the laws they believe will maintain peace, justice, and the status quo. The memories and traditions they preserve about Azor himself are foggy and distorted; even the fact that he is a sphinx has been forgotten, despite the continued importance of sphinxes in the Azorius guild.

Azor was a Planeswalker, and his deeds across the Multiverse include much more than just his work on Ravnica. Numerous ancient civilizations on many different planes have legends of a "lawbringer" figure, often winged and viewed as a god or semi-divine being, and those legends can often be traced back to Azor's influence. And though his plane of origin is forgotten, the sphinxes on many planes, from Alara to Zendikar, show signs of his possible influence in their demeanor and culture. Like him, most sphinxes are known for their wisdom and knowledge, while maintaining an aura of mystery and secrecy.

Gift of Azor

Though the Immortal Sun does have powerful magical properties (intended to help its guardians keep it safe), its primary purpose is to prevent Planeswalkers from leaving Ixalan. Azor created the artifact by imbuing it with his own Planeswalker spark, trapping himself as well as preventing other Planeswalkers from carrying knowledge of this plane back out into the Multiverse.

The Immortal Sun ➢ Kieran Yanner



Through the ages, Azor has entrusted the Immortal Sun to the care of different peoples and civilizations. The nation that would become the Legion of Dusk held it long, long ago, and it is dimly remembered in the legends and symbols of both the legion and the Brazen Coalition. When the Legion of Dusk abused the Immortal Sun's power, Azor took it away from them and carried it across the

Azor, the Lawbringer ➽ Ryan Pancoast

sea to Ixalan, where he entrusted it to the young Sun Empire. With its power at their disposal, the early rulers of the Sun Empire built the golden city of Orazca to house the Immortal Sun, and it became the capital of their empire. For centuries, the empire was a faithful and trustworthy keeper of the precious artifact, but then a new emperor turned its power to evil. Azor took the Immortal Sun from the Sun Empire and gave it to the River Heralds, who used it to drive the empire out of the jungle interior of Ixalan. The merfolk, however, recognized that the Immortal Sun was too powerful a weapon for any people to wield, and they hid it away in the now-deserted golden city.

Land of the Great River

New Horizons Noah Bradley

Ixalan ➤ Jaren Blando

Geography of Ixalan

The center of the world is the great continent known as Ixalan, which has given its name to the plane as a whole. A tropical land covered in lush rainforest, soaring mountains, lofty plains, and winding rivers, Ixalan is shaped like a large crescent enfolding a vast inner sea. Its history was shaped by the interaction between the Sun Empire and the River Heralds. Both peoples lived in balance while the Sun Empire maintained its stewardship of the Immortal Sun, but that balance was upset when the emperor abused the artifact's power. Now the Sun Empire has been pushed to the coastal lands, while the River Heralds dominate the interior.

The Sun Coast

On the eastern coast of the continent, a great mountain range soars high above the forest canopy that dominates the inland reaches. The great cities of the Sun Empire are nestled in the valleys between these peaks, and the sophistication of the empire is visible in the huge terraces carved into the mountainsides to provide level fields for cultivation. Alpine forests cover the upper reaches of the mountains, thinning out near the highest peaks. Rivers, starting as trickles of runoff and hidden springs, pour off both sides of the mountain, rushing into the Stormwreck Sea to the east and winding through the jungle toward the Inner Sea to the west.

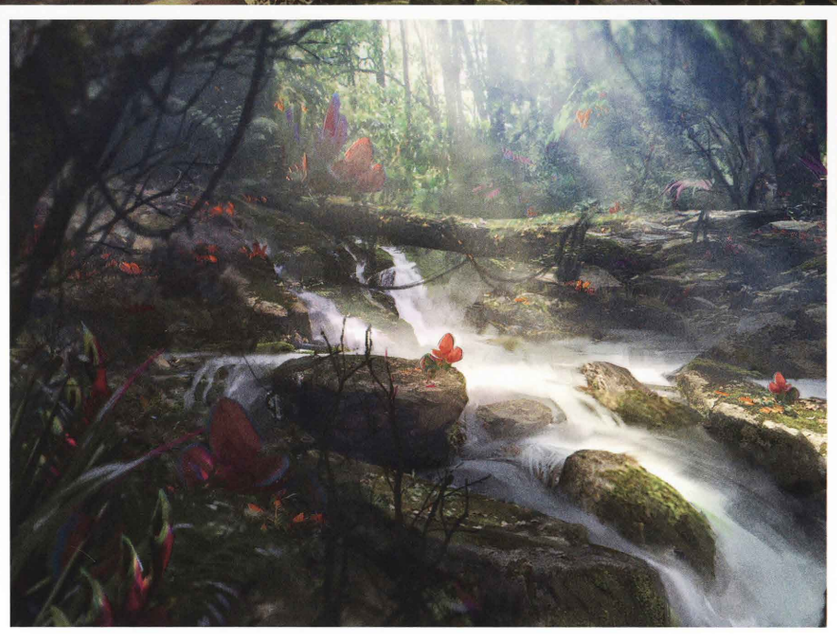
The three great cities of the Sun Empire are situated in the Sun Coast region, giving it its name. Atzocan lies on the low coastal plain, nearest the sea. Pachatupa stands where the coastal plains rise into the high mountains, central to the empire's territory. And Otepec is in a high alpine forest at the western edge of the Sun Empire's lands.

As the Legion of Dusk has begun to land on the Sun Coast, they have established forts and colonies on the coastal plains and swampy river mouths. The core of the Legion's settlements is the area known as Queen's Bay.

Coastal islands, draped in mist, are scattered along the eastern shores. Many of these islands serve as hideouts and bases for the pirates of the Brazen Coalition. Others have been conquered by the Legion of Dusk.

Island ➪ Christine Choi

Lost Vale ➢ Florian de Gesincourt



Woodland Stream ➢ James Paick

The Great River

Most of the continent is a vibrant wilderness where deep channels cut far inland and great rivers wind and cascade across lush forests. Jungle covers much of the land, but the various tributaries of the Great River crisscross the continent. The river itself is the stately ruler of this domain, meandering slowly toward the inner sea.

Lakes and pools formed by shifting terrain dot the landscape. Here and there, mesas rise up above the trees, standing tall in defiance of the erosive forces of wind and water. Murky marshes appear where the waters slow to a halt.

The Great River and its jungle are the home of the River Heralds, who literally claim to speak for the flowing waters. Some merfolk are more at home in the waters, while others dwell comfortably among the trees, but they share the same rainforest habitat.

The Inner Sea

Surrounded on all sides by the mainland, the Inner Sea is connected to the Stormwreck Sea only by a handful of narrow, barely navigable straits. Compared to the tempests of the Stormwreck Sea, the Inner Sea is relatively placid, though freak storms—conjured by the magic of the River Heralds—are a common danger to intruders. Sharp rocks and reefs, barely submerged beneath the glassy waters, also endanger ships that find their way through the straits.

In contrast to the islands of the Stormwreck Sea and the ones that lie just off the Sun Coast, the Inner Sea islands tend to either hold ruins from the ancient Sun Empire or be inhabited by merfolk bands.

History of Ixalan

The histories of the Sun Empire and the River Heralds are closely intertwined. The merfolk are a truly ancient people, whose legends hold that they were here when humans first came to this place (though they do not claim to know where the humans came from). And for a long, long time, the merfolk and the humans lived together in relative peace. The sacred forest of Itlimoc, called the Cradle of Sun's Abundance, is a legacy of this time, when merfolk and human priests worked together to invoke a blessing of fertility upon the land.

Before there was a Sun Empire, human civilization arose in several city-states scattered across the continent. One of the city-states, Orazca, gradually rose to prominence over the others, thanks in large part to the charisma and cunning of its ruler, Chacanto Intli. She began uniting the other cities under her leadership. Even at this time, the humans (and the dinosaurs they commanded) did not expand into the territory of the River Heralds, and the merfolk brought goods to Orazca in trade for items they could not make themselves.

During her efforts to unify the city-states, Chacanto Intli had a fateful encounter. The sphinx Azor, appearing as an incarnation of the sun god, came to Chacanto Intli and gave her the Immortal Sun, urging her to use its power wisely and protect it from anyone who might try to steal or destroy it. Following the sphinx's injunction and exercising great restraint, Chacanto Intli transformed the scattered and fractious city-states into a mighty empire, named for the sun god who had bestowed the Immortal Sun on its ruler.

During this period, the merfolk did something they had never done before and have not done since: they built villages, and even made a sort of city of their own. In keeping with their traditions, these settlements were shaped from and constructed in harmony with the natural environment, but they were permanent. The majestic Deeproot Tree is a surviving remnant of their ancient city, and it is still revered as a place where their ancestors dwelled.

Looming Altisaur ◄ Lars Grant-West

Shapers of Nature ➢ Chris Seaman

Growing Rites of Itlimoc ➢ Grzegorz Rutkowski

Generations later, a new ruler set his sights higher. Emperor Apatzec Intli vowed to conquer the merfolk and raze the jungle, and he wielded the Immortal Sun without any wisdom or restraint. Devastation and ruin followed in his wake.

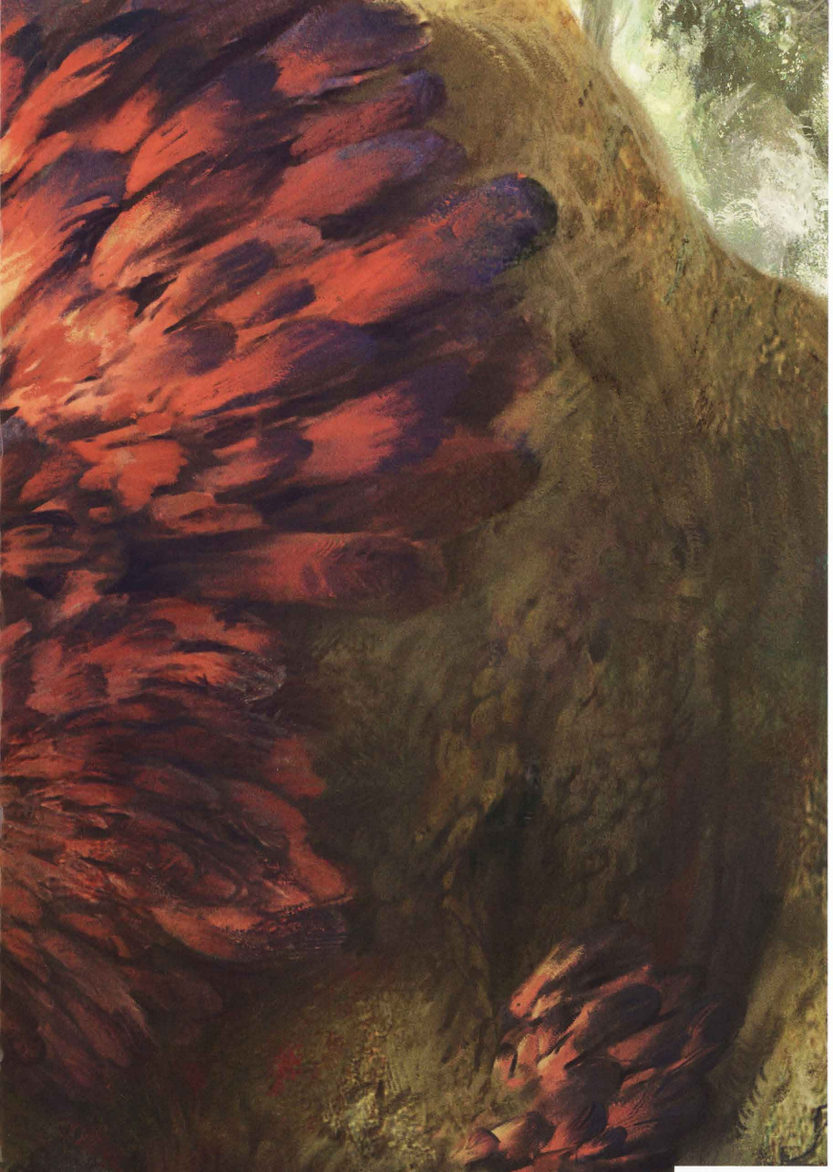
The River Heralds fought desperately for survival until one of their shamans experienced a revelation of his own. Appearing in the midst of a mighty whirlwind, Azor came to Ahandi and offered to help the River Heralds fight back against the Sun Empire. Thanks to Azor's aid, Ahandi led the merfolk in capturing the capital, breaking the empire, and driving the humans out of the heartland to the eastern coast. The River Heralds became the new stewards of the Immortal Sun, but their legends preserved tales of it being used against them—and they resolved never to call on its power. Ahandi implored Azor to hide it away, and to hide the golden city of Orazca itself, so that no one could ever again call on its power. Azor did hide the city, even from the River Heralds, but made them swear to keep anyone from venturing too far inland to find it.

The Sun Empire was reduced to a handful of coastal cities. The emperor's heir founded a new capital, Pachatupa, but the bonds that tied it to the other cities were tenuous. During this period, three cities rose to dominate the other towns and villages belonging to the empire.

Meanwhile, the River Heralds' power increased. Their migrations took them far and wide across the continent, and the jungle itself spread to reclaim the lands that had been plowed and planted by the Sun Empire. The great river grew broad and deep, tended by the merfolk shamans and fed by new tributaries called up by their magic.

In recent years, a new ruler has taken the throne of Pachatupa. After years of raids from the pirate ships of the Brazen Coalition, Apatzec Intli III has forged a new, stronger hold over the other cities, fought back hard against the pirates, and even begun to expand. Pressing into the inland reaches and pushing back the encroaching jungle, the forces of the Sun Empire seek to reclaim their lost ancestral heritage—the golden city of Orazca and its Immortal Sun.

Ixalli's Keeper ➭ Lake Hurwitz

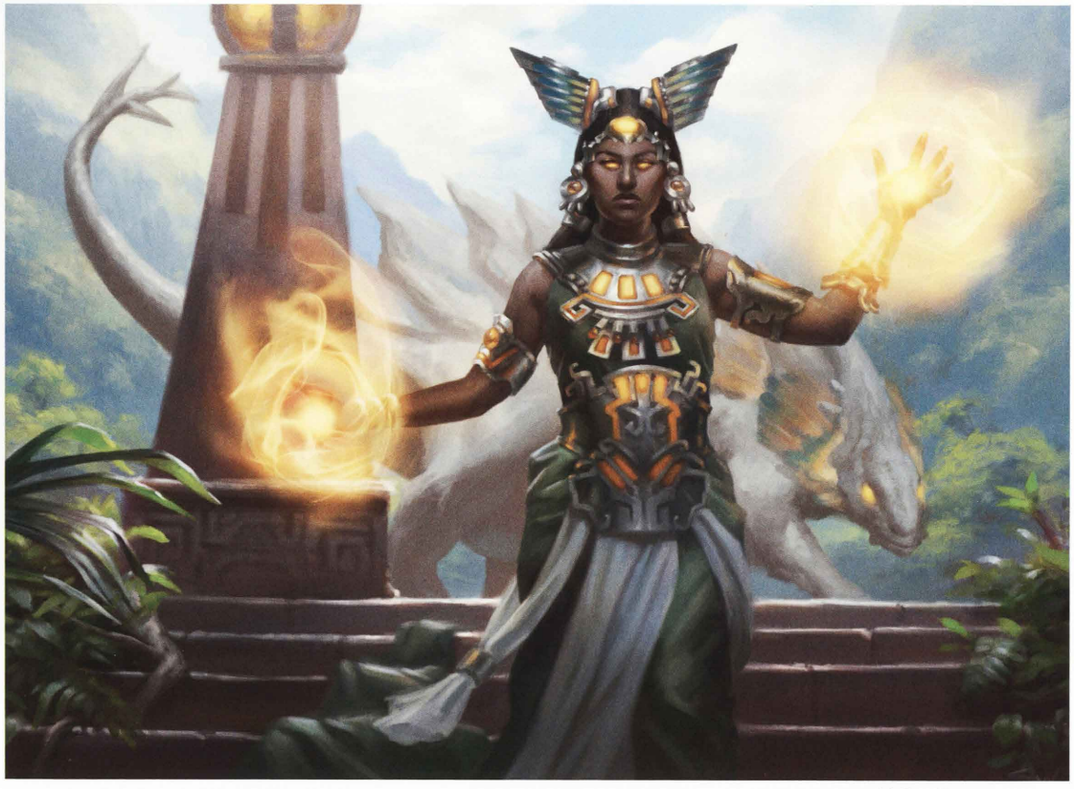


Sun Empire

Just as the sun rises at dawn and the days lengthen in summer, the Sun Empire has awakened after long years of quiet. Besieged by pirate raids and the advance of the Legion of Dusk, caught between the invaders from the sea and the wall of the jungle behind them, the Sun Empire rises in fury to fight off its enemies. With the ferocity of a mighty dinosaur and the righteous light of the radiant sun, proud soldiers and priests march into battle against the invaders and venture into the jungle to reclaim their ancient heritage.

The Sun Empire dominates the coast of Ixalan—from the coastal plains to the tree-covered mountains that separate the empire's lands from the vast interior beyond. And now Apatzec Intli III, newly ascended to the throne, has begun to lead the Sun Empire into a new era of growth and prosperity, expanding beyond the mountains and into the tangled rainforest to find and reclaim their ancestral home and former capital, the golden city of Orazca. Fueled by the magic of their sun priests and the might of the dinosaurs they command, they are braced for conflict—not only against the River Heralds who oppose their expansion into the rainforest, but also against the invaders from across the sea who now threaten the coast.

The Sun Empire is a highly stratified society, led by a powerful emperor who is surrounded by a lavish court. A priestly class—divided into branches corresponding to the sun's threefold aspect—is a second tier of nobility. Elite warrior orders, named for three of the great cities of the empire, are the military champions. Rank-and-file soldiers are a step above the common folk—the artisans, farmers, and merchants who form the bulk of the empire's population.



Kinjalli's Caller ➤ Sara Winters

Bonded Horncrest ➪ Jesper Ejsing

Pachatupa, the Imperial City

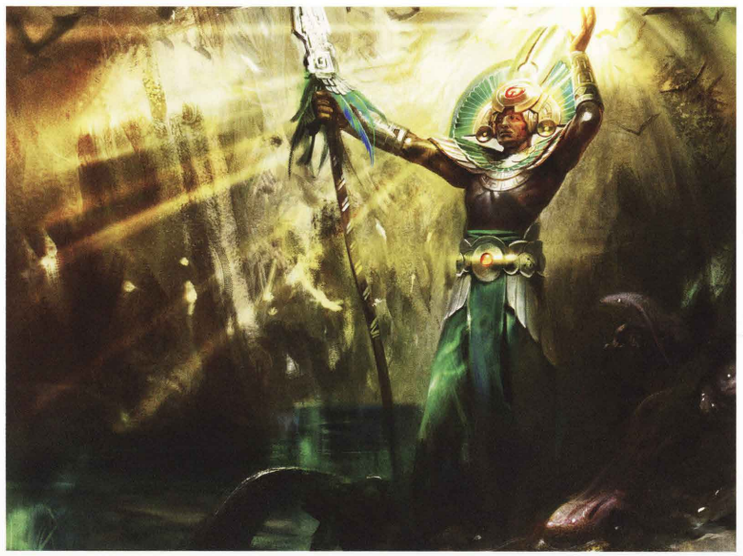
Pachatupa is the center of civilization, where all roads lead. Standing at the point where the coastal plains rise into the high mountains, it is entirely devoted to the emperor and his court. Though its terraced farms, scaling up the mountainsides, are testament to the engineering skill of the empire, the city largely relies on tribute from the other city-states for its sustenance.

The emperor's palace, Tocatli, is a glorious structure at the heart of the city. The palace encompasses many noble mansions belonging to the various families who are closely related to the emperor and positioned somewhere in the line of succession. Its spacious grounds also include three grand temples, each devoted to one of the sun's three aspects.

Representatives from noble families in the other city-states live in Pachatupa as well. They ostensibly occupy a place of honor, but to some degree they are also hostages, kept in the capital to ensure that their families remain loyal to the emperor.

The imperial court is secure in the strength of the empire and its cities. But Pachatupa is the farthest inland and the last city to be threatened by the invading forces. While the emperor remains serenely confident, the people of the other cities feel an increasing desperation.

Emissary of Sunrise ➽ Deruchenko Alexander



➽ Dimitar

Apatzec Intli III. The new ruler of the Sun Empire, responsible for the current mood of expansion and conquest, is a fierce man named Apatzec, named after the emperor who abused the power of the Immortal Sun in an effort to conquer the River Heralds. He is middle-aged, having succeeded his extremely long-lived and conservative mother, and has spent most of his life chafing under her authority and anxious to prove himself as a leader and a warrior. As soon as his mother died, he set about changing everything he disliked about her rule, launching the empire into a state of renaissance—and no small amount of turmoil.

Apatzec trusts in the strength of his armies and his own leadership to secure the good fortune of the empire. Despite (or perhaps because of) his namesake, he initially put little stock in the legends of the Immortal Sun, holding no faith that it would be found, let alone alter the course of history. Learning of the visions of the warrior-poet Huatli, though, has convinced him that the golden city might yet be found and the Immortal Sun once again used to secure the empire's victory over its foes. He has committed significant resources to the search for the city, painfully aware that his initial hesitation may prove costly. At the same time, there are leaders who now fear that his eagerness to find the Immortal Sun is leaving the cities of the Sun Empire vulnerable to the attacks of their enemies.

Priest of the Wakening Sun ➽ Bastien L. Derharme

Tocatli Honor Guard ☙ Sara Winters

Imperial Lancer ☙ Viktor Titov

Armies of Pachatupa. The Emperor's Guard is an elite military force housed in the palace of Tocatli. Rigidly trained and organized, the Guard answers directly to the emperor and is dedicated to the defense of the imperial palace. Its soldiers are divided into seven squads, each with its own commander (called an intical). The seven inticals all report to the emperor, and enough rivalry simmers among them to ensure that the Guard never unites in opposition to the emperor.

The Canchatan, the temple soldiers of Pachatupa, are specially chosen and blessed by the priests of two of the sun temples in Tocatli—the Temple of the Birthing Sun and the Temple of the Consuming Sun. (The third temple, the Temple of the Sustaining Sun, does not consecrate holy warriors, since its teachings emphasize stability and solidity.) They favor weapons with rounded blades suggesting the shape of the sun. Though the Canchatan are technically two military forces, they have a single commander. Caparocti Sunborn is the holy champion of Pachatupa, a fierce warrior who imagines that he is the blinding light of the sun come to smite the foes of his people. Caparocti is known for his shining helmet, which brightly reflects the sunlight.

Atzocan, the Verdant Plain

Atzocan lies on the low coastal plain, where broad fields and lush forests attest to the fertility of the land. Of the three great cities of the Sun Empire it is nearest the sea, which means that it has weathered the most attacks from Brazen Coalition raiders. In stark contrast to the elegant serenity of the capital, Atzocan is a stern, disciplined, and determined city.

Thanks to the abundance of the land around it, Atzocan provides a great deal of the food required to sustain the rest of the empire—and a sizable portion of the food that sustains the pirates as well. Large marketplaces spread throughout the city provide a place for farmers to sell their produce to local artisans and noble families as well as to merchants who carry it to the other cities and villages of the empire. Pachatupa in particular relies heavily on food from Atzocan, which is paid as tribute to the emperor.

Carnage Tyrant ➢ Yeong-Hao Han

Evolving Wilds ➤ Jonas De Ro

Atzocan is nominally governed by a son of the emperor, Atlacan Huicintli, a clever but physically weak young man. The heads of three noble families—Cabrana, Palani, and Cuitzan—vie with each other for actual control, completely unaware that Atlacan is playing them against each other to maintain some modicum of authority and keep Atzocan loyal to the emperor.

Plains ➤ Raul Vitale

The Dinosaur City. In addition to supporting abundant crops, the plains surrounding Atzocan are the native habitat of several varieties of large, powerful dinosaurs. Herds of huge altisaurs and brontodons roam the outermost plains, while armored ceratopses, armasaurs, and aegisaurs wander freely near the farmlands. The priests of Atzocan use their magic to call and control these dinosaurs, putting them to work in and around the city. Thus, the design of Atzocan, more than the other cities of the empire, is designed to accommodate the large beasts moving through the streets.

Atzocan also boasts more temples than any other city of the empire because, instead of large central temples, it has numerous smaller shrines around the city, spreading the priesthood—mostly dedicated to the sun in its creative and sustaining aspects—around the city where they can best be of service in keeping the dinosaurs under control.

Thundering Spineback ➪ Tomasz Jedruszek

Scott Murphy

Armies of Atzocan. Having endured decades of pirate raids and more than their fair share of internal strife, the people of Atzocan value strength—physical and emotional—above most other virtues. The tallest, burliest, and strongest warriors earn the greatest respect, and they engage in ritualized contests of boasting intended to paint their deeds as large as possible.

The emperor's son, as governor of the city-state, is also the commander of its army. Despite lacking the physical strength Atzocan warriors prize, he holds unquestioned authority over the army because the soldiers value order and the chain of command almost as much as they value battle prowess. That said, the noble families that vie for political influence in the city also jockey for position within the army—under the governor's command.

Atlacan's current favorite lieutenant is a towering warrior named Itzama the Crested, named for the elaborate helmet she wears. She made the helm from the crested skull of a dinosaur that she claims to have killed barehanded in an epic wrestling match.

Atzocan Archer Naomi Baker

Rootbound Crag ➽ Grzegorz Rutkowski

Otepec, the Mountain Temple

Known for its elaborate stone temples, the city of Otepec stands in a high forest at the western edge of the Sun Empire's lands. Though it is an ancient city, it has the feel of a frontier town, far from the heart of civilization. This feeling is perhaps intensified by the current surge of interest in discovering the golden city, since a number of Sun Empire explorers are using Otepec as a staging ground for their expeditions.

Forest ➽ Christine Choi

A River Herald band roams perilously close to Otepec's lands at times, claiming ownership of a nearby spring that is the source of the Notana River. In the past the merfolk have occasionally traded with the people of Otepec, and the city's people still observe an annual celebration commemorating a feast at which humans and merfolk sat down together in peace centuries ago. Now, humans leaving the city's walls head eastward, toward the heart of the empire, or they venture toward the west in large numbers and with extreme caution.

Like Atzocan, Otepec is governed by a child of the emperor, his daughter Caztaca Huicintli. Caztaca is both wise and strong, and she is well loved by the people of her adoptive city. The noble families of Otepec are loyal to her—and thus to the emperor—forming a united front against the scheming priesthood of the city.

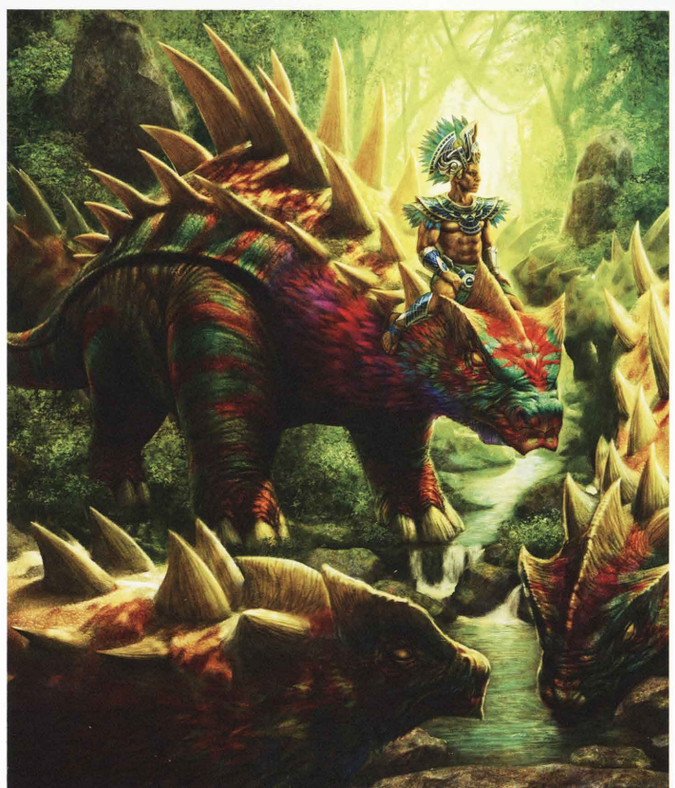
Rob Alexander

The Temple Plateau. Three huge temples, each encompassing several monumental structures, dominate a large plateau on the northern side of the city. Called the Temple of the Wellspring (the sun in its creative aspect), the Temple of the Still Lake (the sun in its sustaining, nurturing aspect), and the Temple of the Cascade (the destructive aspect of the sun), these temples are staffed and led by priests who wield an unusual amount of power in Otepec. The priests believe that political power belongs in the hands of the devout, that the empire should become a sort of theocracy governed by the priests of the threefold sun. Since they are themselves members of the imperial family, distantly related to Caztaca Huicintli, they could argue a legitimate claim to the throne of the empire.

The people of Otepec are torn between their love for the emperor's daughter and their devotion to the three aspects of the sun god. They are not blind to the power struggles between the nobility and the priesthood, and their fervent wish, by and large, is for the emperor's daughter to accommodate the priests as much as possible.

Tilonalli's Knight ➽ Lius Lasahido

Otepec Huntmaster ➤ Daarken

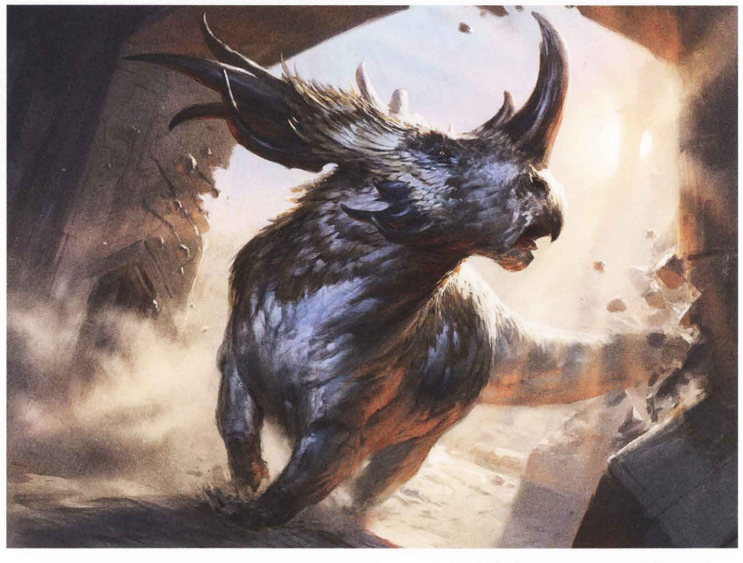


Knight of the Stampede ➤ Steve Argyle

Armies of Otepec. The soldiers of Otepec are focused largely on patrolling the forest to the west, keeping the River Heralds away from the city. To that end, they ride swift, fierce dinosaurs into battle to strike fast and hard against any enemy. They wield long spears, which they both wield as lances and hurl using spear-throwers. The leader of these dinosaur-riding knights is Chitlati, Lightning Rider. She is a woman of tremendous charisma who readily inspires others to fight under her command. Her spearhead is carved in the shape of a lightning bolt. She answers only to the emperor's daughter, but she is also a devout follower of the Threefold Sun, and the priests of the temples have significant influence with her.

Sunrise Seeker ▻ Filip Burburan

Gishath, Sun's Avatar ➤ Zack Stella



Wakening Sun's Avatar ➤ Tyler Jacobson

The Threefold Sun

The people of the empire worship the sun in three aspects: creative (associated with white mana), sustaining and nourishing (associated with green mana), and destructive (associated with red mana). Many different parts of life and the natural world are associated with the sun's different aspects. For example, the rainy season is linked to the Wakening Sun, the cool season with the Verdant Sun, and the hot season with the Burning Sun.

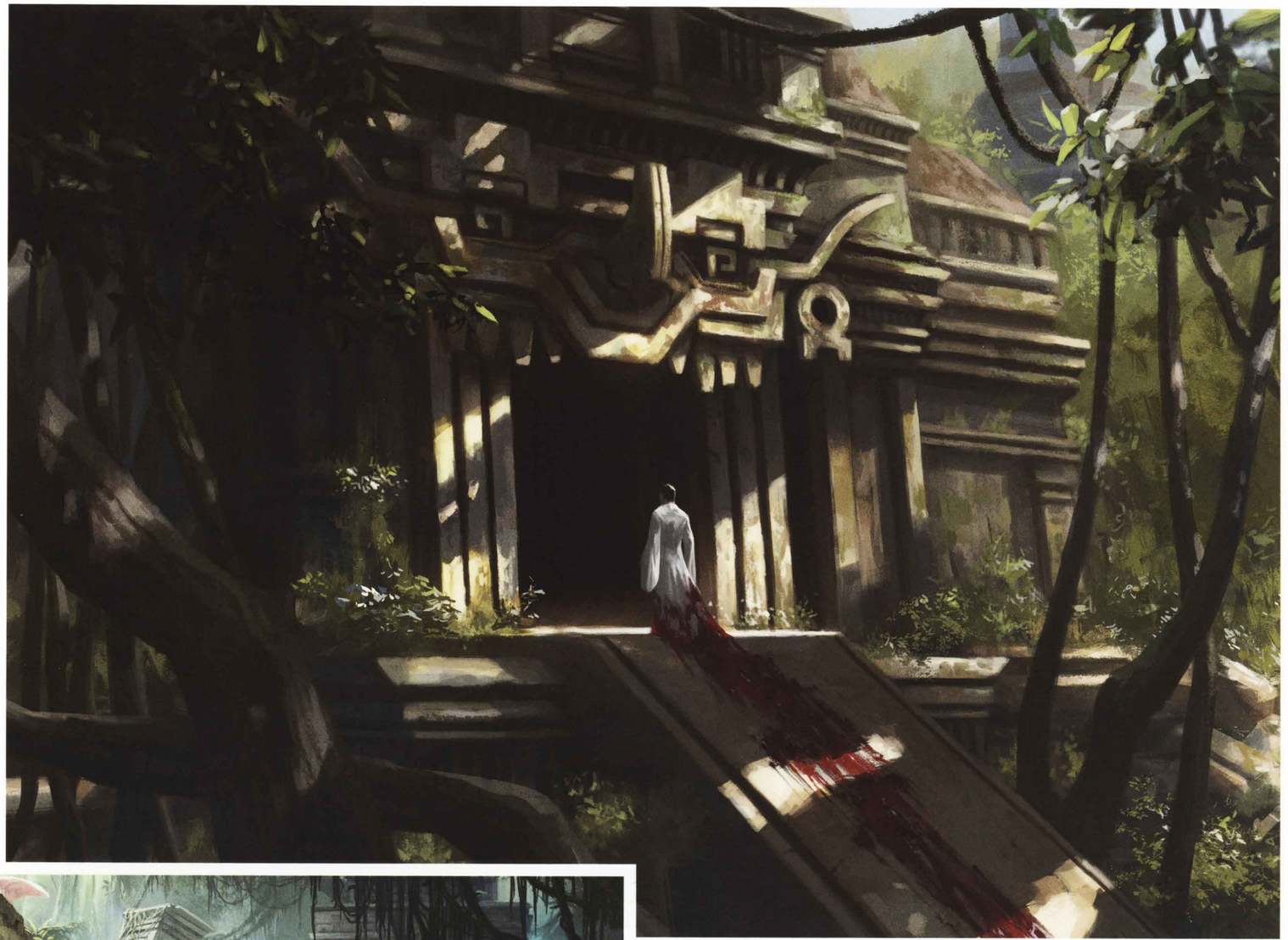
Kinjalli, the Wakening Sun. The white aspect of the sun represents its creative aspects. Kinjalli is said to have formed humans by shaping them from clay and baking them until they were solid. Kinjalli kindles the spirit to life, sparks the intellect, and inspires creativity. The Wakening Sun is associated with healing, but also with blinding and searing wrath. It is the patron of the emperor and closely associated with Chacanto Intli, the empire's founder. Kinjalli's aspect is embodied in the imperial court, the hierarchical priests of the creative sun, and the structured ranks of the military. Other names for Kinjalli include Sun's Creation and the Birthing Sun.

Verdant Sun's Avatar ➤ Izzy

Ixalli, the Verdant Sun. The green aspect of the sun represents its sustaining and nourishing aspects. Ixalli fosters growth in all things, from the verdant rainforest to the development of children into adults. The Verdant Sun is associated with strength, solidity, and community. Ixalli's priesthood is a conservative force in the empire's society, resistant to change but supportive of the people and the strength of the nation. These priests are the masters of dinosaurs, wielding powerful magic to control and restrain them. Ixalli is also known as the Fertile Sun, the Sustaining Sun, Sun's Growing, or Sun's Abundance.

Tilonalli, the Burning Sun. The red aspect of the sun represents its destructive aspects. Tilonalli ignites the passions, smites the enemies of the empire, and brings all life to its eventual end. The Burning Sun is associated with ferocity, fire, and love. Tilonalli is a patron of many warriors, including the holy soldiers of Pachatupa and the fierce knights of Otepec. Tilonalli is also called the Consuming Sun or Sun's Destruction.

Burning Sun's Avatar ➤ Randy Vargas



Temple of Aclazotz ◆ Daarken

Azcanta, the Sunken Ruin ◆ Magali Villeneuve

Ancient Sites

The Sun Empire used to be larger than it is, and remnants of its past glory still lie scattered throughout the jungle of the Great River. Some of these remnants are no more than heaps of rubble overgrown with the hardy plant life of the jungle, potentially interesting for the sake of inscriptions that might remain on worn stone surfaces, but otherwise remarkable only as landmarks for those traveling through uncharted forests.

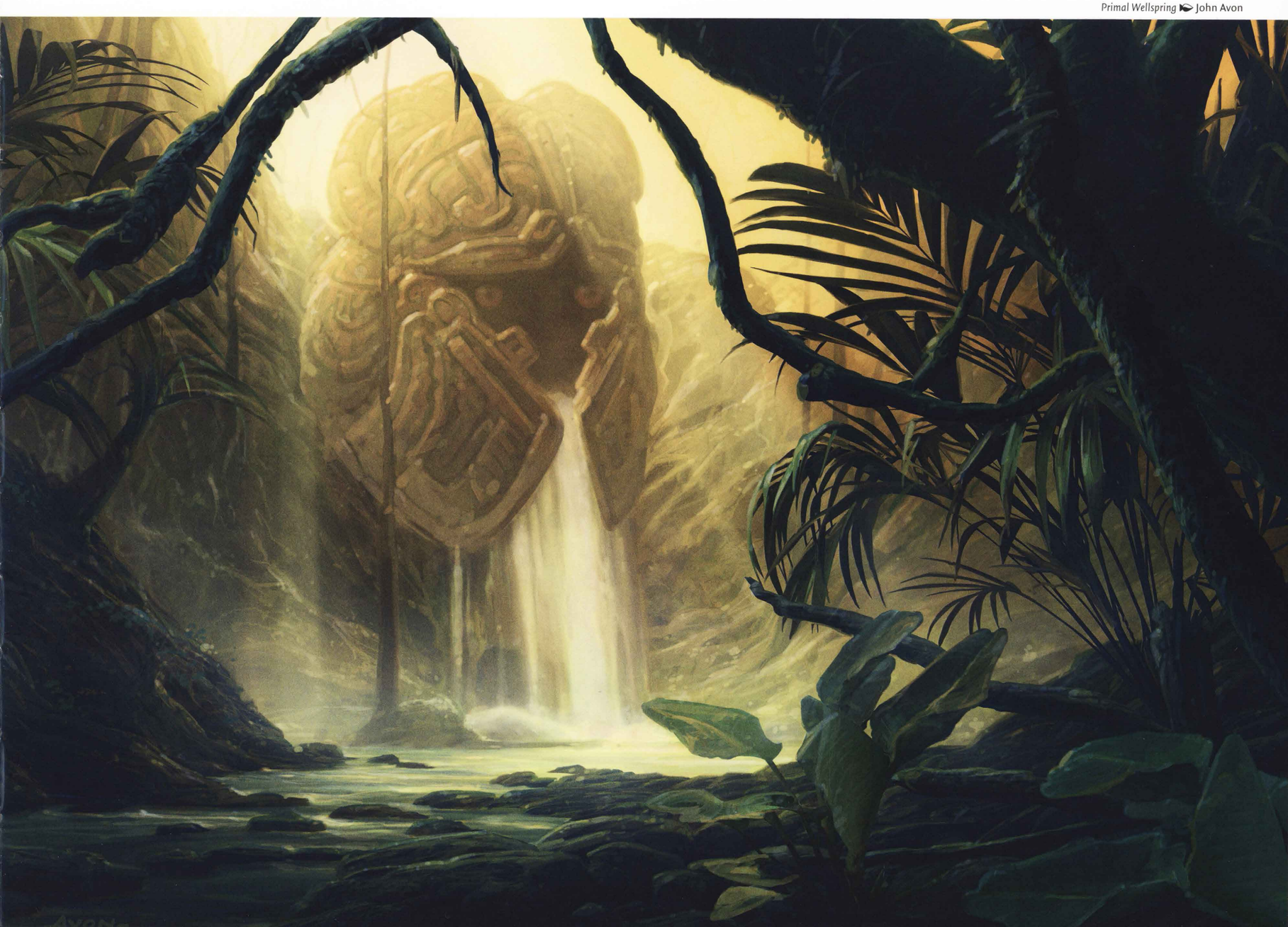
However, several entire cities lie in ruins scattered throughout the jungle. Quetzatl was once the home of a self-proclaimed king who challenged the authority of the emperor. Its ruins betray the violence used to tear its buildings down, stone by stone, and legend holds that spirits of the dead, including the Pretender King, still haunt the ruins. The city of Pecatli was known for its grand temple, which boasted three great spires for the three aspects of the sun. The spires

have long been toppled, but the diamonds, emeralds, and rubies said to have crowned them have never been found. Techepec was a retreat for the emperor and the imperial family, a place where they could escape the trials of life at court for a time. In fact, Emperor Huatzan II used Techepec as a sort of capital-in-exile during a brief period of insurrection when another pretender sat on the throne in Orazca. And Azcanta, now called the Sunken Ruin, was a thriving population center until a prolonged conflict with the River Heralds caused it to sink into the waters of the Inner Sea. Its buildings are still largely intact far beneath the waves, and some pirates now seek its treasures.

A few lone shrines and temples dot the jungle as well, survivors of cities whose wooden buildings have long since rotted away. Tonalixco, the temple of the eastern sun, marked the western edge of the empire in the fortress-city of Tanaztac. Icalaquiampa, the temple of sunset, was the focus of a religious sect that tried to replace the emperor with a high priest and establish theocratic rule. And Aclazotz was dedicated to a bat god of the night, opposed to the Threefold Sun and the empire devoted to the sun.

Of course, the grandest ruin of the ancient Sun Empire is Orazca, the glorious golden city where the Immortal Sun still lies hidden. It was the empire's capital for many centuries, and tribute from across the breadth of the empire was brought to adorn its palaces and temples. Gold adorns nearly every building in the city, and jade inlays reflect the influence of the ancient merfolk who shared the city with the humans of the empire. The earth has closed up over the golden city, hiding its secrets and its treasures from all who seek it. Three golden spires are the only visible sign of the city that rises above the forest floor.

Primal Wellspring ➤ John Avon

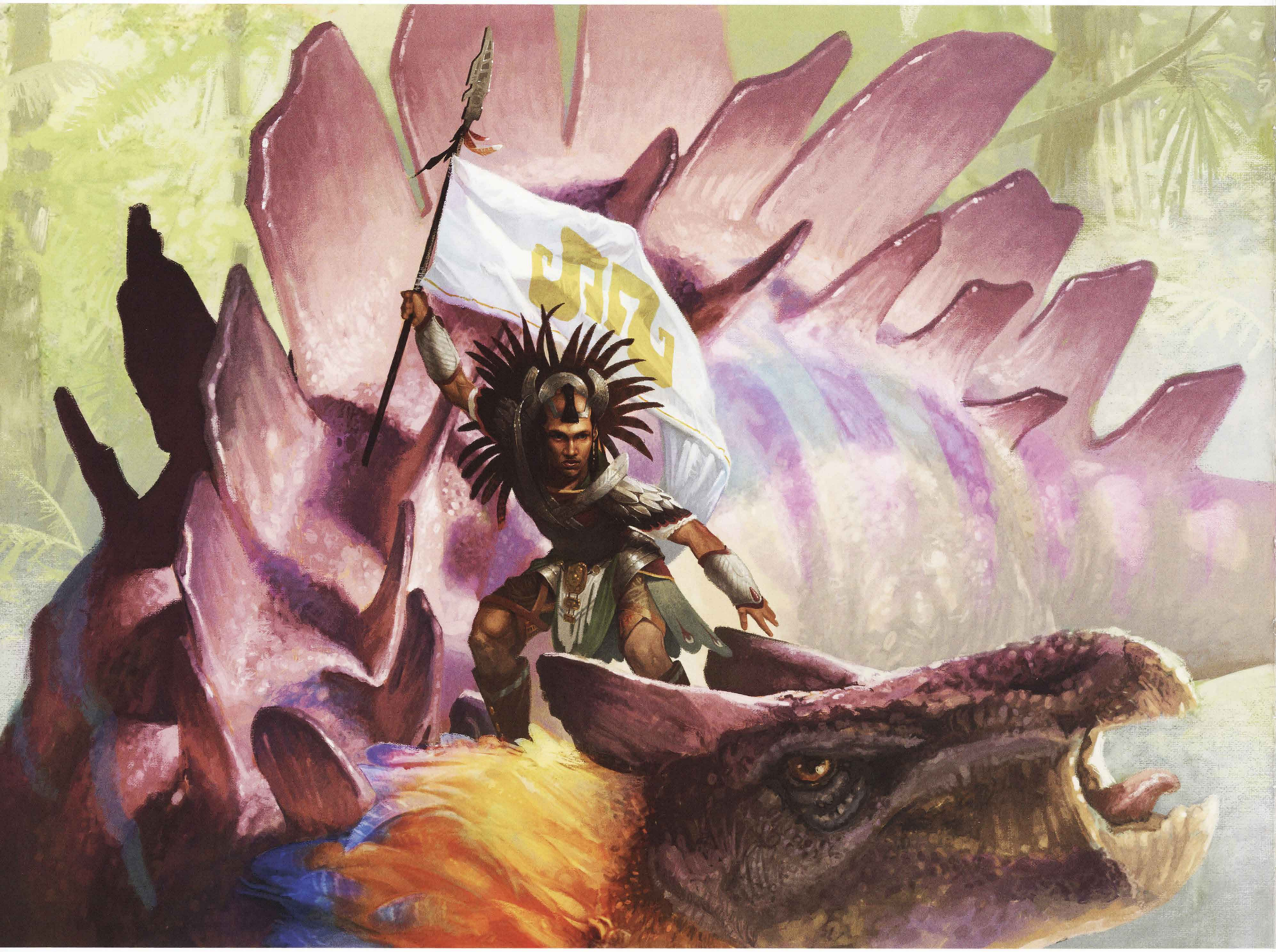


Dinosaurs

Dinosaurs are the dominant animal life of Ixalan, including apex predators and enormous herbivores as well as small egg eaters and seed pickers. The people of the Sun Empire live alongside dinosaurs without taming or domesticating them. Whenever a dinosaur moves through a Sun Empire city, it is under someone's direct control—and there's always the risk of it breaking free. This is part of the Sun Empire's worldview: nature (embodied in the dinosaurs) is a tool to be wielded, bent to human will, but it is a constant test of will and strength. Nature can't be tamed, but when humans live alongside nature they are made stronger.

Dinosaurs are important to the Sun Empire's sense of national identity. The empire's people use dinosaur feathers as decorations and as inspiration for design motifs in everything from jewelry to

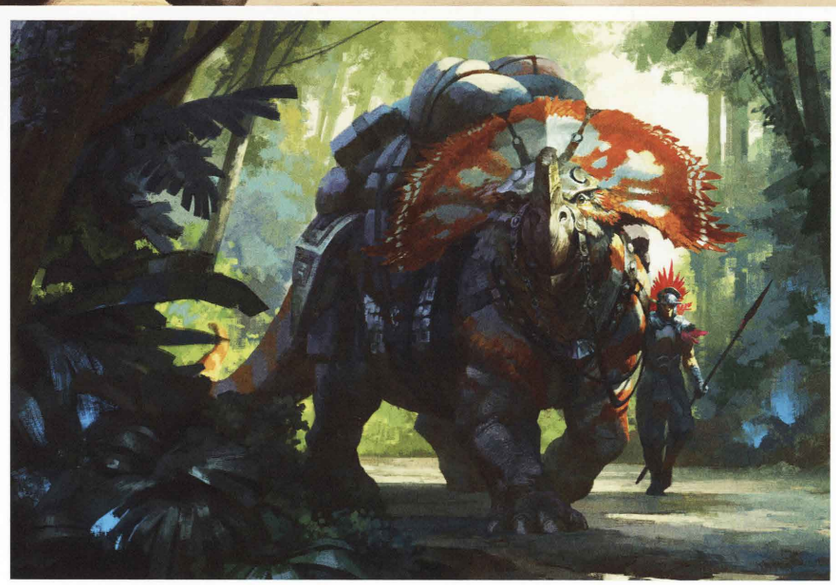
Rallying Roar ➤ *John Stanko*



Raptor Companion ➤ Slawomir Maniak

architecture. They believe that the Immortal Sun first gave their priests the ability to call and command the dinosaurs, and so maintaining this command is a way of clinging to their ancient heritage.

The people of the Sun Empire interact with a wide variety of dinosaurs. These include herds of huge, forest-dwelling herbivores, heavily armored quadrupeds, flying dinosaurs, and aggressive bipedal predators.



Imperial Ceratops ➤ Bayard Wu

River Heralds

Wind roars in a destructive cyclone, waves rise high into the air before smashing down, and vines and branches reach and grab as the shamans of the rainforest work their magic. The people of the waters, the River Heralds, wield the raw force of nature in their effort to protect their world from disaster. Living in peace and harmony with the natural world, they seek to preserve its delicate balance and drive the invaders away.

The River Heralds are a collection of small, nomadic tribes that were the dominant inhabitants of Ixalan before the rise of the Sun Empire. Their strength was once great enough (aided by Azor) to drive the Sun Empire out of the interior and close off the golden city, but their numbers are now greatly diminished. They live in harmony with the land, and their shamans wield powerful nature magic to control the elements of wind and water, which they use to protect themselves from the harsher aspects of life on Ixalan. Now the River Heralds dominate the deep interior islands and jungles, the winding rivers, and much of the sky.

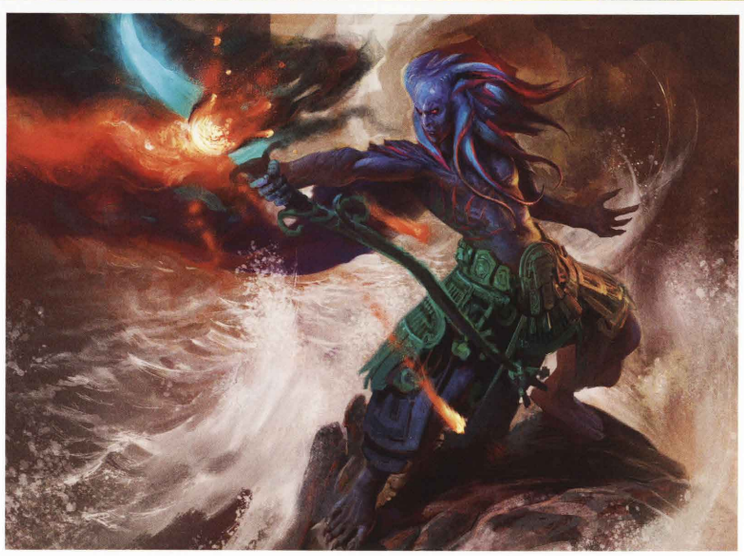
Headwater Sentries ➤ Naomi Baker

Deeproot Champion ➪ Raymond Swanland

Jade Guardian ➢ Chris Seaman

Merfolk

The River Heralds are merfolk—a race of amphibious humanoids at home throughout the oceans, rivers, and rainforests of Ixalan. They stand between seven and eight feet tall, with skin that ranges from deep burgundy through many shades of violet and blue, to green, bright orange, and yellow. They are humanlike in shape, but long fins extend from their shoulders, forearms, middle backs, and calves. Frills of fins also protrude from the backs of their heads.



Spell Pierce ➢ Deruchenko Alexander

All merfolk can breathe air or filter oxygen from the water, and they can walk on land or swim with equal ease. But they are actually two separate subspecies. The green merfolk favor the land, walking among the trees and savoring the sunlight that filters through the leaves, while the blue merfolk are more at home in the waters of the Great River and the Inner Sea.

Green merfolk generally have yellow chests and greenish faces, shading to dark blues and purples on their backs and limbs. Patterns on their skin suggest the tree frogs common in the rainforest, as do their eyes of orange, lime green, or sky blue. Their fins are relatively short and thick. They climb trees with ease, move through undergrowth unhindered, and often wield magic to shape vines and branches to their will.

Blue merfolk often have burgundy or magenta on their faces and chests, with lighter shades of blue and purple elsewhere. Their eyes are red, orange, or blue, and their fins are long, thin, and elegant, suggesting scarves or veils of fine fabric. They swim easily, even upstream, and clamber over rocks and through rapids with ease. They prefer shallower waters, and spend a fair amount of time on the shores as well.

Merfolk weapons and armor are elaborately carved from jade in swirling, braided designs that suggest the flow of the waves and the growth of jungle vines. Sometimes the pieces of jade armor worn by a merfolk shaman will lift off from the surface of the shaman's skin while the shaman is using magic.

Vineshaper Mystic ➢ Kieran Yanner

Shapers of Nature

The River Heralds have lived in peace and harmony with the natural world as long as they can remember. It's not that they lack the knowledge or skill to build cities and develop technology; rather, they have deliberately chosen to live as part of the natural world, partly in rejection of the path they watched the Sun Empire take long ago.

The magic of the River Heralds' shamans is focused on controlling wind, water, and their jungle environment. They strive to maintain a peaceful coexistence with nature, not to conquer it or defy it. They are called Shapers for the way they alter nature around them—changing the currents of wind and water, calling up storms and floods, and bending branches and vines. As they move through the jungle, they adapt it to fit their needs—and then return it to the way it was, leaving no trace of their passing, just as a pebble dropped in water leaves the surface unchanged once the ripples have passed.

The power of the Shapers is so great that even a small band of River Heralds can stand against a much larger force of Sun Empire or Legion of Dusk soldiers. They redirect rivers to thwart intruders, call up banks of fog, summon enormous waves to wash away their foes, create huge vines to destroy ships and fortresses, and direct the winds to lift them into the air or send flying opponents crashing down. They also summon elementals—living creatures formed from water or tangles of jungle growth.

Wind Strider ➢ Magali Villeneuve

Run Aground ➽ Sara Winters

Waker of the Wilds ➽ Shreya Shetty

The wisdom of the elders, passed down orally from shaman to shaman, is central to the River Heralds' society. They pass on the mythology of the golden city, the Immortal Sun, and the Last Defender, as well as instructive stories about life in the jungle, the names of the nature spirits they conjure and command, which foods are safe to eat, and the evils of the ancient Sun Empire.

Circles of Water. The River Heralds view jungle and river as two equal parts of the same ecosystem—two halves of the world. The river and the sea are the lower half; the jungle and the sky (with the rain, mist, and fog that are so characteristic of the rainforest) are the upper. Water flows freely between the two, binding them into a whole, and the merfolk are fundamentally creatures of the water.

Green merfolk are more at home in the upper world and blue in the lower, but they are two halves of the same race. They recognize their differences, just as they recognize the difference between jungle and river, but they value those differences instead of fighting over them.

Search for Azcanta ➤ Magali Villeneuve

Tishana, Voice of Thunder ➤ Anna Steinbauer

Sources of the Nine Rivers

To outsiders, the various bands of the River Heralds present a unified front, determined to keep intruders away from the rainforest interior and ensure that they do not find the golden city. In fact, while they share this common goal, the merfolk bands are in constant competition with each other for primacy and control of the richest territory.

A merfolk band consists of about a dozen individuals, led by a shaman called a Shaper. The Shapers are respected elders and leaders, who guide the decisions of their bands and lead them on their migrations—and into battle against intruders. Each Shaper has a single apprentice at any given time. Should a Shaper die, the apprentice takes over leadership of the band. If a band grows too large for its territory to support, the apprentice takes a portion of the band away to form a new band and claim a new territory.

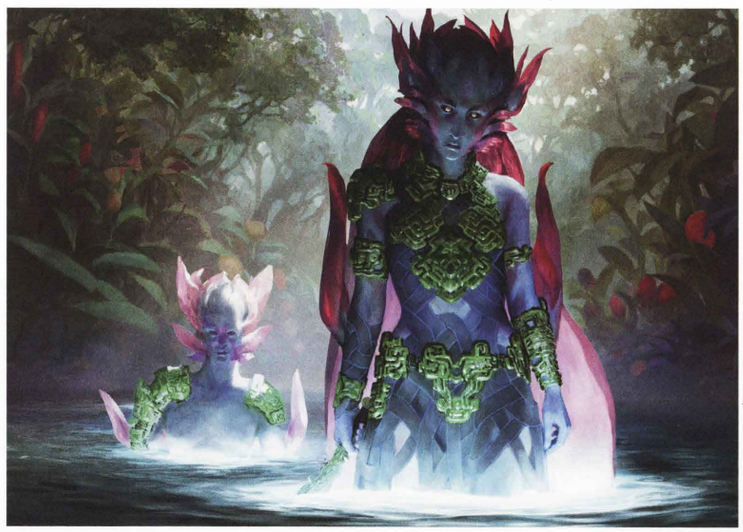
By merfolk reckoning, there are nine tributaries to the Great River that dominates the interior of Ixalan. The headwaters of these nine rivers are considered the prime territory, and the shamans whose bands control the sources are the most respected. The shamans are known by the rivers' names: Tishana, Kumena, Pashona, Vuhana, Mitica, Notana, Falani, Tuvasa, and Kopala.

Tishana's Band. The river Tishana is also called the Great Source, and the Shaper who carries its name can claim leadership over every band. Tishana is the shaman most stridently urging not only outsiders but also her own people to stay away from the golden city of Orazca and its magic. Her magically amplified voice can shake the trees and drive people to their knees in terror (giving rise to her epithet, the Voice of Thunder), and a single word from her mouth can drown a pirate ship or call up a whirlwind to scatter a vampire band. This power dissuades any challenges to her authority, but she is also beloved by the people as a warm and kind elder.

Tishana's large band includes both green and blue merfolk, and her territory extends both far downriver from the headwaters and widely into the jungle. The members of her band share in the respect that Tishana commands from all merfolk, but many of them have earned that prestige by their own deeds.

Renowned as the mightiest warrior in all the Heralds bands, Jadana wields a huge glaive and wears heavy jade armor. She is Tishana's right hand and rarely speaks, but she secretly questions whether the Heralds should perhaps claim the power of the city for themselves. She craves power and doesn't understand the concept of a power "too great to be used"—if the power is great, it should be used to seize victory, whatever the risks.

Deeproot Waters ➪ Zezhou Choi



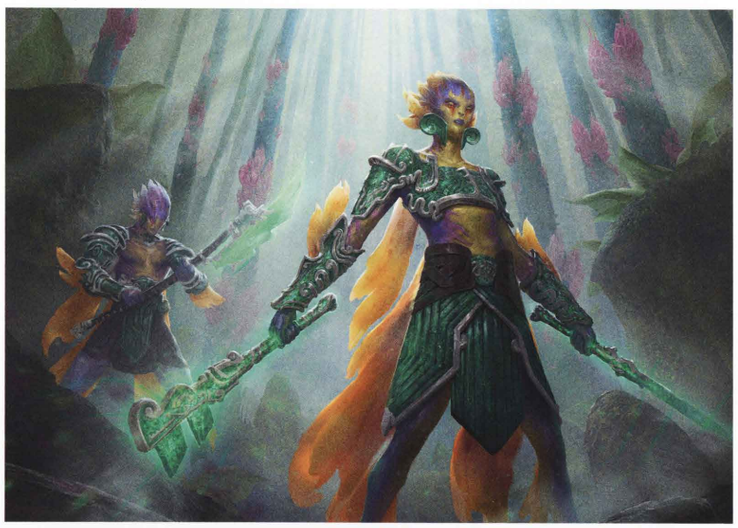
Kopala, Warden of Waves ➪ Magali Villeneuve

Kumena's Band. Kumena is a younger male shaman. As Tishana's former apprentice, he has significant prestige among the merfolk, and his band frequently partners with Tishana's. His beliefs could hardly be more different from his mentor's, though. He has long believed, under pressure of outside invaders, that the River Heralds should find Orazca and claim its power to drive the intruders back. In contrast to Tishana's wisdom and kindness, Kumena stirs up the anger and outrage of the other River Heralds, and he is finding support for his ideas of bold, decisive action.

Kumena's band consists largely of green merfolk, most of whom share his desire to find and open the golden city. They are marked by an unflinching and uncompromising hatred for the forces that dare to intrude on their land, particularly the soldiers of the Sun Empire.

Some of that hatred is fueled by Kumena's apprentice, Vidana. Before she began her studies as a Shaper, she and her husband were scouts in Tishana's band. They came upon a camp of Sun Empire warriors and were discovered, and her husband was killed by a dinosaur. Vidana's magical studies focus on the creation of elementals,

Kumena's Speaker ➢ Johann Bodin



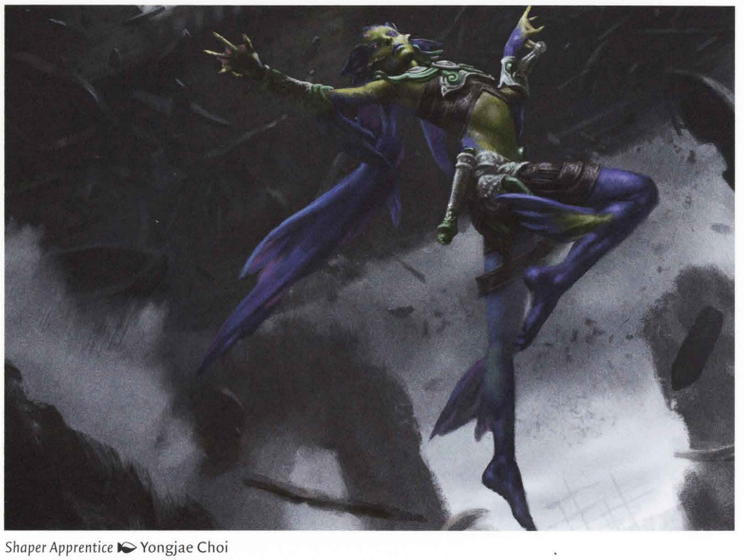
Emergent Growth ➢ Daniel L junggren

Overflowing Insight ➤ Lucas Graciano

and she often travels with a large, leafy elemental guardian, believing that the best way to fight powerful monsters like dinosaurs is with a powerful monster of one's own. She imagines using the power of the Immortal Sun to create an elemental horde that would wipe the Sun Empire from the face of Ixalan.

A young warrior named Hadana is a quietly dissenting voice within Kumena's band. Deeply attuned to the natural forces of the Great River despite his lack of talent as a shaman, Hadana believes that dinosaurs, humans, and perhaps even vampires are part of the natural world. As forces of nature in their own right, they should not be opposed with force, he believes. Rather, they should be gently bent to the River Heralds' will through diplomacy and manipulation. Similarly, he is not unsympathetic to Kumena's idea of opening the golden city, but he clings to the idea that its power should be used to forge harmony among the peoples of Ixalan and the intruders.

Merfolk Branchwalker ➽ Kieran Yanner



Shaper Apprentice ➽ Yongjae Choi

Pashona's Band. Haunted by visions of the future, Pashona foresees the opening of the golden city and the ensuing catastrophe, and she has resigned herself to it with a grim fatalism that is uncharacteristic for the merfolk. Thus, while she supports Tishana's efforts to drive intruders away from the city out of a sense of duty, she knows that the effort is ultimately futile. She wonders whether the intruders might represent the doom of her people.

The others in Pashona's band are not so fatalistic. Consisting mostly of blue merfolk, they share an intense curiosity and clever ingenuity.

Pashona's apprentice, Nirit, specializes in sculpting elaborate illusions from water and air. A playful and theatrical young artist with an eye for detail and a passion for the craft, Nirit is able to create elaborately choreographed scenes using the waters of the rivers and streams. Rather than focusing on releasing raw power from the elements, Nirit prefers to focus on magic's subtlety and grace. Staying hidden from view just below the river's surface, Nirit engages in lengthy, uninterrupted reflection on and observation of landwalkers. As enemies new and old encroach upon the merfolk lands, Nirit uses powers of misdirection to confound these interlopers. At Nirit's

hands, enemies near the river might see obscuring fog, illusionary facades of mysterious paths leading the wrong way, or the threatening outlines of riparian predators. Nirit recently scattered a group of Legion of Dusk soldiers led by Champion Cerazzo. An obscuring fog weighed down the heavily armored soldiers and diverted their path. Champion Cerazzo cried out to his soldiers to stay close to their comrades in formation. But before him, he saw the outlines of other soldiers, and Cerazzo and his men rushed forward to join their companions. But these soldiers were only vapor suspended in the air, and Cerazzo's company found themselves rushing off the precipice of a cataract and falling down onto the jagged rocks below. Nirit smiled and summoned a rushing current of river water to carry the unconscious soldiers back out to sea.

Limosa is a scout who takes great pride in his stealth, his ability to move in a river almost invisibly. Having spent a great deal of time on scouting missions, spying on the invading forces, he has become fascinated with their ways, particularly the freewheeling, rebellious ways of the pirates. He spends more and more time away from the rest of his band, observing the pirates and sometimes even sneaking aboard their ships.

Blinding Fog ➪ Igor Kieryluk

Alex Konstad

Ryan Alexander Lee

The Deeproot Tree

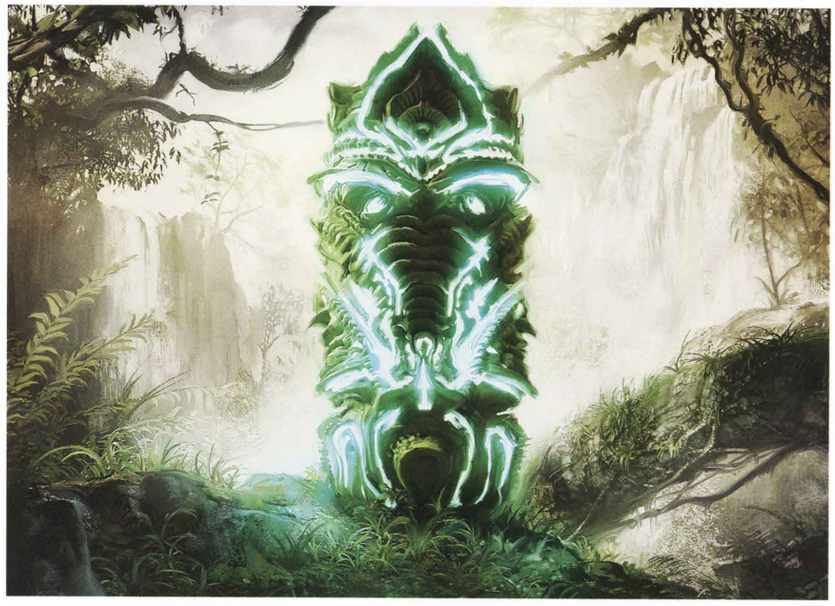
In their migrations, the River Heralds use their nature magic to create temporary shelters, reshaping trees, leaves, and streams to make living, natural dwellings for as long as they need shelter. When they move on, the jungle returns to its previous state. Though they have no permanent settlements, one site serves as a sacred shrine and meeting place for all the merfolk: the Deeproot Tree.

The Deeproot Tree is an ancient mangrove of enormous size, towering almost four hundred feet above the marshy ground. Shamans have coaxed the branches into stairs and platforms that hold dozens of shelters nestled safely above the ground, and similar platforms are tucked in among the tree's roots, both above and below the water level.

Herald bands visit the Deeproot Tree at least once a year, staying for anywhere from a few days to a month or so. Shamans view these visits as an opportunity to refresh their connection to the forces of nature, with the sprawling roots of the enormous tree and the mighty waters of the river flowing nearby.

Elemental Totems

River Herald bands use carved pillars of jade to mark and protect their territory. From a distance, these totems seem like squat blocks with a hint of humanoid features in the ornamental carvings. When intruders trespass on the lands they are set to guard, though, blue or green light begins to shine from inside the totem, spilling out from cracks formed where separate pieces of jade begin to move apart. Soon the totem fully opens, releasing the elemental energy stored inside. An elemental guardian—a living creature formed of swirling wind, streaming water, or viny growth—takes shape around the totem core. These are powerful guardians, but creating them takes a great deal of work for both the crafting of the jade and the working of magic to bind the elemental spirit to the totem. Thus, they are too few in number to serve as an effective barrier to the armies of invaders now making their way into the River Heralds' territory.



Sentinel Totem Anthony Palumbo

CONQUEST OF TORREZON

Skymarch Bloodletter ➪ Tomasz Jedruszek

Conquest of Torrezon

Eight centuries ago, the continent of Torrezon was a diverse assembly of nations and city-states, enjoying a renaissance of scientific progress, artistic flourishing, and vibrant trade. As war erupted within a remote, mountainous nation, though, the Legion of Dusk was born. Led by deadly vampire conquistadors, the forces of the legion swept inexorably across the continent. As more and more of the continent came under Legion control, waves of refugees fled from their advance. Prosperous merchant sailors from the coastal Free Cities made a daring expedition across the sea to the coast of Ixalan, where they tried to establish trade with the Sun Empire. Rebuffed by the empire, these merchants turned to piracy.

Torrezon now lies entirely under the Legion's control, and Legion colonies exist elsewhere around the world. Now they too have come across the sea and launched their greatest invasion yet as they seek to conquer the Sun Empire, drive out the pirates, and claim the power of the golden city along the way.

Swashbuckling ➪ Josu Hernaiz

Deathless Ancient ➤ Nils Hamm

History of Torrezon

Though the Legion of Dusk and the mariners who formed the Brazen Coalition are newcomers to the land of Ixalan, their ancient histories are linked with those of the Sun Empire and the River Heralds by the Immortal Sun.

The Setting of the Sun

Before the Immortal Sun was brought to Ixalan, it was originally put into the care of the people who would become the Legion of Dusk. For generations, the Immortal Sun remained under the protection of its holy custodians in a mountaintop monastery.

Though the Immortal Sun became an object of religious reverence, its presence gave the local monarch a disproportionate amount of influence in regional matters. Jealousies blossomed, and the monastery fell under attack by the forces of a rival king, who is remembered by history as Pedron the Wicked. His forces entered the sanctuary, overwhelmed the monks, and seized the Immortal Sun. The last custodian of the precious artifact, a woman named Elenda, was left for dead on the floor of the sanctuary. As Pedron's forces departed, a winged being descended from the sky and took the Immortal Sun from them, carrying the relic to the west, where it was lost.

For a time, the people of the region were swept up by an obsession to recover the Immortal Sun, the focal point of their worship. The years went on, but the Immortal Sun remained lost. Obsession turned to blame. The church pointed fingers at the impious, while secular rulers became embroiled in their own political conflicts.

The Immortal Sun, once regarded as a physical object of worship, faded into legend as little more than a curiosity.

Legion Conquistador ➢ Sidharth Chaturvedi

Inspiring Cleric ➪ Randy Gellegos

The Apostasine War

Though the dominion of the Legion's monarchs now stretches across the continent, it was not always so. Eight hundred years ago, a mountainous nation called Torrezon (it later gave its name to the whole continent) split into three parts when its monarch died, with each portion ruled by one of the monarch's children. The two younger brothers marshaled their armies against their older sister, who had inherited the largest portion, in a violent attempt to reunite the sundered realm. The Church of Torrezon was a powerful force within all three kingdoms, and its leaders denounced the rebellious brothers as heretic usurpers, perhaps as part of an effort to increase the church's influence. The two brothers became known as the Apostasine Princes.

The armies of Torrezon were soon swept up in a wave of religious fervor, and they waged war against the Apostasine Princes with fanatical devotion. But the collective might of the princes proved greater than even the fanatical army of Torrezon. The war raged on for three centuries, with the children and grandchildren of all three rulers carrying on the conflict. The sheer brutality of the war decimated the population of the entire region. The nobility was diminished and the ranks of knights thinned, but both the rulers of Torrezon and the pontifices of the church refused to admit defeat.

In the third century of warfare, the Apostasine armies enjoyed a series of victories, and soon they came within sight of the spires of Torrezon's capital. The remnants of the combined forces of the monarch and the church formed up to meet the overwhelming invading army. Just as defeat seemed certain, a stranger emerged. Wreathed in rippling black vapor, this rider charged into the honor guard of the Apostasine Princes, slaughtering all in her path. The enemy army broke ranks and retreated. The stranger introduced herself as Elenda, the last custodian of the Immortal Sun, who had returned after centuries of seeking the lost relic. The monarch and pontifex were incredulous at such a claim, and Elenda confessed that she took on the blessing of vampirism to continue her search. The pontifex interpreted Elenda's transformation as a selfless act of sacrifice. Soon, many of Torrezon's nobles undertook Elenda's transformative ritual, and it became known as the Rite of Redemption by the church.

Vicious Conquistador ➤ Kieran Yanner

Legion Lieutenant ➪ Zezhou Chen

Queen's Commission ➪ Mark Behm

The Vampire Conquest

The Rite of Redemption soon became the norm among the noble families of Torrezon. With the power of this vampire nobility marshaled against the Apostasine Princes, the united kingdom and church of Torrezon quickly secured victory and reunified the realm at last. But after three centuries of war, the rulers of Torrezon were not content with their ancient borders, and they began a campaign of conquest across the continent. Combining centuries of battlefield experience with a legion of noble knights armed with the superhuman gifts of vampirism, Torrezon's army became the deadliest on the continent.

Over the course of four more centuries, alternating periods of intense warfare with short-lived lulls of uneasy peace, the armies of Torrezon slowly swallowed up kingdom after kingdom, expanding outward from their central mountainous home and driving waves of refugees toward the sea.

Sword-Point Diplomacy ➢ Eric Deschamps

Fall of the Free Cities

In the final century or so of Torrezon's expansion, a desperate remnant of city-states still inhabited and ruled by living humans clung to their freedom on the southern shores of the continent. They enjoyed a brief period of great prosperity as they developed the seafaring arts and a thriving trade developed among the cities. They established colonies across the scattered islands off the mainland, drawing on the region's abundant natural resources. The arts and invention thrived in an era of renaissance and enlightenment.

All too soon, however, the shadow of the Legion of Dusk reached the so-called Free Cities as well. Rather than submitting to their inevitable defeat, though, the daring, indomitable mariners of the Free Cities struck out to make new lives for themselves in a distant land the Legion of Dusk could never reach—or so they hoped. Cherishing freedom above all other goods, these fearless, headstrong adventurers struck out across the ocean to the west, into the unknown.

The mariners' skill at sea, combined with the magic and invention that had perfected their small, sleek vessels, helped them

navigate the treacherous open waters of the Stormwreck Sea. Even with all their talent and adaptability, many ships were lost in titanic storms, shipwrecked on small islands of jagged rocks, swallowed in great maelstroms, or dragged under the waves by tentacled monsters. Only the hardiest crews survived, battered and nearly beaten, to arrive at the shores of Ixalan.

As these vessels reached Ixalan and crews made their way ashore, they were relieved to find the land settled and cultivated by the people of the Sun Empire. They hoped to establish trade, exchanging the treasures they had brought with them for replenished supplies—and the promise of peace. But the Sun Empire rebuffed them, driving them away from the shores and sending them back out to the dangers of the sea.

Hostage Taker ➢ Wayne Reynolds

Birth of the Brazen Coalition

The captains of the Free Cities had not fled the Legion of Dusk just to bow to a different empire. Reasserting their fierce independence, they claimed the waters as their domain and turned to piracy and plunder. They embraced a life at sea, with the freedom that accompanied such a life. Each ship became a sovereign power, with the captain as its monarch. Some captains built empires—fleets of ships—united under their charismatic or tyrannical leadership. Like any nation, these ships became contested ground: mutiny could quickly turn a first mate into a captain and a captain into an offering to the monsters of the deep. A ship coveted for its speed might fly one flag in the morning and another on the same evening.

A modicum of order came to the pirate ships after a fierce battle between the *Scourge,* commanded by a young Captain Beckett Brass, and the *Squid Eyes,* under the command of Captain Jareth Wake. After the *Scourge* rammed the *Squid Eyes,* the two ships became impossibly entangled. The battle raged on as the crews fought across the decks of both ships, each hoping to claim the ships' boats when the vessels inevitably began their descent to the sea's bottom. But through some quirk of fate, both ships stayed afloat. Eventually, the two captains agreed to a parley, realizing that victory was impossible for either side. Captains Brass and Wake took small parties out on the ships' boats and went in search of new vessels to command, while the rest of their crews stayed behind, at first trying to separate the two vessels but then working together to ensure that they didn't sink. They eventually declared themselves the first citizens of High and Dry—a neutral ground where pirates could meet and trade goods, tools, treasures, and stories. Over time, other derelict vessels limped to High and Dry—or were towed there by more seaworthy vessels—and expanded the dimensions of what soon became a thriving little town.

Pirate's Prize ➽ Deruchenko Alexander

Conqueror's Galleon ➪ Emrah Elmasli

The existence of High and Dry allowed for the creation of an unusual currency among the pirate captains: favors and obligations. Temporary accords and lasting alliances were forged (and broken) amid the listing masts and tilted decks of the floating town, and eventually a web of relationships bound the captains together. Rivalries and feuds persist, of course, but the captains recognize that unity against common foes is more important than any animosity between them, especially now that the Legion of Dusk has reached Ixalan in their wake. Insofar as a lasting connection exists among the pirates, they refer to themselves as the Brazen Coalition, in honor of Captain Brass, who now commands the largest fleet of the coalition.

Sailing for the Sun

A hundred years have now passed since the Legion of Dusk solidified its control over Torrezon, during which time rivalries and ambitions among the nobles have festered. Noble families vie for royal favor, and many have grown restless without the promise of the spoils that had come with war.

Skulduggery ➪ Deruchenko Alexander

Thus, when rumors of the Immortal Sun reached Torrezon, the queen was eager to sponsor expeditions to Ixalan, providing the nobles a new outlet for their aggression and greed.

A new age of conquest has begun.

Legion of Dusk

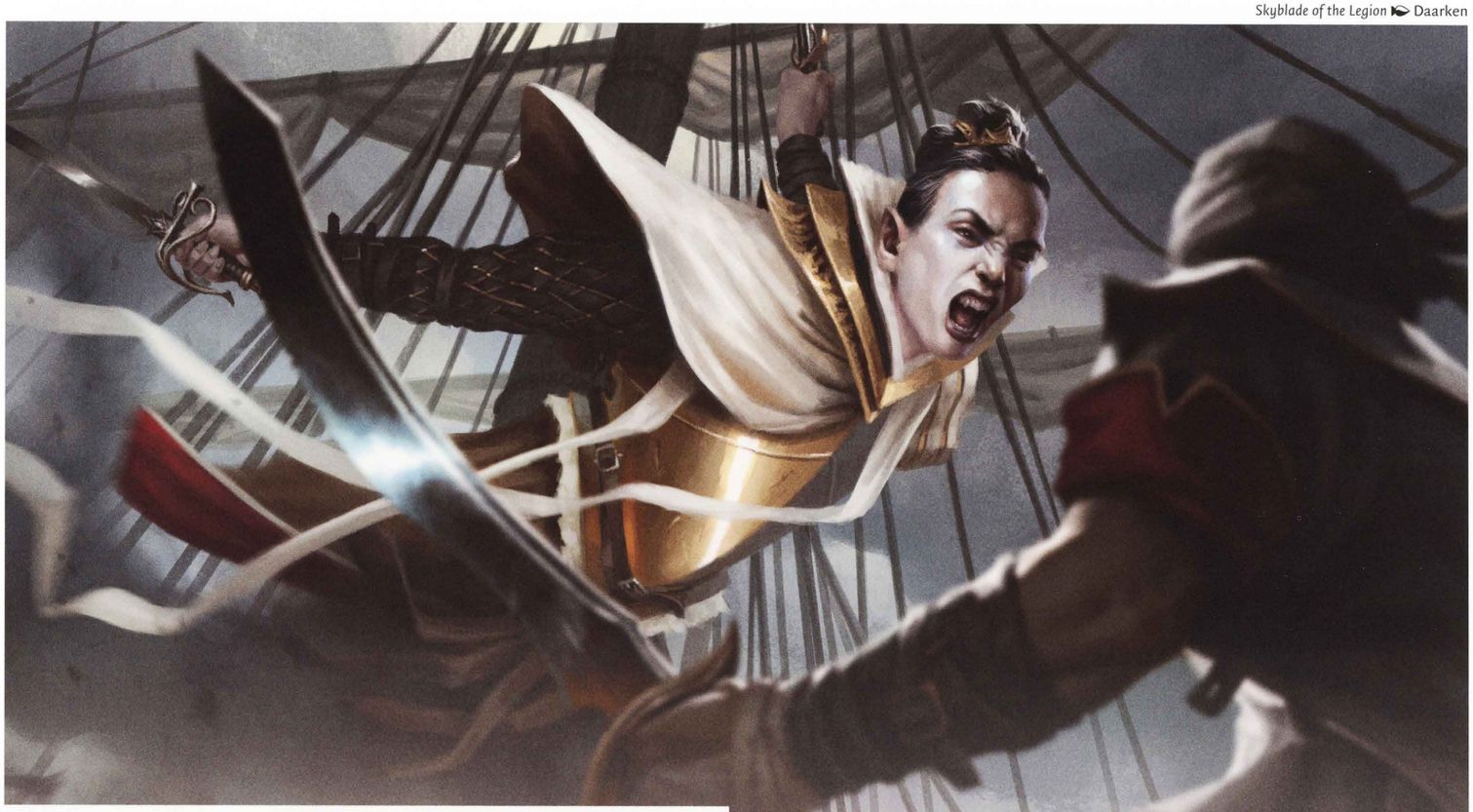
The society of Torrezon is forged from an alliance between a powerful church and an iron-fisted monarch. With an unstoppable legion of vampire conquistadors—stronger, faster, and more ruthless than any human soldiers—Torrezon came to rule the entire continent around their homeland. The vampires are viewed as holy figures, like dark paladins, and their undead existence is full of ritual and taboo. Perhaps most importantly, they are commanded to feed only on the blood of the guilty—enemies of war, rebels against the state, or heretics who defy the church. (Of course, not all vampires are so selfless, and some flout the church's restrictions and feast on the blood of their enemies, whether or not these victims are also enemies of the church.)

Drive for Conquest. Because most of the population of Torrezon remains human, the Legion's constant drive for conquest serves to ensure that the vampire conquistadors always have enemy blood to drink so they don't turn on their own people. Their expeditions of discovery and war are led by vampire conquistadors and clerics, with humans serving only in support roles as sailors and menial laborers. The expedition to Ixalan is one of the largest in Torrezon's history.

Duskborne Skymarcher ➪ Seb McKinnon

Glorifier of Dusk ➪ Viktor Titov

Skyblade of the Legion ➤ Daarken



Bloodcrazed Paladin ➤ Daarken

Vampirism

The Legion of Dusk is dominated by an aristocratic class made up of vampires. They are faster and stronger than most humans, and gifted with supernatural abilities that made them the most formidable force in their homeland. Now, as they push into the depths of Ixalan in search of the Immortal Sun, they bring this strength to bear against all who would resist their advance.

An Act of Sacrifice. For many vampires, the Rite of Redemption that transforms a human into a vampire is an act of personal sacrifice, paving the way for a promised glorious age. These vampires embody Torrezon's noble tradition in Ixalan. They are often guided by their dual loyalties to church and crown, believing that the monarch acts with righteous purpose. As such, these vampires carry themselves with a self-assurance that is both imposing and imperial. Other societies seem inferior and unclean compared to their own, leading them to feel that they have a right to claim new lands despite the presence of people already inhabiting those lands.

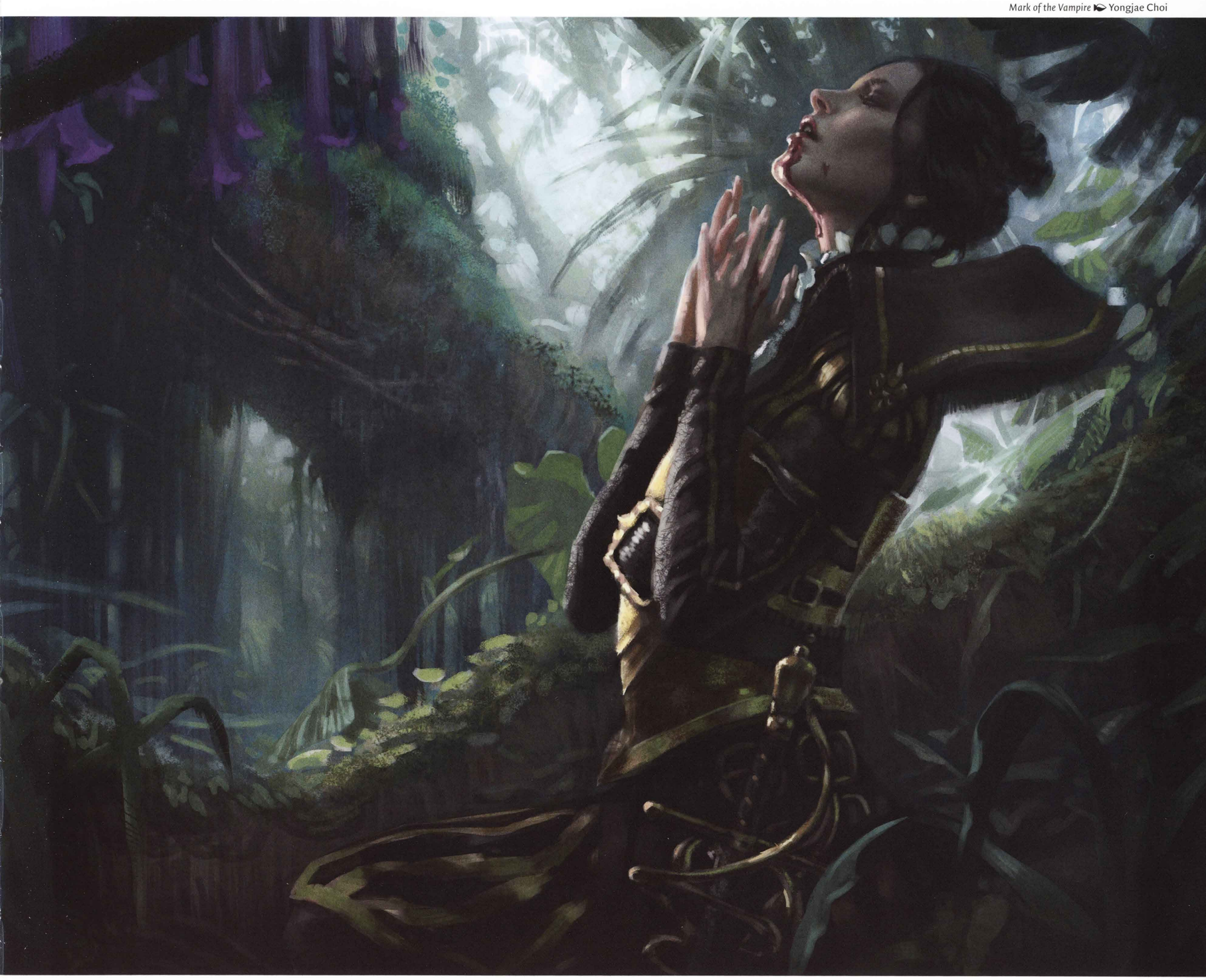
A Means to Power. Other vampires view vampirism as a means to achieve a powerful advantage. These vampires are fierce, ruthless, and often cruel. They can be politically ambitious, invoking Torrezon's hierarchy when it serves their interests and ignoring all the rules of church, state, and morality when they become a burden. These vampires relish conflict, be it political or armed, as a means of demonstrating their superiority. Those who have achieved wealth and power display it ostentatiously. When these vampires come to Ixalan, they are conquistadors motivated by the prospect of personal glory and the accumulation of riches.

Vampiric Gifts

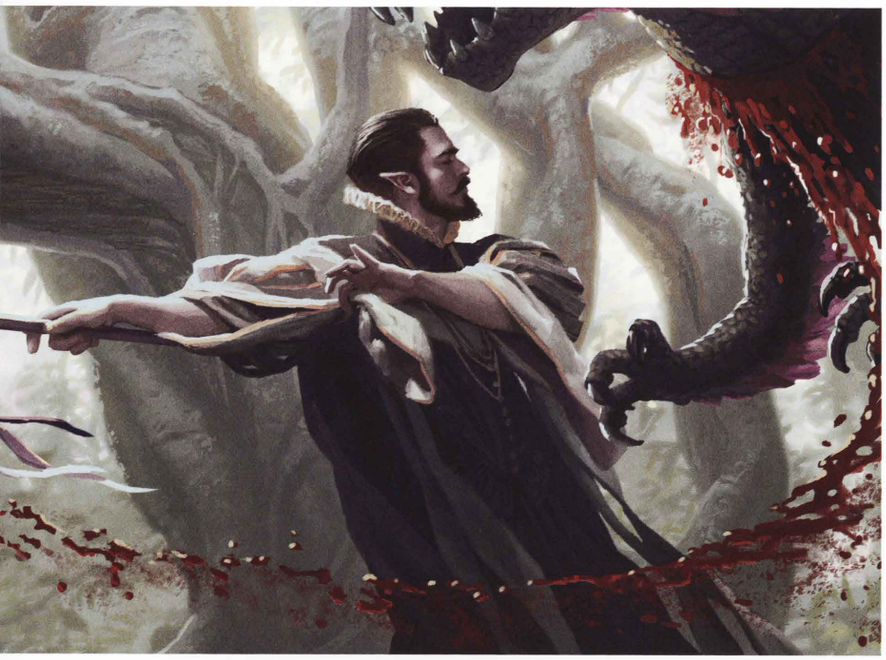
The core of the vampiric nature is the Feast of Blood. Though it is forbidden to feed on human citizens of Torrezon, including the human sailors and servants who accompany the vampire conquistadors to Ixalan, vampires are encouraged to feed on outsiders and heretics. The Feast of Blood sends new life essence flowing through the vampire who partakes, manifesting as even greater strength and speed.

Some vampires are also gifted with the ability, known as exultation, to carry themselves into the air by transforming the lower half of their bodies into an inky black vapor.

Mark of the Vampire ➤ Yongjae Choi



Anointed Deacon ☙ Winona Nelson



Nobility and Knighthood

The kingdom of Torrezon is ruled by a single monarch, a title passed down to the firstborn child of the royal family. The Mordenuras are the ruling dynasty, and Queen Miralda VI, known as the Pious, currently sits on the throne. Miralda has ruled for more than a century, and it was by her hand that Torrezon achieved its final victory in the Vampire Conquest and won undisputed dominance over its entire home continent.

Beneath the monarch is a range of nobles of varying wealth and power, all sworn to her majesty. Some nobles bear ancient, respected names that are attached to storied lineages, while others were only recently granted nobility through feats of arms. Regardless of lineage or status, the common bond that all nobles share is vampirism. It is a noble rite of passage that commoners are forbidden from undergoing.

Bishop of the Blood-Stained ☙ Yongjae Choi

Fighting Styles

Over the course of centuries of warfare, the vampires of the Legion of Dusk have developed numerous fighting styles that maximize the benefit of their supernatural talents.

The Quick Blade. Developed as an outgrowth of the use of rapiers in honor duels, the Quick Blade style relies on the elegance and speed of these light weapons.

The Humbling Blade. Focusing on overpowering the enemy with devastating blows, the Humbling Blade is a long-sword technique.

Bloodletting. Some vampires have become experts on anatomy, and using the precise strikes of the Bloodletting style they attack major veins and arteries to cause maximum damage.

Mounted Combat. For centuries, the nobles of Torrezon fought primarily from horseback, a tradition that many have brought across the sea. These knights ride dusk horses, large and fearless beasts bred for size—supposedly by crossbreeding their line with lesser demons of Torrezon to give them unnatural longevity and endurance. Their charge inspires panic, and they have learned to crave the taste of flesh.

Knightly Orders

For a member of Torrezon's nobility, the highest mark of honor is membership in one of Torrezon's orders of knights. Though all orders are blessed by the clergy, most are considered secular in the eyes of the kingdom, and therefore fall directly under the command of the throne. But some holy orders, sanctioned by the church, are made up of pious vampire knights known as paladins, whose religious devotion eclipses all other loyalties. Among the dozens of knightly orders, two have earned reputations in Ixalan that outshine all others.

The Blood-Stained. More closely linked to the church than any other order, the knights of the Blood-Stained are seen as fanatics by most, a reputation they embrace by donning their signature red collars. Demonstrating their faith and entering the ranks of the Blood-Stained means abandoning all the trappings of human life—marriage, family, community, and even their own purity, as they are forced to rely on the blood of the wicked for sustenance. To forsake their families, they must in fact kill their closest relatives and drink their blood, symbolizing the weight of carrying the fate of all the people of Torrezon on their shoulders.

Paladin of the Blood-Stained ☛ Bastien L. Deharme

Arguel's Blood Fast ➢ Daarken

When not on campaign, the members of this secretive order fast, focusing on their faith through a continuous monastic chant. On expeditions, each member carries a relic or symbol of the order's founder, a teenage boy of slight build who wielded a simple spear. His spear now serves as the order's standard.

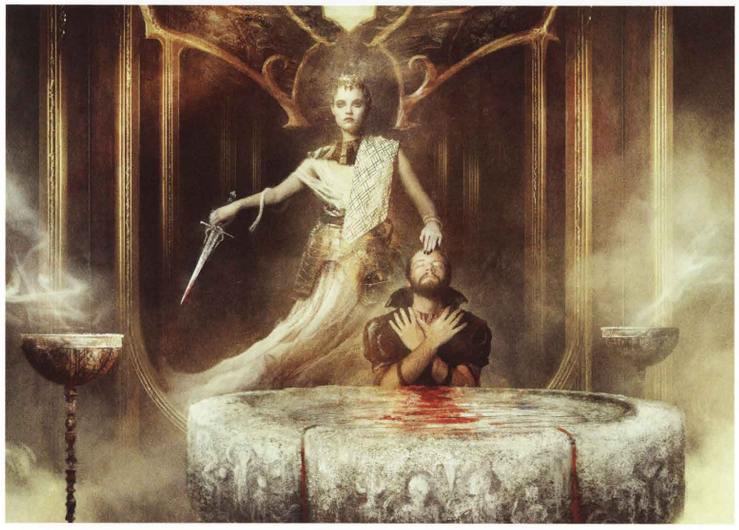
The current High Marshal of the Blood-Stained, a brooding woman named Ravian, spent more than a year as a captive in the Blood Crypt of the Not-Fort. She was freed in a raid by her order, and has since sworn an oath of silence until the Not-Fort is razed.

The Sanctum Seekers. Under the leadership of their high marshal, Arguel, the Sanctum Seekers were the first of the holy orders to make the voyage to Ixalan, clashing with Sun Empire forces upon making landfall. After a bitter fight, the Sanctum Seekers established a foothold at an abandoned Sun Empire site. They erected the fort of Durrón there, and it has since become their headquarters.

Encampment Keeper ➢ Craig J Spearing

Sanctum Seekers are a tough, adventurous lot who thrive in the challenging and unfamiliar conditions of Ixalan. Some paladins have even become accomplished dinosaur hunters. They are known for going on expeditions with their monstrous mastiffs, huge war dogs that are fiercely loyal and equally mean in disposition.

Axis of Mortality ➢ Bastien L. Deharme



Ritual of Rejuvenation ➢ Bastien L. Deharme

The Church and Clergy

The Church of Dusk has a rigidly hierarchical structure, headed by the Pontifex of Dusk. While Torrezon's church has elaborate ranks of supreme priests and cardinals, only three orders of clergy matter as far as the Legion of Dusk on Ixalan is concerned: the low-ranking deacons who assist the clerics; the clerics themselves, who perform most of the rituals of the church; and the bishops who oversee the clerics.

The precepts of the church are relatively simple, summarized in three points:

Blood Is Holy. It is the bringer of life. It is the vessel of vitality. It is the reminder of one's mortality. It is the proof of one's lineage.

The Sinking Sun. Salvation has a cost. Just as the sun must set to allow for a new dawn, a person can turn to darkness if it will bring about the coming salvation.

The Promised Age of Ever-Flowing Blood. The rediscovery of the Immortal Sun ignited a new notion in the church—reclaiming the artifact will bring true eternal life to those who have turned to vampirism, replacing the shadowed but everlasting existence of the undead.

Every order of knights and company of conquistadors has at least one embedded member of the clergy. These clerics fulfill a variety of functions: serving as emissaries, tending the wounded, and bringing down the holy wrath of the church. They can be identified by their flowing robes.

The Blood Fast. Vampires sometimes abstain from feasting on blood in a holy sacrament called the Blood Fast. Over time, the fasting vampire's acute hunger actually leads to a state of hyper-awareness. Vampires in this state are utterly terrifying, for with their heightened senses comes a mad fury that the church has declared to be the purest form of pious devotion.

Invocation of the Venerables. The Venerables of the church are its saints—dead vampires who are held up as paragons of church ideals. Devout vampires often call upon the power of a Venerable through the use of relics, which might include a weapon, a piece of armor, a lock of dry hair, a tooth, or even a finger bone that formerly belonged to the Venerable.

Glorifiers

Some vampire clerics, called Glorifiers, specialize in bestowing the blessings of the church to bolster the pious. Their benedictions can knit grievous injuries and inspire the faithful. They make extensive use of blood in their rituals, often bestowing their blessings through blood poured into ornate chalices. On the battlefield, they can draw strength from blood shed in combat and share that strength among their allies.

Condemners

Condemners wield the power to punish those who do not recognize the righteous authority of the church, imposing the church's full wrath. Their maledictions can wither flesh, summon darkness, corrupt the land, sap spiritual energy, and even extract the blood of their enemies through pores and tear ducts. Some Condemners can inspire crippling fear through the power of their gazes.

A specialized order of Condemners, the Shade-Binders, capture and magically bind undead spirits composed of darkness, using blessed braziers that exude inky black smoke. These spirits guard ships when the conquistadors have disembarked, and they are sometimes bound to vampire weapons.

Vanquish the Weak ➢ David Palumbo

Elenda, the Dusk Rose Chris Rahn

The First Vampire

When King Pedron's forces took the Immortal Sun from its resting place, its custodian, Elenda of Garrano, was gravely wounded in the fighting and left for dead. She survived, and when she had recovered her health, she swore a solemn oath to recover the Immortal Sun at any cost—beginning with killing the wicked King Pedron. Long before Torrezon's war of conquest, Elenda scoured the land for any sign of it or the winged being that took it from Pedron's forces. When she reached the coast, she set sail, moving ever westward. Years passed, and still she found nothing. In desperation, she turned to dark magic. She ultimately sacrificed her own soul for the chance to continue her search—and in so doing, she became the first vampire.

After several centuries, Elenda returned empty-handed to a continent consumed by war. With her superhuman abilities as a vampire, she helped turn the tide of the war against the Apostasine Princes. After a crucial battle, she introduced vampirism to the knights of Torrezon as an act of devotion through self-sacrifice. Though Torrezon went on to complete its conquest, Elenda still felt compelled to seek the Immortal Sun, so when she heard rumors of a city of gold, she set sail once again for the land across the sea.

Elenda disappeared years ago, but there are some vampires who believe that she now rests in the golden city as the guardian of the Immortal Sun once again. They take legends of a "Last Guardian" as confirmation that Elenda keeps watch over the mighty artifact.

Tomb of the Dusk Rose Bastien L. Deharme

Vona, Butcher of Magan ➢ Volkan Baga

Vona of Iedo, the Butcher of Magan

First and foremost, Vona is a fighter. It was through feats of arms that she won her nobility during the Apostasine War, where she ruthlessly sacked towns that were sympathetic to the Apostasine Princes. At Magan, where an enemy army had made camp, Vona earned her moniker by sneaking into the walled village at night and slaughtering a dozen officers, including the army's general. After this grisly work, Vona fought her way to the gate and opened it so that her own force could take the village and finish off the enemy.

Throughout the course of the war and the Vampire Conquest that followed, Vona continued to gain fame by participating in the bloodiest battles. With Torrezon's eventual victory, Vona had difficulty transitioning to peacetime. Though she was now a noble with her own lands, the territory was poor and rocky, and she was not an able administrator. Soon she slaughtered her own human serfs and abandoned her humble estate. In the larger cities of Torrezon, she offered her services as a duelist.

When word arrived that the queen was assembling a fleet to cross the sea, Vona was on the first ship that left port. Across the sea there would be more fighting and the prospect of true fortune. Now, Vona, at the head of a company of conquistadors, is cutting a bloody swath across Ixalan. Though officially an agent of the queen, her true goal is to find Elenda of Garrano, in the hope that the first vampire can bring about the same decisive victory that Torrezon won against the Apostasine Princes. With Elenda at her side, Vona is convinced that she could establish a throne in the golden city and rule an empire of her own.

Mavren Fein, Dusk Apostle

Mavren Fein is a high-ranking member of Torrezon's clergy. He is a powerful, broad man whose presence seems to fill whatever room he occupies. Every word that passes his lips is spoken with an unshakable authority that has been known to make even the most arrogant nobles tremble.

When word of the golden city reached the pontifex's seat in the Grand Cathedral of Torrezon, Fein took it upon himself to see to the matter in the name of the church. The pontifex had an enormous ship built for Fein, complete with a re-creation of the Grand Cathedral erected on the deck. On the voyage across the sea, Fein and his clerics fasted. As the weeks passed, he claimed that he could feel the golden city on the other side of the world reaching out to him.

But soon, the ship was met by all manner of disaster. Storms, treacherous shallows, and pirate attacks winnowed the crew until only a handful of people remained. As a demonstration of faith, Fein had the ship's navigational equipment destroyed. When at last the ship was dashed against the cliffs of Ixalan, only Fein survived—a miracle that he saw as a validation of his quest.

Fein found his way to the colony of Adanto, where he joined forces with Vona of Iedo to seek out the golden city and Elenda, the guardian of the Immortal Sun. Where Vona's goals are selfish, Mavren's are deeply altruistic. He staunchly believes that the Immortal Sun can bring eternal life to his people, freeing them from the stain of drinking the blood of the wicked.

Mavren Fein, Dusk Apostle ➢ Daarken

Legion's Judgement ➪ Lucas Graciano

Legion's Landing ➢ Svetlin Velinov

Pious Interdiction ➢ Lake Hurwitz

The Legion of Dusk in Ixalan

In the last several years, the crown and church of Torrezon have sponsored dozens of expeditions across the sea to the shores of Ixalan, and with each one the Legion of Dusk's influence in the region grows. Though their reach into the continent's vast wilderness remains limited, the Legion's conquistadors have established a strong presence on a group of islands in what has become known as Queen's Bay. Their holdings—collectively called Miraldanor in honor of Queen Miralda—are protected by a string of forts that regularly defend against pirate raids and Sun Empire offensives. While the knights and soldiers who garrison the forts are a hardened collection of fighters who have grown accustomed to battling even dinosaurs, the land itself is an unwelcoming place.

In Ixalan, a viceroy embodies the authority of Queen Miralda, governing from the fortified town of Adanto. The current viceroy is Relo of Garra, a fiery vampire noble from an esteemed bloodline who has developed a personal grudge against the pirates of the Brazen Coalition. Noble governors reporting to the viceroy oversee the multitude of other settlements in Queen's Bay. They are responsible for maintaining a portion of the Legion's armada, and for supplying conquistadors on their expeditions into the heart of Ixalan.

Conquistadors. The bulk of vampires who have come to Ixalan have done so as conquistadors, lesser nobles who set sail in search of glory and riches. They are veteran soldiers of the centuries of warfare that led to Torrezon's dominion, and they itch to do what they do best: conquering. Conquistador expeditions are led by soldiers with the title of champion, assisted by lieutenants.

Queen's Agents. Though Queen Miralda remains on her throne in Torrezon, she keeps many eyes and ears in Ixalan. A number of vampire scouts and rogues operate in Ixalan under the direct authority of the crown. They report only to the queen, and act as her eyes and ears across the sea. They employ stealth and cunning to penetrate deep into the wilds, or to infiltrate enemy organizations. Often, agents are sent to steal maps, track enemy movements and vulnerabilities, and even carry out assassinations. Many agents were orphans, but by the queen's authority they underwent the rites that transformed them into vampires.

Yaloma, the Queen's Agent

Among all the queen's agents, Yaloma is her most trusted. Yaloma is a fearless and cunning spy, daring to infiltrate deep into enemy territory to procure information, or to assassinate key figures. She has mastered the gift of exultation and become quite accomplished in the art of aerial ambushes. Her skill at evasion is enhanced by her Cloak of Shadows, which she received from Queen Miralda. Her whereabouts are always unknown, though she has been known to appear unannounced in the middle of a conquistador encampment, or at the viceroy's court in Adanto. She has even been spotted on the crooked streets of High and Dry, the floating town of the Brazen Coalition.

Adanto Vanguard ➢ Anna Steinbauer

Adanto, the First Fort

The first vampire to make landfall in Ixalan was the bold navigator Adrian Adanto of Lujio. Adanto and his crew made several attempts to penetrate Ixalan's wilderness, but each time they were driven back to their ships by Sun Empire forces. Refusing to retreat from the continent altogether, Adanto set about conquering a small island at the edge of the bay. It was here that Torrezon's first fort in Ixalan, named for Adanto himself, was built. It quickly became a headquarters for conquistadors, as it was the first island that expeditions from Torrezon would pass when they entered Ixalan's waters. The small fort has since grown into a bustling port town and the seat of the colonial viceroy.

Adanto, the First Fort ➢ Svetlin Velinov

Fiery Cannonade ➽ Ben Wootten

Clashes with Pirates. The main threat to Fort Adanto comes from pirates of the Brazen Coalition. Thanks to its proximity to open ocean, combined with the fact that it is a symbol of Torrezon's authority in Ixalan, Adanto is on constant guard against pirate attacks. Pirates have even managed to burn parts of the fort on two separate occasions.

The current viceroy, Elia Sotonores, lost a brother in a pirate raid and has sworn vengeance upon the Brazen Coalition. Her untarnished record of land-bound combat in the Vampire Conquest had not prepared her for the cunning sea tactics of the Brazen Coalition. Pirates used the greenery surrounding the island to conduct raids under cover of night, or simply terrorized the town with firecannon blasts before sailing away. Then, on a moonless night, the fort came alive with the smell of smoke and the sound of screaming. The pirates had discovered a series of subterranean caves under the fort, which they used to bypass Adanto's well-guarded walls. The pirate leader, Captain Dennan Bentblade of the *Blue Blade,* captured the viceroy's brother, Lucaz. Intending to strike terror into the hearts of the fort's soldiers, Captain Bentblade dragged Lucas into the central square and executed him. Elia arrived with her forces just in time to watch her brother's brutal murder, and she quickly routed the pirates. Elia swore vengeance over the remains of her brother, and since then her flag shows two crossed rapiers—one black, for herself, and one white, for her lost brother. Vengeance consumes her mind, and direct attacks on pirate fleets are a higher priority for her than governing Adanto.

Conqueror's Foothold Emrah Elmasli

Durron, the Fort of Faith

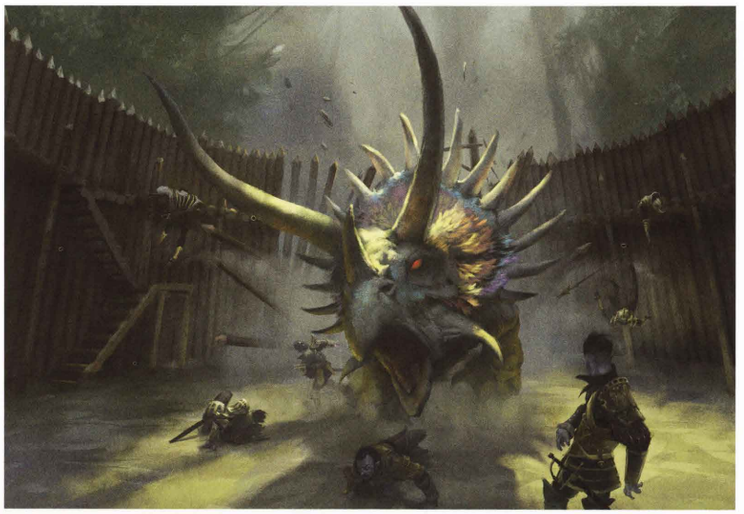
Durron is the church's main fort in Ixalan. It is an impressive stronghold standing on a small island near where two mighty rivers empty into Queen's Bay. The site was once a Sun Empire settlement, but it was abandoned many years ago. Now the fort stands on top of the settlement's ruins. From Durron, paladins set out on expeditions in search of the golden city. The vaults of the fort house some of the Legion's most complete maps of Ixalan, though the church guards this knowledge jealously.

Clashes with the Sun Empire. Durron is positioned at the frontier of Torrezon's colonial presence in Ixalan. As a consequence, the Sun Empire sees the fort's existence as a bold act of aggression

that cannot be tolerated. Durron is in an almost perpetual state of siege, and many paladins from Torrezon look forward to the prospect of combat that their homeland no longer yields.

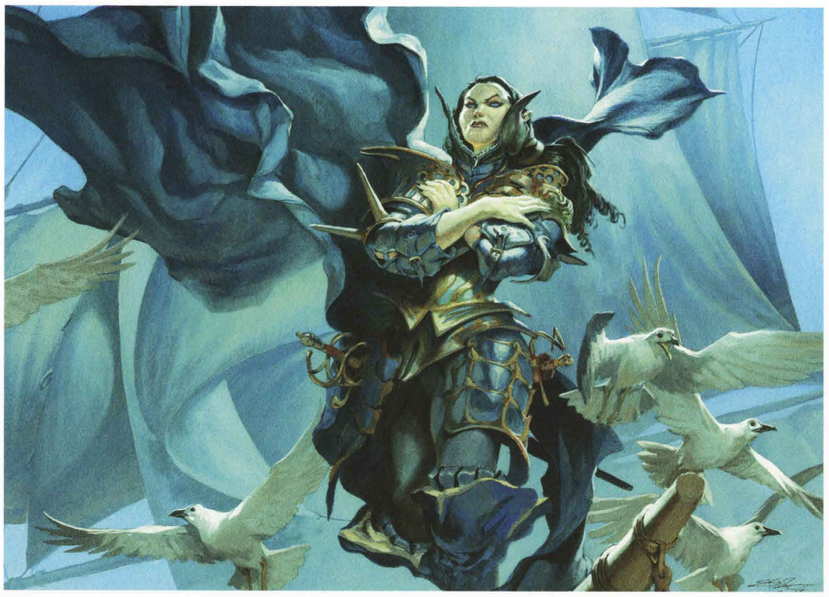
Arguel, High Marshal of the Sanctum Seekers. Centuries old, Arguel was once the heir of the Truez family, one of the wealthiest households in all of Torrezon. In his youth, he won many accolades in battle, and he was known in noble circles for his roguish charm. All this changed during the Battle of Tolen, when he claims to have seen a vision of an exploding sun that pulled all warmth from his body. He was grievously wounded in the fighting, which he saw as an omen. It was no longer the time for him to seek personal glory. Instead, he renounced his claim as heir to the Truez name and became a paladin. When the call went out to set sail for Ixalan, he was given leave to commission a new order. He founded the Sanctum Seekers, an order of paladins dedicated to finding the Immortal Sun. Now, Arguel continues to serve as the high marshal of his order, and he has made Durron, the Fort of Faith, the Sanctum Seekers' headquarters in Ixalan. As high marshal, Arguel wields a heavy two-handed sword he calls Redeemer. When he goes to battle, he is accompanied by his loyal mastiff, Piago.

Crash the Ramparts ➷ Mark Behm



➷ Lucas Graciano

Queen's Bay Soldier ☛ Jesper Ejsing



Leor, the Edge of Exile

At the far north end of Queen's Bay is the utilitarian fort of Leor. What started as a simple structure built on the sandy soil of a narrow island soon swallowed up the tiny island as Leor's stone citadel grew. Now the entire fort is surrounded by high stone walls that rise directly out of the water, and nothing of the natural island can be seen.

Plains ☛ Christine Choi

Dusk Legion Dreadnought ➢ Titus Lunter

Because of Leor's remote location, its inhabitants have become more self-sufficient than those of the other forts clustered at the southern end of the bay, and many vampires have become adept raiders who capture Sun Empire citizens and bring them back to the fort to feed upon their blood. The fort has a reputation for cruelty, which in turn has attracted particularly cruel individuals who like to live beyond the reach of royal authority.

The Dusk Fog of Leor. Ships approaching Leor notice that a heavy fog hangs over the area, growing increasingly dark the closer one gets to the fort. The center of the fog is so dark as to seem almost perpetually shrouded in night. Surrounding the fort are countless shadowy spirits that the vampires brought over from Torrezon, and they descend on enemy ships with ruthless abandon.

Brazen Coalition

No rules, no constraints, endless possibilities, and the chance to prove your worth on your own terms—this is the life of the Brazen Coalition. The pirates of the coalition might not have a land to call theirs, but they own the sea, from the deadly waters of the open ocean to the tranquil coves and secluded estuaries of the mainland. A very loosely affiliated group of pirate captains, the Brazen Coalition has agreed to stand together against their common enemies, even as they individually seek to take their share of the riches of Ixalan. To last long in the cutthroat competition within the Brazen Coalition, captains must display both ingenuity and ferocity—qualities that have served them well against the dangers of Ixalan.

Magical Artifacts. A distinguishing strength of the Coalition is great skill with magical artifice. The pirates have maintained their independence and strength by creating new and innovative artifacts. Coalition artificers use their magic to enhance the tools of the navigational trade, crafting items such as enchanted compasses that point toward treasure or away from danger. Some make magical charts that store and communicate a richer depth of information than ordinary paper and ink. Enchanted figureheads can protect a ship from attack or enhance its speed, and magical masts and sails can resist the fury of the wildest storm. And artificers have created a wide variety of magical weaponry, particularly firecannons that hurl flaming bursts at enemy ships.

Perhaps oddly, given their cutthroat society, pirates often share these advances with their fellows. This sharing stems from an economy built on favors and obligations: when one captain shares a magical advance with another, the recipient owes a favor to the benefactor, which can be collected in a variety of useful ways. As an added benefit, sharing such magic among the captains of the Coalition makes the Coalition as a whole a greater threat to their many enemies, making it harder for them to be isolated and eliminated. While the pirates can't compare in organization or numbers to the other factions, they compensate by using their superior artifacts and plundered resources to give them the fastest and most dangerous ships on the seas.

Repeating Barrage ➢ Dan Scott

Rowdy Crew ➢ Steve Prescott

Firecannon Blast ➤ Svetlin Velinov

Motley Crews

The pirates of the Brazen Coalition are a diverse bunch, including humans from a wide variety of backgrounds as well as members of three nonhuman races: goblins, orcs, and sirens.

Humans. The humans of the Brazen Coalition come from dozens of different lands conquered by the Legion of Dusk in Torrezon's war of expansion. To them, their tremendous variety in skin tone, features, and cultural heritage means next to nothing; they have cast off their pasts and adopted a new life at sea.

Goblins. Goblins are native to Ixalan, but their eager curiosity drew them to the ships of the Brazen Coalition when the pirates first made landfall on the Sun Empire's shores. Though they still thrive in remote jungle colonies, goblins are most commonly seen perched on gunwales, clambering up masts, and swinging on the ropes of sleek pirate ships. For their part, they prefer what they consider dignified positions aboard ships to living as dinosaur prey on the Ixalan mainland.

Goblins stand about three feet tall, though they rarely stand upright; they prefer a crouched posture that lets them scramble quickly on all fours, aided by their long prehensile tails. They use their tails to grip masts, hang upside down from yardarms, and swing themselves along faster than they could otherwise run. Their hearing and eyesight, adapted to warn them of approaching predators, make them excellent lookouts, whether in a crow's nest aboard a ship or prowling ahead of an expedition into the jungle. (Their loud shrieks and whoops also serve as very effective alarms to their companions when danger does come near.)

Despite their small size, goblins can hold their own in a fight against larger foes. Their size and agility help them dodge blows and get past their enemies' defenses. Their sharp teeth are useful weapons in addition to the knives and daggers they often carry. And they're bolstered by an almost foolhardy confidence. Sometimes their fierce displays of hissing and spitting are enough to deter would-be attackers before a fight even begins.

Goblins' agility serves them well as crew members on pirate ships. They climb, swing, and jump among the ships' ropes to raise and lower sails, loosen tangles, and repair holes. They can get into tight spaces that humans can't, which helps them scamper among the ships' weapons, loading and launching the ballistas and firecannons used in battles at sea.

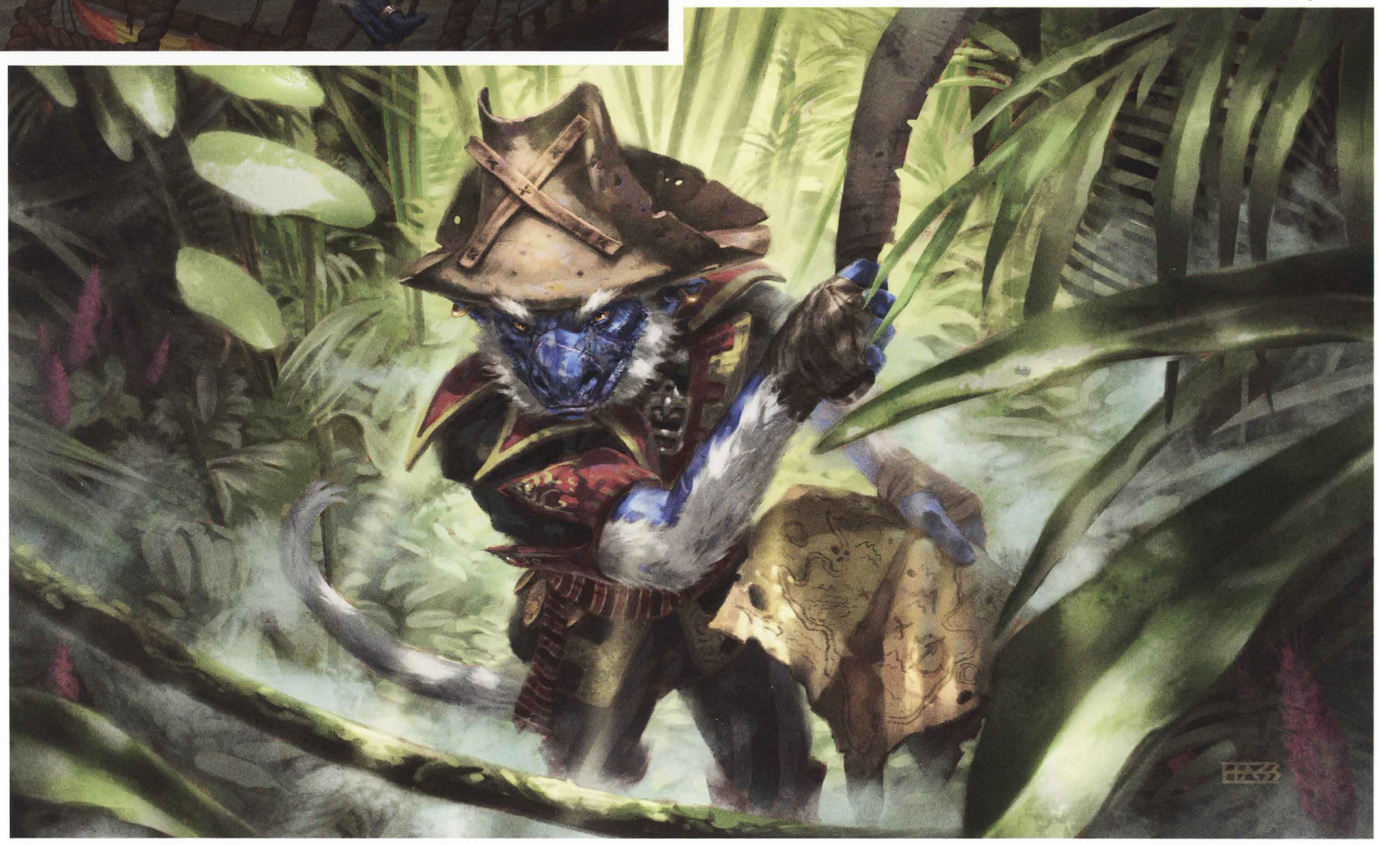
For better or worse, many goblins are also incorrigible pranksters. Their antics can provide entertainment to relieve the monotony of long stretches at sea. Cavorting through the sails in an enthusiastic acrobatic display, accompanied by their tuneless screeching and hooting, is enough to provoke their crewmates to gales of laughter. They pilfer trivial items and stash them up the masts or hide them under piles of fish, trip clumsy orcs over the gunwales with their nimble tails, or put tar on the rims of spyglass lenses. But many goblins have a hard time determining when a prank is inappropriate, is poorly timed, or has gone too far.

Rigging Runner ☙ Simon Dominic

While happily welcomed aboard most ships, goblins are typically unwelcome on the pirates' floating town, where they are viewed as menaces and pests. Their antics and pranks are unwanted and often destructive, and tend to escalate as they grow bored—which happens quickly when a goblin disembarks from a ship at sea. They far prefer the wind in their fur, the wide expanse of the sea before them, and the rocking of the deck beneath them to the relative stability of High and Dry.

Many goblins never boarded the ships of the Brazen Coalition and remain in their native habitat on Ixalan. They live in burrows dug into sheer cliffs and spend their days hopping around the cliffs, much as they do on the masts of a ship. They rarely venture near the cities of the Sun Empire, but the River Heralds consider them harmless nuisances.

Goblin Trailblazer ☙ Josh Hass



Orcs. Orcs originally came from the same mountainous region where the kingdom of Torrezon was born, and they have been enemies of the Legion of Dusk since it was originally formed. The entire race has been declared anathema by the Church of Torrezon, and after centuries of fighting the Legion their numbers have dwindled to only a few hundred. Some still live on remote islands near Torrezon, but many have joined the Brazen Coalition to serve in a variety of roles on pirate ships—any role that calls for an abundance of sheer muscle.

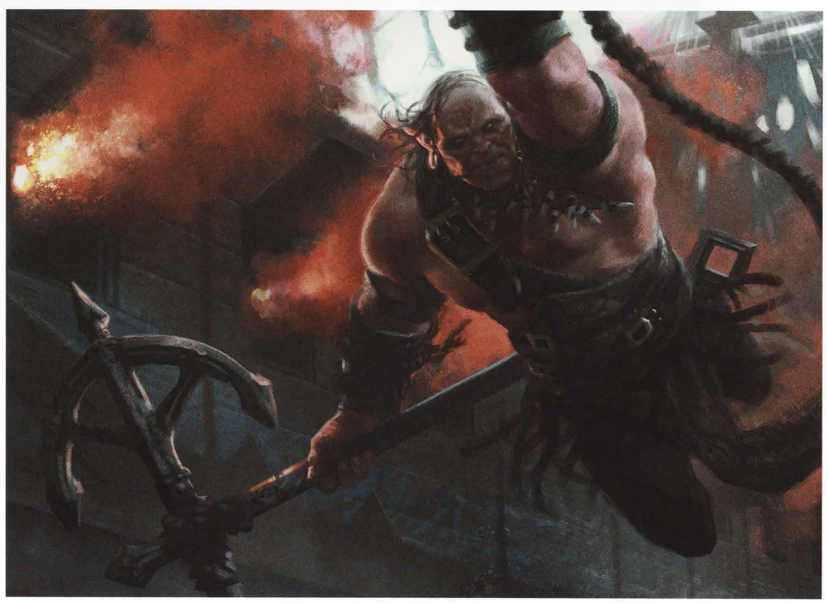
Orcs are tall, standing head and shoulders above most humans, and generally about twice as broad as an average human. They often accentuate their bulging muscles by wearing tight-fitting bands and accessories around the thickest parts of their arms and necks. Their skin color ranges from light brown through gray to very dark, almost jet-black.

Stubborn and proud, orcs don't like being told what to do, so they can thrive as captains. In this role, they prefer small crews of skilled, independent sailors who don't require much oversight, since they also don't like being asked for advice or direction by others. These orcs are driven by fierce ambition, striving to create a name for themselves and a legacy for their ships by making their crews the most feared and revered at sea. They run tight ships and don't put up with crew members who can't carry their own weight. By the time an orc has risen to the position of captain, he or she has earned the trust and unwavering loyalty of the crew with strong leadership and great results.

The position of first mate is a good fit for many orcs. It grants them all the freedoms they desire and none of the responsibilities that would otherwise perturb them. They are skilled at pointing

Dive Fleet Ravager ➢ Bram Sels

Ruin Raider ➤ Kieren Yanner



Headstrong Brute ➤ Yongjae Choi

their captains' attention—and their ships—straight toward whatever objective most appeals to them. Captains are happy to have orcs as first mates for a number of reasons, not the least of which is their sheer size and the protection they provide, not just against outside threats, but also against the possibility of a mutiny. Anyone who would claim the title of captain must get past the first mate, which is a daunting prospect when the mate is an orc.

Not all orcs are interested in rank. They can also be perfectly content doing heavy labor, as long as they know what is expected of them and are left alone to do it without somebody looking over their shoulder or barking orders at them. Many are happiest when lumbering freely about the deck of a good ship, serving under a captain who promises to steer them toward battle. These orcs are the most free-spirited among their kind, and as long as there's water underneath them, a sturdy ship around them, and a clear sky above them, they are jovial. But jovial for an orc should not be confused with peaceful. Jovial orcs are full of energy and spirit, keyed-up and ready to brawl. They pick fights with others in their crew for the sport of it and they're the first aboard an enemy vessel, fists flailing, when it's time for battle.

Lookout's Dispersal ➤ Ryan Yee

Siren Stormtamer ➤ Josu Herniaz

Sirens. Sirens are at home near the waters of the Stormwreck Sea. They settle along rocky coasts, on remote islands, and even on floating piles of kelp. They are mercurial creatures who can turn in an instant from lonely to repulsed, from desirous to hateful, from welcoming to irritated, from loving to murderous—and back again. They are fascinated with ships, and enjoy toying with them. A siren might call out to a passing crew for company, only to change his mind and draw the ship into an entangling mass of kelp. Or she might lure a vessel onto jagged rocks so that she can study the wreckage and learn more about the strange contraption. But as the number of Brazen Coalition ships passing through siren-controlled waters increased over the years, a growing number of sirens decided to satisfy their curiosity by taking positions on ship crews—including, in at least one case, the position of captain.

Sirens are humanoid creatures with birdlike features. Their long, slender arms extend into powerful wings that easily carry their light frames into the air. Their fingers bear sharp claws but are nimble enough to wield weapons and perform fine manipulation. Crests of feathery plumage start between their eyes and cover the backs of their heads. Their eyes are as enchanting as their songs, and their impish smiles betray their satisfaction when others do exactly as they desire.

A siren's song is entrancing. Anyone who hears and succumbs to the song is compelled to draw nearer to the siren, longing for the

song to fill their ears and drown out everything else. As part of a pirate crew, in a position called the ship's song, a siren might use this ability to draw an enemy ship close enough to board. Other sirens have tuned their songs to appeal to sea creatures, allowing them to summon anything from a pod of dolphins to a monstrous leviathan to protect their own ships—or sink their enemies'.

Thanks to their familiarity with the Stormwreck Sea, many sirens also serve as navigators on Brazen Coalition vessels. Their knowledge of currents, reefs, rocks, and the lairs of sea monsters exceeds the information contained on any map. And those sirens who can claim the position of captain boast the most obedient crews on the sea, bent to the sirens' will by the magic of their songs.

Dreamcaller Siren ☜ Eric Deschamps

Fleets, Ships, and Captains

The Brazen Coalition is hard to describe as any kind of single entity. It is a complex organism made up of many smaller parts: ships and their crews and captains, sometimes united into larger fleets. All these parts manage to work against their common enemies while constantly struggling against each other, vying for power and prestige—and the treasures of Ixalan.

Allegiance to captain and ship is a pirate's first loyalty. Captains tend to attract crews who share their personalities, ideals, and priorities. While every captain is an individual, it's possible to group pirates as a whole into three broad categories.

Some pirates are spirited visionaries, optimistic dreamers, resourceful explorers, and cunning rogues. They tend to be the most creative of the pirates, and they are driven by their thirst to truly

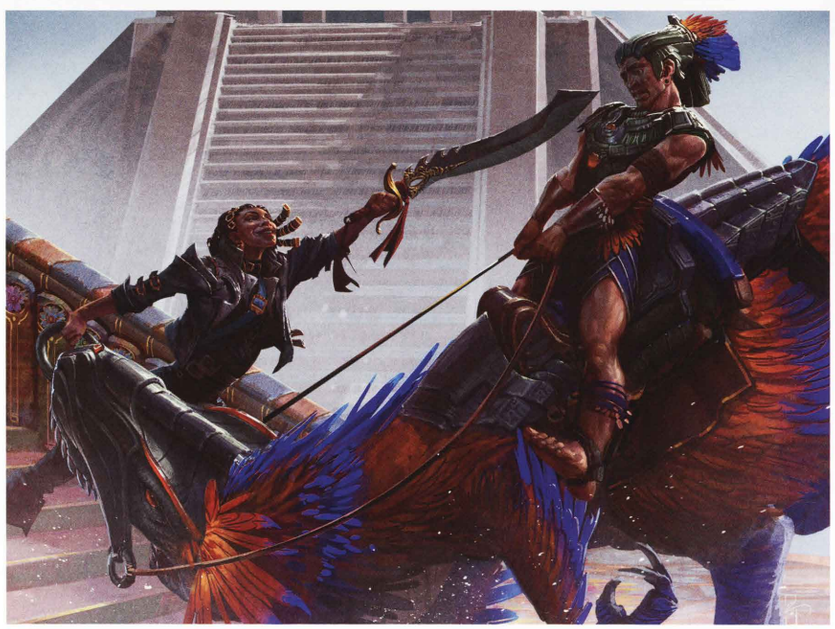
Grasping Scoundrel ▸ Steve Prescott

Opt ➢ Craig J Spearing

"know" every corner of the sea. They can be credited with devising the vast majority of the nautical artifacts, both magical and not, used aboard pirate vessels. This category includes most sirens.

Other pirates are hostile tyrants, aggressive cutthroats, rash assassins, and marauders. Some of them use plague magic or plunder minds for secrets. They enjoy the violence of the pirate life, and in particular the wealth and power it can bring. Some orcs fall into this category.

A third group of pirates consists of gutsy tricksters, adventurous voyagers, fearless combat mages, and confident brawlers. They are the most impulsive among the pirates, unwilling to make plans past the next treasure haul, and easily distracted from a set course by the promise of an unexplored land, a washed-up wreck, or the potential to engage in a battle. Almost all goblins and most orcs are in this group.



Sure Strike ➢ Izzy

Admiral Beckett Brass ➪ Jason Rainville

Admiral Beckett Brass and the Fathom Fleet. Beckett Brass, as captain of the *Scourge,* earned a formidable reputation because of both her skills as a sword fighter (wielding her cutlass, Ripper) and her mastery of enchantment magic. A well-known legend claimed that those who sailed on the *Scourge* were luckier, faster, and stronger than they were before joining her crew. This was credited to the brass figurehead that graced the bow of her ship, which was said to be infused with the captain's magic to give a boon to any loyal crew member aboard. Thanks to this magic, Captain Brass's crew always found the biggest treasures and raided the most rival ships. Many pirates coveted a position on her crew, and some of them deserted their own captains in hopes of finding the *Scourge* and winning a post aboard. But if any deserters ever found a place in Captain Brass's crew—or if they ever found the *Scourge* at all—word never got out. This fact only added to the air of mystery surrounding the captain, her ship, and its magic brass figurehead.

Jareth Wake, navigator of a ship called *Squid Eyes,* became obsessed with discovering the truth. Turning all his expertise to the task of finding her, he designed enchanted compasses, maps, sextants, and calipers, all tuned to a single point: the location of Captain Beckett Brass. He convinced his captain to enable his search by promising that they could plunder Captain Brass's figurehead and perhaps glean some of her magical secrets.

But Captain Brass knew when she was being tracked, and she turned to her own trusted navigator and first mate, Lex Briggs. Lex specialized in magically augmenting—and undermining—navigational equipment. Her augmentations could create compasses that would point toward great quantities of gold, maps that would reveal

the locations of buried treasure, charts that would show the movement of other vessels at sea, and calipers capable of shortening the distance her crew had to travel to reach their desired location. But her magic could also obfuscate her ship's location, obscure maps, and send compass needles spinning off their axes.

At Captain Brass's orders, Lex crafted no fewer than six charms to confound Jareth Wake's magic, and the *Scourge* would probably have evaded him forever if it hadn't been for Swab, the *Scourge*'s goblin prankster. Swab's trickery disrupted Lex's charms just long enough for Jareth to set his course and discover the *Scourge* at last. The literal collision of the *Scourge* and *Squid Eyes* led to the creation of the floating city of High and Dry and, ultimately, the formation of the Brazen Coalition.

Since then, Captain Brass has become Admiral Brass, in command of a disciplined, fearsome collection of ships known as the Fathom Fleet. Ships such as the *Hangman's Noose* (captained by Sedden Dray), the *Witch's Windlass* (captained by Farrien Goss), the *Windbinder* (with its helmsmage-captain Kalishah Abban), and Admiral Brass's own *Second Scourge* have extended her fearsome reputation. Many captains have proven willing to give up some of their own freedom in exchange for the measure of security that comes from sailing under her flag.

Pirates of the Fathom Fleet can be recognized by the rope motifs woven into their clothing, celebrating the metaphorical lines that tie the ships of the fleet—and indeed, the whole Brazen Coalition—together.

Fathom Fleet Captain ➢ Matt Stewart

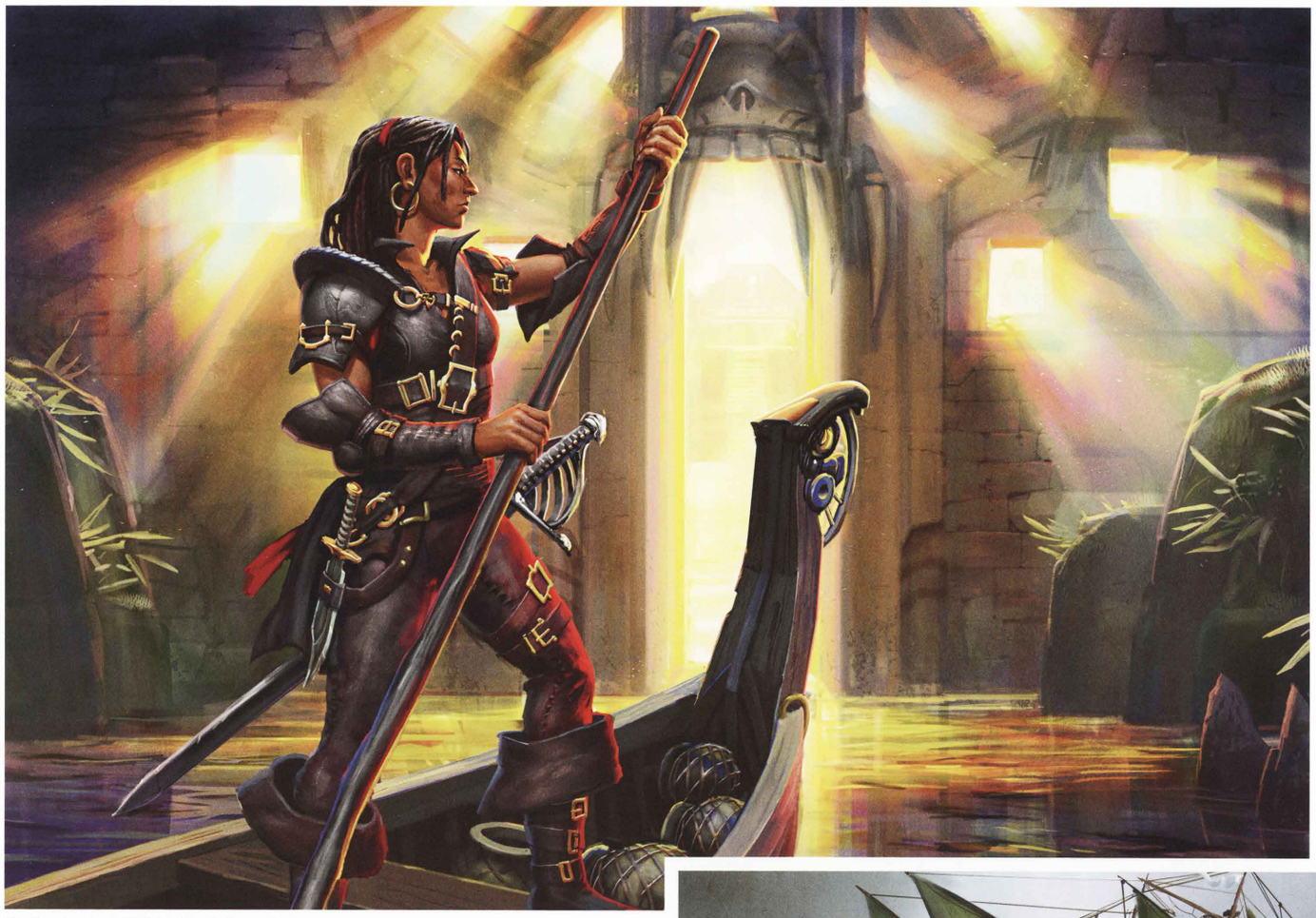
Brazen Buccaneers ➢ Joseph Meehan

Sailor of Means ➭ Ryan Pancoast

Captain Brandis Thorn and the Dire Fleet. Captain Brandis Thorn was never satisfied with being in command of just one ship. From the start of his career, he dreamed big and saw himself as captain of an entire fleet. His first act as captain of the *Dire*—after seizing the wheel out of the still-warm hands of former captain Garm Greddis—was to order a raid on the nearest vessel. Brandis himself boarded the ship and ordered its captain to walk the plank; he didn't want the bother of dealing with dissension in the ranks. With the captain gone, Brandis named the ship *Diremore,* and welcomed it to his Dire Fleet. With both ships at his command, he went on to claim two more vessels before sunset, and another one under the cover of darkness that night—or so his legends say.

The crews of ships annexed into the Dire Fleet have the choice of falling in line under Captain Thorn or following their erstwhile captains to the bottom of the sea. Most choose the former, happy to become part of the most feared fleet on the sea. It is said that some crews even hope for a raid by the Dire Fleet. Once, Daphne Vail, lookout of the *Ugly Mug,* who was annoyed at being overlooked time and time again for promotion by her own captain, saw Captain Thorn's fleet coming but said nothing until it was too late to take evasive action. After the Dire Fleet claimed her ship, Daphne told Captain Thorn what she had done and asked for a higher position on one of his ships. Impressed, he made her first mate of the *Dire,* securing her loyalty forever.

Dire Fleet Hoarder ➽ Deruchenko Alexander



Dire Fleet Interloper ➢ John Severin Brassell

The Dire Fleet relentlessly pillages other ships as well as coastal towns. Captain Thorn is said to have plundered more treasure than any other captain at sea. He leaves much of it buried at locations only he knows of, keeping only his favorite bits and leaving behind anything—or anyone—that might weigh him down. He sails with a different ship of the fleet each day, both to make it nearly impossible for enemy captains to find him, and because he enjoys the feel of steering every ship he owns. To him, his ships are far more than wood and nails; each one has its own personality, and he wants to get to know them all.

In one of his most recent raids, Captain Thorn took control of the *Salty Dog.* But when he boarded, preparing to force the captain down the plank, he found someone already halfway down the plank: a stowaway named Oscar Flinch. Smelling something amiss, Brandis asked Flinch for his side of things. Flinch claimed he had fled his old vessel, the *Tormented Doubloon,* when it was taken over by a snake-haired woman who turned their captain to stone and set off to find the legendary golden city. Hoping to avoid becoming stone himself, Flinch escaped on a small dinghy and found his way aboard the *Salty Dog.* Intrigued by the promise of the golden city's treasures, Captain Thorn took Flinch back with him to the *Dire*—after ensuring that the captain of the *Salty Dog* walked the plank.

Fell Flagship ➢ Titus Lunter

Now Captain Thorn is using Flinch's piecemeal knowledge of the location of the golden city to lead an expedition into the heart of Ixalan. With so many ships' crews at his disposal, he has a virtual army of pirates at his command. This, he believes, is the treasure the Dire Fleet was made to plunder!

Chart a Course ➽ James Ryman

Deadeye Plunderers ➽ Greg Opalinski

Captain Wallis Parrish and the Deadeyes. Captain Wallis Parrish commands the *Tide Turner,* and she has also secured the (conditional) loyalty of a handful of other captains who sail under Parrish's flag as part of a fleet called the Deadeyes. The Deadeye captains share a common history as part of the naval forces of the Free Cities, and they still wear an approximation of their old

uniforms. Unlike the Dire Fleet, which sails together as a formidable force, it is rare to find two Deadeye vessels sailing together. Despite its noble heritage, the fleet is known for underhanded trickery, and its captains prefer infiltration, assassination, and thievery over frontal assault and wanton plunder. Captain Parrish keeps the other captains loyal to her by controlling the flow of information, doling out tips that will set them up for success. In exchange they give her a percentage of the spoils.

Captain Parrish is a mind-mage, leading the crew of the *Tide Turner* on missions that are more about plundering minds than looting treasures. She collects secrets like other captains hoard jewels, keeping them securely locked away in her own mind to ensure that she is far more valuable alive than dead. She never records what she has learned on a map or journal, and in fact destroys such records once she has absorbed their contents.

Deadeye Quartermaster ➤ John Hass

Captain Lannery Storm and the Storm Fleet. Captain Lannery "Slippery" Storm is a daring swashbuckler who finds more delight in sailing, exploration, and the freedom of the sea than in piracy proper, and she discourages senseless violence. Of course, she still engages in piracy as a means of subsistence, and she's more talented at plundering than many who pride themselves on their work. But her real skill lies in her ability to evade capture. She's as slippery as an eel (hence her nickname), finding her way out of the stickiest situations. On the rare occasions where she has been captured or fallen into a booby trap, she has managed to slither right out, leaving vacant cells, unlocked doors, broken nets, and empty treasure chests in her wake. To her it's all for the amusement of it, the exhilaration of being out in the open sea, and the thrilling rush of finding new places to explore. Some say that her spirit is such that it cannot be contained; they claim that is the source of her magic, and that as long as she retains her swashbuckling spirit, no one will ever be able to hold her.

Avarett Hamett is the first mate aboard the Storm Fleet's flagship, *South Storm.* She is happy to serve under Captain Storm, who is the only captain she has met who seems to understand what it really means to be a pirate—being constantly on the move, wind in her hair, salty sea air in her lungs, and a rope in her hands. Avarett wants to know the whole world, and she feels she will get a chance to see it all in the Storm Fleet. And more, she'll get the chance for many a glorious battle along the way. When *South Storm* engages an enemy vessel, Avarett can be found swinging from the masts or loading

Captain Lannery Storm ☙ Chris Rallis

Storm Fleet Aerialist ➪ Jesper Ejsing

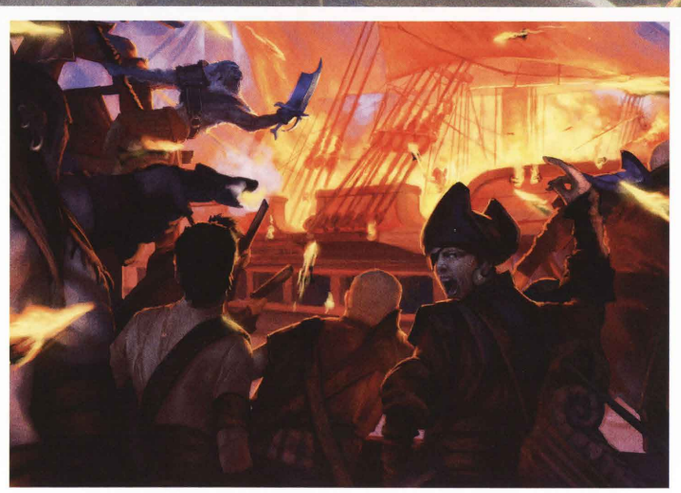
the magical cannons. She enjoys the heart-pounding blasts and the resulting explosions. The thunder in her chest, the pummeling that reverberates through her veins—there is nothing like it in all the world. That, she feels, is exactly what it means to be a pirate.

The captains who follow Captain Storm in the Storm Fleet are considered some of the luckiest at sea; there's never a dull moment when Captain Storm is around. Her ships have the most talented entertainment and the heartiest shanties. They might have the most treasure too, but who's counting? Captain Bennell Dardan of the *Blood Anchor,* Captain Fole Demeer of the *Standing Rock,* and Captain Oljin Raye of the *Sunset Wave* are among the most famous other captains of the fleet.

Pirates of Storm Fleet crews tend to decorate their ships—and accessorize their own outfits—with pieces taken from decommissioned vessels: pieces of balustrade, anchors, wheels, ornamental flourishes, and so on.

Storm Fleet Arsonist ➪ Jason A. Engle

Hijack ➤ Svetlin Velinov



Unfriendly Fire ➤ Josu Hernaiz

Captain Angrath the Flame-Chained. Angrath the Flame-Chained is a minotaur Planeswalker. In a cruel twist of fate, a planeswalking mishap took him to Ixalan, where of course he has been trapped ever since, unable to planeswalk away. Turned away from the Sun Empire and assaulted by the River Heralds, Angrath finally found a home among the pirates of the Brazen Coalition when Captain Radcliff of the notorious *Devil's Smile* offered him a place in his crew. Welcomed among the other misfits and rogues of a particularly motley crew, Angrath put his physical and magical talents to good use in Captain Radcliff's raiding and pillaging. Soon it was clear that the rest of the crew loved and respected Angrath more than their captain, and the minotaur led a quick and almost bloodless mutiny that left Radcliff hanging by a gaff hook strapped to the bowsprit. Now-Captain Angrath changed the ship's name to *Devil's Chains* to reflect the magic of his searing-hot chains, and the crew's notoriety increased exponentially.

Angrath is driven by a feeling of restless impatience, like a caged animal awaiting its moment of freedom. This fuels his wild temper and spurs him on in an endless series of raids upon the coastal towns of the Sun Empire. His aggression is wholeheartedly supported by his crew. Angrath continually sets his sights on the next biggest thing—but he is never satisfied when he acquires it.

In one of his recent raids, he faced off against a human warrior of the Sun Empire. As they battled, he was impressed by her skill but still utterly confident of his victory. As the killing blow approached and desperation grew in her eyes, she was suddenly engulfed in a field of glowing energy he recognized—it was the same magic that had balked him every time he had tried to planeswalk away from this infernal prison. Shocked at finally meeting another Planeswalker, he spared the woman's life and retreated, for the first time he could remember. But he was sure he would see her again; their destinies must be intertwined.

Eventually Angrath learned that the woman, Huatli, had gone off seeking a golden city, in pursuit of the Immortal Sun—the greatest treasure the world had ever known. This treasure, Angrath was sure, was fated to be his; why else would he be marooned on this world? The fact that the other powerful warrior was pursuing it just made it all the more desirable.

Angrath's Marauders ➽ Victor Adame Minguez

Independent Ships. The four great fleets are certainly significant powers on the Stormwreck Sea, but they are not the only voices in the Brazen Coalition. Many captains are content to command a single vessel, doing their best to make it in the world without being assimilated into one of the fleets.

A coldhearted, greedy woman named Brinely Rage is the captain of the *Cruel Calm,* but her boatswain, Marley Driscoll, inspires even more respect and fear than she does. Driscoll wields a cursed stiletto he calls Deserter, which can kill with the tiniest prick of its sharp blade. Armed with this deadly weapon, Marley swims across open water to enemy vessels and sneaks aboard, slipping into sleeping quarters to sow death among the enemy crew before the *Cruel Calm* draws near and attacks. Captain Rage has often been asked if she fears Marley and his Deserter; her reply is always the same: "If that blow was coming, it would have come a long time ago." The two seem content in their arrangement, both doing what they do best.

Captain Garm Greddis commanded the *Dire* until Brandis Thorn's mutinous blade ended his life. But Captain Greddis had always known that his murder was inevitable, given the amount of treasure he owned and the renown of his ship, so he planned for it. He laid a curse to ensure that whoever took his life would be haunted by the spirits of everyone who died by the same blade. So Captain Greddis was only the first of many spirits brought into being by this curse, and each pirate put to death at Captain Thorn's hand has returned as a ghost to serve on Greddis's ghost ship, the *Phantom.* Now they stalk the Dire Fleet, waiting for the perfect moment to make the good captain walk his own plank.

Scott Murphy

Navigator's Ruin ➪ Zoltan Boros

When Jareth Wake was the navigator of the *Squid Eyes,* his obsession with finding Captain Beckett Brass led to the creation of High and Dry and the formation of the Brazen Coalition. He left that fateful meeting with the treasure he had been looking for: a brass figurehead of his own, holding the same magic that blessed the crew of Captain Brass's *Scourge.* But by the time Wake had rowed away from High and Dry and secured a new ship to hold his figurehead, he realized that he was not satisfied. In truth, it was never the treasure that he wanted—he just enjoyed the thrill of the hunt. By successfully eluding him for so long, the navigator of the *Scourge,* Lex Briggs, had proven herself a worthy target. Now on his new ship, the *Flotsam Born*, he continues to track Briggs and the *Second Scourge*, shadowing their every move, locked in a game of cat and mouse with his rival.

Lightning Strike ➪ Craig J Spearing

Captain Warsh Grapnel of the *Bloodbane* has borne a grudge against the Legion of Dusk since the vampires sank his first vessel, the *Doomborn.* He spends much of his time on the waters of Queen's Bay, harrying Legion ships and raiding coastal forts. In fact, he has captured a small fortified town from Legion control and dubbed it the Not-Fort. In special prisons within the Not-Fort, Captain Grapnel keeps vampire captives locked in hanging cages until they starve to death. The Not-Fort is notorious among the vampires of the Legion, and the governor of Adanto has put a large price on Captain Grapnel's head.

Storm Fleet Pyroman ➤ Kieran Yanner

Spitfire Bastion ➤ Jonas De Ro

Jetsam. A captain without a ship is called jetsam—like unwanted goods thrown overboard that have washed ashore. Some such captains have survived mutiny or shipwreck, while others have chosen to settle on High and Dry or in a pirate colony. And more than a few have abandoned their ships to explore Ixalan's interior in search of the golden city.

Captain Ripley Vance once commanded the *Leviathan's Wrath* after spending years as a flame-wielding combat mage on that ship. But when she discovered a natural lava flow on a coastal cliff, she realized she had found her new home. She constructed a fortress on the site, using her magic to harness its volcanic power and create powerful bombards to defend her new home. Now called Spitfire Bastion, the fortress is a trading post for rations and supplies. In contrast to High and Dry, Spitfire Bastion is anything but neutral ground: it belongs to Captain Vance, and her word there is law. Her enemies are not welcome, and anyone allowed to resupply there owes the captain a favor.

Captain Cadenze is a siren who has tuned her song to command the monsters of the sea. After luring dozens of pirate ships to their doom and watching their treasures sink to the bottom of the ocean, she decided to acquire a ship of her own so she could plunder such treasure herself. Calling up a sea monster to get her a ship, she took command of the *Strangleweed* and its remaining crew. After preying on other pirate ships for a few years, Captain Cadenze grew bored and decided to explore the navigable rivers and inlets of Ixalan. Even as her crew grew excited at the rumors of the golden city and their progress inland, the captain fell in love with Ixalan itself—its pristine rain forest and churning rivers. When she found a cove near an area of rough rapids, she abandoned the ship and made a new home for herself, now called the Aria Rapids. Her ship and crew then became the first victims of Cadenze's ode to Ixalan, lured in by her captivating song until they smashed against the rocks of the rapids.

Jonas De Ro

Boneyard Parley ✒ James Ryman

A Pirate Crew

On a ship of the Brazen Coalition, every pirate has a place and a specific job to do. The pirates know that if they do their job well, and everyone else does the same, their ship will succeed and prosper. For that reason, the social structure of a pirate crew is relatively flat: the captain rules the ship, the first mate is the captain's second-in-command, the boatswain manages the crew, and everyone else takes orders from the boatswain. A pirate who covets a higher position has only three positions to look at—and no one really aspires to be a boatswain.

Navigators. Navigators are a key part of any pirate crew. Though they don't decide where the ship is going, they figure out how it will get there. In the Brazen Coalition, they use a combination of mundane and magical methods to do their jobs. Celestialists are mages who supplement their charts, compasses, sextants, and astrolabes with spells used to divine more information from the stars, sun, and moon. Some mages also specialize in interfering with the implements of other navigators, helping their ships evade attacks and lead enemies into danger.

Helmsmages. Spellcasters whose magic directly affects the ship or its crew are called helmsmages, and they are prized almost as highly as navigators. The term originated with mages who dealt specifically with the helm, causing the ship's wheel and tiller to follow a predetermined course, or hold fast despite a raging storm. Other helmsmages can fill the ship's sails with artificial (but short-lived) winds or raise and lower the sails without hauling on ropes. Or they can fill the crew with a fearful respect for the captain, instill unshakable courage, or break the will of an enemy crew.

Combat Mages. The life of a pirate involves plenty of combat, both ship-to-ship and hand-to-hand. Most pirates are skilled at the mundane expressions of both—fighting with swords, cutlasses, rapiers, daggers, axes, crossbows, and improvised weapons (from gaff hooks to belaying pins) when necessary, or firing a ship's ballista or firecannon at an enemy vessel. But some employ magic in combat to sear their enemies with fire or lightning, make their weapons strike true, or shield themselves from attack. Obfusers call up fogs or use illusions to conceal their ships from enemy sight. Plague sorcerers use sinister magic to lay curses on enemy crews or ships, ranging from wasting plagues to swarms of rats that devour ropes, supplies, and flesh.

Other Crew Positions. Besides commanders and specialized magicians, a pirate ship holds a full complement of relatively ordinary crewmembers. Gunners, carpenters, cooks, coopers, and surgeons support the work of the deckhands who trim the sails, batten the hatches, hoist the jibs, weigh the anchors, and swab the decks. Lookouts—often goblins—perch in crow's nests to look for land or approaching danger. And some pirates earn a position in the crew purely for their skill in combat.

Fathom Fleet Firebrand ➤ Zezhou Chen

Daring Saboteur ➤ Victor Adame Minguez

High and Dry

The floating city of High and Dry is neutral ground for the Brazen Coalition. It resembles a roped-together fleet of ships more than it does a city on land, consisting of rafts, barges, ship hulls, and floating platforms lashed together into one large mass. Houses, taverns, and shops stand on top of all this, providing a place for pirates to trade their ill-gotten gains with each other and spend their hard-won gold. As one might expect, it is a dangerous place where violence is commonplace and usually goes unpunished. Open warfare between pirate crews is about the only crime that is prohibited in the city, and like all crimes it still occurs despite this unwritten rule. The floating city supports a service economy of ordinary folk, but the bulk of its population at any given time are sailors here for a short period of rest, recreation, and trade.

High and Dry was created by the collision of two ships, Beckett Brass's *Scourge* and the *Squid Eyes.* Since then, at least one other ship has accidentally crashed into the city and thus been incorporated into it, but most of High and Dry is made from derelict ships that would otherwise have been scuttled or dismantled. Sections of hulls are attached to the city at odd angles, and shops, taverns, and homes often have strangely sloping floors and walls as a result. At the edges of the city, it can be hard to distinguish ships that dock there from ships that have become part of High and Dry. Sometimes ships that are docked too long get blocked in by the addition of other wrecks around them.

Wanted Scoundrels ☛ Volkan Baga

Prosperous Pirates ☛ John Hass

The Apostasine Prince

Tomin Greer was a deckhand on the *Salty Dog* before it became part of the Dire Fleet, but he always clung to the idea that he was the scion of a wealthy and noble family from the old Free Cities. He saved his wages and stole scraps of treasure until he felt he had enough money to set out on his own, then purchased a home on High and Dry. He has affected the lifestyle of a noble heir, dressing in elegant garb and adopting a refined demeanor appropriate to the best upbringing. In fact, he has even adopted a noble title: the Apostasine Prince. This reference to the strife-filled history of Torrezon is an intentional effort to provoke the Legion of Dusk.

A con artist and swindler, Tomin has a particular grudge against the Legion of Dusk, because he really does believe that the vampires stole his rightful title and property. Though High and Dry is his new home, he makes occasional forays into the Legion's colonies at Queen's Bay, relying on his wits and charm to get him out alive. Recently, he convinced a legion cleric named Arran Vela that the secret of the Sun Empire's control over dinosaurs lay in their amber-studded weapons, and he traded one such weapon for a relic, a small fingerbone from the Venerable patriach Varrianos. His deception was quickly discovered, though, and he barely escaped from Adanto with his life. He gained a new scar on his left cheek from the incident, but considers that a small price to pay for a genuine relic of the Legion.

Entrancing Melody ➢ Winona Nelson

Worlds Collide

As the Legion of Dusk and the Brazen Coalition have come to Ixalan, the overarching story has been one of conflict. Not only have the peoples of Ixalan been forced to defend themselves from the invaders from across the sea, but Sun Empire soldiers have long fought the River Heralds, and the Legion of Dusk has always been the enemy of the Brazen Coalition. Despite this constant conflict, though, a few stories of cooperation and even love between individuals from different backgrounds have unfolded in Ixalan.

Blood Bond

Tetlai is a member of a noble family and a scout for the knights of Otepec. She leads scouting parties outside the city, watching for signs of River Herald incursion into what the emperor considers Sun Empire land. Though she coordinates the efforts of other scouts, she herself prefers the freedom and power of gliding over the canopy on her favorite soarwing mount. During one of her explorations, though, her mount was injured by a River Herald's magical assault, sending it plummeting to the ground. When she crashed, furious and desperate to save her companion, she found herself face-to-face with a vampire, Juaso Monserro, who had also been gravely injured in a fight against the merfolk. Starved for blood but too weak to fight for himself, Juaso begged Tetlai to give him sustenance, and promised that in return he would heal her companion. Tetlai agreed, spilling her blood to Juaso, who made good on his word. Some combination of Juaso's grim determination, their shared contempt for the River Heralds, and their newly formed blood bond drew the two together as comrades, and now they are making their way through the jungle in search of the golden city.

Pterodon Knight ➢ Anthony Palumbo

Queen's Agent ➪ Winona Nelson

For his part, Juaso Monserro belonged to a disgraced aristocratic family that had been punished for speaking out against the pontifex of the church. Though he is a lowly soldier, he is driven by the hope of restoring his family's honor through his own deeds of glory. He wields his mother's rapier in battle as a reminder of the family's past prosperity. (Perhaps Juaso's sense of familial duty also reminded Tetlai of her beloved older brother, Atlal, and contributed to their bond.) As his commander led a team through the inner jungles of Ixalan, they were ambushed by the River Heralds. Juaso valiantly held off the enemy long enough to allow his comrades to escape—and abandon him. Juaso languished in the treacherous jungle, finally collapsing of hunger and exhaustion. As he lay alone, he tried to think of his consuming hunger as the sacred rite of the Blood Fast, despite the lack of a cleric to administer the sacrament. Then, like a vision granted as a reward for his deprivation, Tetlai crashed down through the forest canopy above him. Juaso had never met a warrior of the Sun Empire before, but he admired her unwavering loyalty to her soarwing mount, and agreed to assist her if she would feed him with her blood. As Juaso and Tetlai became companions in their quest to find the golden city, Juaso increasingly admired Tetlai's optimism and resolve, though his admiration is tempered by jealousy for her highborn position and privilege. Throughout their travels, Juaso keeps a keen eye out for Champion Cerazzo, the commander who abandoned him to die.

Storm-Tossed and Star-Crossed

Zara Vast is a bold and reckless pirate, the former captain of the *Night Terror.* Pursuing a vampire ship at sea, Captain Vast rushed headlong into a massive storm that broke in front of her ship. The *Night Terror* was tossed about on the waves, many of her crew fell overboard, and ultimately the ship crashed on the rocks just off the coast of Ixalan. She was trapped on a wild coast, dangerously near the vampire colonies of Queen's Bay, with half her original crew and no ship. Desperate for supplies and a means of escape, the captain stole into the fortress-outpost of Leor, intending to seize any food, gold, or valuables that she could find. But she was detected, the alarm was raised, and she tried to make her escape—but not before the vampire governor's son, Arrando Caveres, convinced her to take him with her. Instead of returning empty-handed, he argued, she could ransom him for information and wealth. Arrando was more than happy to leave the smothering confines of the fort and his father's authority, and he was quickly charmed by his "captor."

But rather than pay a ransom, the aggrieved governor put a price on Captain Vast's head, offering a handsome reward to anyone who could return his son to him. Many pirates of the Brazen Coalition leaped at the chance to earn what seemed like easy money, and the captain and the governor's son found themselves on the run. With the scrappy remaining crew of the *Night Terror,* they made their way to High and Dry, where they were confronted by the greedy pirate Dennan Bentblade. The unwritten rules of High and Dry prevented a physical confrontation on this neutral ground, so the two pirate captains agreed to a game of chance with Arrando as the prize. Captain Bentblade won and began to drag Arrando away, but the young vampire pointed out that the pirate had cheated. Captain Vast confronted Bentblade, and the cheating pirate drew his cutlass and rushed at her. Before she knew it, she had run him through in self-defense, provoking the onlookers into a fight that turned into a massive brawl. In the ensuing chaos, Captain Vast found Arrando and, with their remaining crew, absconded with Captain Bentblade's ship into the night.

Desperate Castaways ➤ Zoltan Boros

Marauding Looter ▶ Jason A. Engle

Orazca, the Golden City

Spires of Orazca ➽ Yeong-Hao Han

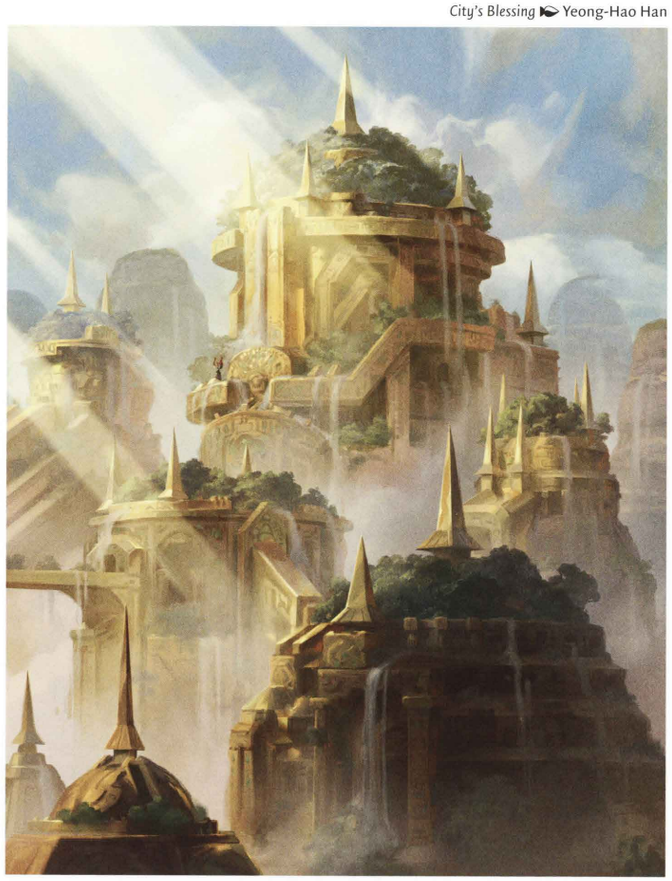
City of Gold

The legend of the golden city has ignited the aggressive peoples of Ixalan. The Legion of Dusk, the Brazen Coalition, and the Sun Empire are all fighting their way into the heart of Ixalan in hopes of finding the legendary city and claiming the treasures—and the magical power—it holds. The River Heralds are striving to keep the intruders away from the city, but without knowing the city's location, all they can do is struggle to push the invaders back.

Orazca lies deep in the rainforest, at a point where a fjord cuts inland from the Inner Sea. The city is almost entirely encased within the earth, with only a few golden spires protruding from the ground and rising through the jungle canopy. An especially large spire, like a great obelisk rising up from a pyramidal base, marks the center and the pinnacle of the city, the location of the Threefold Temple—the ancient city's greatest temple and the home of both Azor and the Immortal Sun.

A marvel of exquisite ornamentation, Orazca boasts gold, turquoise, amber, and jade everywhere. Water flows harmoniously through it, cascading down carefully crafted channels and plummeting down sheer drops of hundreds of feet. Trees and bushes, fed through the centuries by sunlight reflected down narrow shafts from the surface, continue to thrive amid its ramps and walkways. And the stylized shape of Azor, the sphinx who brought the Immortal Sun to live here, appears on the most prominent buildings and archways throughout the city.

City's Blessing ➤ Yeong-Hao Han



Moment of Triumph ➽ Steven Belledin

Explorers of Ixalan ➪ Adam Paquette

Legends of the Lost Sun

Every civilization of Ixalan has legends about the Immortal Sun and its resting place, the mythical city of gold. The Legion of Dusk, the Sun Empire, and the River Heralds have all been entrusted with the care and protection of the Immortal Sun at some point in the past, and memories of acquiring, possessing, using, and losing the powerful artifact are preserved (however imperfectly) in the tales passed down through the generations. Thus, as each group now seeks Orazca and hopes to claim the Immortal Sun, each one has particular hopes and expectations of what they will find.

Zacama, Primal Calamity ➪ Jamie Jones

Emblem of Identity

In the myths of the Sun Empire, Kinjalli the Wakening Sun created human beings, shaping them from clay and baking them in the warmth of the sun. Ixalli the Verdant Sun sustained and nourished them, giving them a privileged position above all the other creatures of the forest. To them was given the power to command the dinosaurs and rule the land, and the whole of the continent was entrusted to them to be tended and nurtured.

The people of the Sun Empire built the golden city of Orazca, and their legends hold that it was erected on the very spot where Kinjalli scooped up the clay to form the first humans. Orazca's ruler, Chacanto Intli, united the other human cities under her leadership and transformed them into a mighty empire. For generations, Orazca was the capital of this empire and the hub through which all trade and travel flowed.

Thus, for the people of the Sun Empire, Orazca is historically important as the birthplace of their nation, spiritually important as the birthplace of their race, and symbolically important as the embodiment of their national identity. For the current emperor, Apatzec Intli, reclaiming Orazca would mean reestablishing their role as the dominant power on Ixalan, asserting their right to rule the land, conquer the River Heralds, and drive the invaders away. And reclaiming the Immortal Sun would give them the power to act on those claims and establish the rule of law and justice throughout Ixalan.

Vanquisher's Banner ➪ Milivoj Ćeran

Source of Eternal Life

The Immortal Sun is woven into the earliest history of the Legion of Dusk and closely linked with their religious beliefs—including their notion of what it is to be a vampire. Their myths remember Azor as a glorious, winged humanoid being who appeared on a mountaintop to a hermit named Juasín de Solano. Azor gave the Immortal Sun to the hermit, who built a shrine on the site. The shrine later grew into a monastery, led by Juasín for centuries as the Immortal Sun preserved his life. According to legend, at least, all the monks remained ageless while they lived in the community and followed its rules of strict asceticism. The monastery became a destination for devout pilgrims who wished to taste the life-giving power of the Immortal Sun.

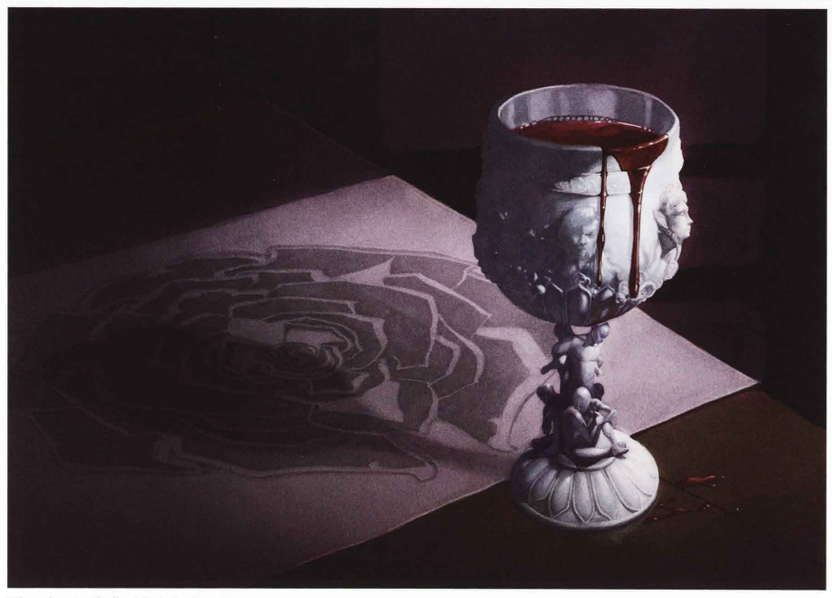
The loss of the Immortal Sun was regarded as a spiritual tragedy, but the artifact and the monastery that housed it eventually faded into legend as a relic of a distant, paradisiacal age. Those legends took on new life centuries later, at the end of the Apostasine War, when Elenda—the last custodian of the Immortal Sun—returned to Torrezon. She had not reclaimed the Immortal Sun despite her long search, but she had discovered a way to preserve her existence in a shadowy mockery of the life it had given its caretakers—as a vampire. Soon all the nobility of Torrezon had undertaken the same transformation, and as part of the rite they swore an oath to seek the Immortal Sun as a way of restoring true eternal life to themselves and their people.

Profane Procession ➤ Bastien L. Deharme

Sanguine Sacrament ➪ Bastien L. Deharme

For the most part, that oath was an empty promise. Elenda had sought the Immortal Sun for centuries without discovering it, and later generations of vampire nobles were preoccupied with conquering the neighboring lands rather than continuing her fruitless quest. Elenda did resume her search, but until the conquest of Ixalan began and the rumors of the golden city of Orazca began to spread, the Immortal Sun was once again an object of myth.

Now hope has returned. The Legion of Dusk hopes to conquer Orazca and reclaim their long-lost Immortal Sun. With the Immortal Sun once again under their control, the hopes of the church will be fulfilled. No longer will the vampires be forced to subsist on the blood of the wicked, for they will be transformed beyond the need for food and drink of any kind. In place of an everlasting undeath, true eternal life will be available to all.



Hierophant's Chalice ➪ John Stanko

Revel in Riches ➪ Eric Deschamps

Power of Plunder

No ancient lore ties the pirates and swashbucklers of the Brazen Coalition to the Immortal Sun, and they have no memory of ever possessing it. But just as they plunder the treasures of the other peoples of Ixalan, they have plundered the mythology as well—and they hope to plunder the golden city.

Something so fiercely pursued by the other peoples of Ixalan must be desirable, so many pirates want the Immortal Sun simply for that reason. Other captains bring a variety of different goals to their searches. Some captains hope for personal power, a heightened position within the Brazen Coalition. Some dream of usurping Admiral Beckett Brass's position as titular head of the coalition, or claiming rulership of High and Dry. And some dream of power extending to cover the whole continent, or even the whole world.

Some pirates have heard of the vampires' hopes for eternal life, and desire to claim immortality for themselves. If that puts them on equal footing with the vampires, so much the better. Some have come to understand that the Sun Empire wants to rebuild their ancient realm with the help of the Immortal Sun, and dream of carrying it back across the sea to drive out the Legion of Dusk and reclaim their own ancestral lands. And some have learned that the River Heralds consider the Immortal Sun to be a terrible weapon of incredible power—and all that matters is that they should be the ones wielding that weapon. And as if all that weren't enough, the Immortal Sun is hidden in a place called the golden city, which sounds like a treasure worth plundering in itself.

One uniquely piratical legend concerning the Immortal Sun has arisen just recently, probably through some combination of existing

stories of lost treasure hoards and the rumors swirling about the golden city. According to this tale, a sea captain named Janny Marillon has already discovered Orazca and secured the Immortal Sun by tricking its guardian. With the Immortal Sun in the hold, Captain Marillon's ship supposedly gained the ability to fly and even to enter a sort of spirit realm. (It seems likely that some hint of Vraska's true motivation for seeking the Immortal Sun has made its way into this tale.) However, possession of the artifact made his ship a target, so he is said to have buried it on a barren island somewhere in the Inner Sea. Like any good pirate captain, he recorded the position of this island on a treasure map, so finding the map could lead someone to the Immortal Sun.

Few pirates actually believe this tale, but many enjoy telling it—perhaps in the hope that it will cause the listeners to seek the Immortal Sun in all the wrong places.

Treasure Map ➪ Cliff Childs

Weapon of Nightmares

In the legends of the River Heralds, the Immortal Sun was the weapon that the Sun Empire used against them during a failed war of expansion. Their tales speak of a great stone disk strapped to the back of an enormous dinosaur, with the emperor himself standing atop it and calling down the fire of the sun as a giant explosion descending to the earth and spreading its brilliant flame for miles around. It was an object of terror and devastation, an artifact of pure evil whose only purpose was destruction, and it did lasting harm to the River Heralds and their jungle home.

Thus, the idea that anyone would want to retrieve this weapon and put it to use again is utterly abhorrent to most of the River Heralds. The power it offers is too great for anyone to use—for anyone else to claim it would bring a terrible end to the world they

Tishana's Wayfinder ☛ Shreya Shetty

Pillar of Origins ➽ Dimitar

know. Orazca is lost and hidden in the depths of the jungle for a good reason, in their view, and they believe that the mighty winged guardian has charged them with protecting it.

To that end, the River Heralds are grimly determined to face the threat posed by the outsiders invading their territory. Their goal is to prevent anyone else from finding the golden city, and they use their magic of wind, water, and vine to divert explorers and conquerors away from the heart of the jungle. They have spent centuries preparing for exactly this danger, and have sworn that the devastation wrought by the ancient Sun Empire will never happen again.

Ixalan ➭ Tyler Jacobson

Heirs of the Golden City

At the emperor's command, scouts, troops, and explorers are crossing the mountains from the Sun Coast and entering the jungle in search of their ancient capital, Orazca. Emperor Apatzec Intli was initially reluctant to sacrifice experienced soldiers and leaders to the apparently hopeless cause of finding a city lost to legend, but the mystical visions of a young warrior named Huatli have spurred him to action.

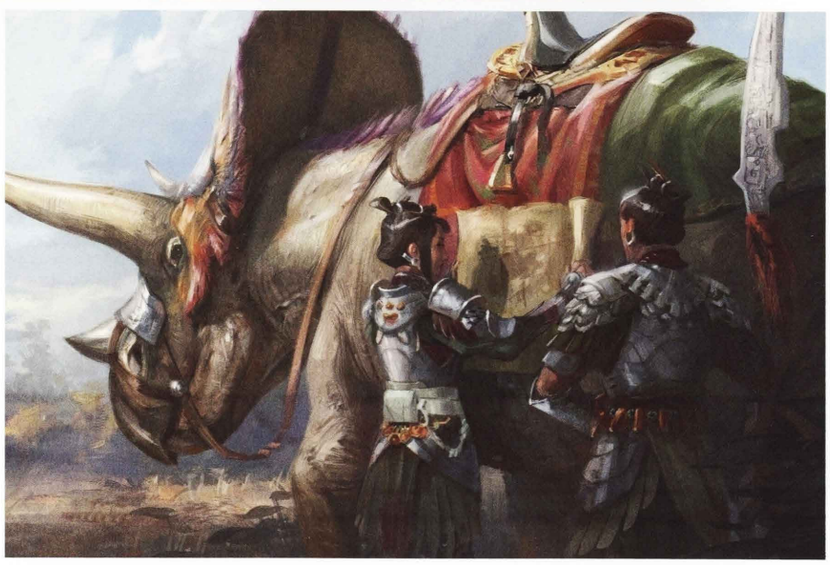
The Sun Empire has extensive resources to support the search for Orazca. Though no clear maps of the ancient empire or the trackless jungle exist, searching ancient records has yielded some vague diagrams that point toward the general location of the city. Interpreting these annals and charts is a complicated task, and sometimes the hard work of scholarship is supplemented by divination magic, imploring the Threefold Sun for assistance in the search.

Ixalli's Diviner ➪ Lucas Graciano

Emperor's Vanguard ➽ Victor Adame Minguez

As part of the search for the Sun Empire's ancient heritage, explorers also seek and explore other ruins whose origins lie in the dim reaches of history. Sometimes they yield vague clues to the direction of Orazca or glimpses of understanding into the power and nature of the Immortal Sun. Sometimes explorers find magical artifacts that help them in their search or aid them in battle against their foes. Sometimes the ruins offer nothing but dangerous traps, lurking beasts, or even terrible demons. Some explorers who delve into these ruins never emerge.

Key to the Sun Empire's search for Orazca is their sense that they have already fallen behind. Because the emperor was slow to believe the resurfaced legends of the Immortal Sun, he now feels that the invaders, vampires and pirates alike, have gained an advantage over him. Driven by that fear, the Sun Empire explorers are quick to attack any vampires and pirates they encounter in the wilds. Occasionally, they follow their enemies in hope of learning whether the invaders possess useful information leading them toward Orazca.



Commune with Dinosaurs ➽ Jonathan Kuo

Huatli, Emperor's Chosen

Huatli was raised a warrior-poet of the Sun Empire. Born of commoners, she excelled at the battle schooling all children of the Empire receive. Thanks to her skill with both weapons and magic, and her apparently innate gift for controlling even the most powerful dinosaurs, she rose to a station just short of nobility while battling raiders of the Brazen Coalition on the coast near Atzocan.

In the Sun Empire, the arts of poetry and performance are deeply respected. The ideal warrior is not only matchless in combat, but an artist capable of reflecting creatively upon the experience. Huatli is a talented poet whose words have moved Emperor Apatzec himself to tears. Her poems are frequently composed from the point of view of the dinosaurs she fights beside, and attempt to express their instincts and perceptions in human terms.

She is distinguished by never having killed a foe in battle. The knights of the Sun Empire view killing as a clumsy means of victory that brings the stain of dishonor on the killer. Instead, the ideal is to compel a foe to surrender through superior martial prowess, intimidation, and insightful manipulation. She patiently tracks her targets, systematically eliminates their routes of escape, and ultimately confronts them to force their surrender.

The course of her life changed during a Brazen Coalition raid, when she confronted an infamous "monster"—the minotaur pirate Angrath the Flame-Chained. An incredibly powerful foe, he pressed her to the limit of her abilities. At the moment of her greatest desperation, shining tapestries seemed to part before her, opening a path to a whole new realm of existence, but a pressure like a hurricane wind prevented her from passing through. Inexplicably, Angrath failed to press his advantage and instead withdrew, leaving her to contemplate her experience.

Huatli has become convinced that her mystical vision—since repeated numerous times—is pointing her toward Orazca and the Immortal Sun. Her experience has spurred the emperor to action, and he has sent Huatli—under the command of Cabrana the Crested, a towering warrior of Atzocan and a favorite of the emperor's son—to follow her visions to the golden city.

Slash of Talons ➤ Magali Villeneuve

Huatli, Warrior Poet ➤ Tyler Jacobson

Jace's Sentinel ▶ Alex Konstad

Shapers' Sanctuary ▶ Zezhou Chen

Guardians of the Golden City

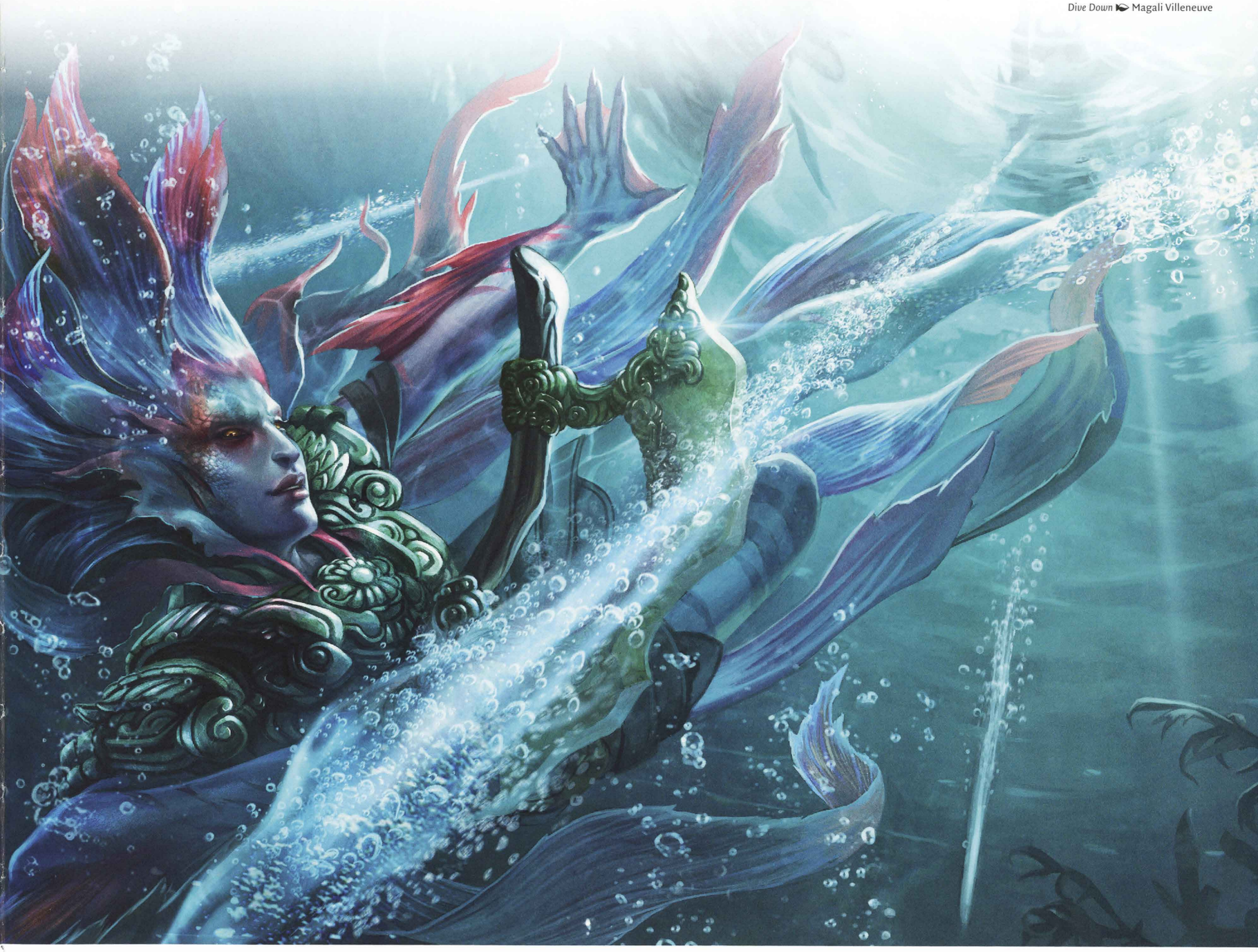
Unlike the other explorers of Ixalan, the goal of the River Heralds is not to find Orazca, but to keep the intruders in the jungle away from it. This effort, perhaps doomed to failure, is complicated by three important factors.

First, the River Heralds lack clear, centralized leadership. Tishana, the Voice of Thunder, is the shaman of the Great Source—the headwaters of the most important tributary to the Great River—and that gives her a position of authority among all the other shamans who lead Herald bands. But her authority is not absolute. Although the other shamans listen to and respect her counsel, they are not bound to obey it. And although their ancient oath to protect Orazca and the Immortal Sun is a part of every shaman's teaching, many voices among the River Heralds question whether the current circumstances might demand a new look at that promise.

Chief among those voices is Kumena, one of Tishana's former apprentices and a shaman whose territory includes the headwaters of another prominent tributary. Kumena's hatred for the forces intruding into the jungle knows no bounds, and he has begun to argue that the River Heralds must resort to unthinkable extremes to drive the invaders back or destroy them utterly. Specifically, he wants to find Orazca, claim the power of the Immortal Sun, and use it to wreak havoc upon the Sun Empire and the foreign invaders. Although Tishana's voice of calm and caution prevails for now, Kumena's continued urging is starting to sway other shamans and even members of Tishana's own band.

Finally, the River Heralds' task is made all the more difficult by the fact that they themselves don't know where Orazca is. For the first generations after Azor left the Immortal Sun in their keeping, shamans forbade any mention of the golden city's location, and eventually no one remained alive who remembered where it lay. These shamans knew that if the River Heralds didn't know where the Immortal Sun could be found, they couldn't be tempted to use its power, and they couldn't be corrupted by the lure of that power. As a result, the River Heralds are in the awkward position of trying to steer and misdirect intruders away from a location they don't know. They tend to take the simplest approach they can manage, either turning invaders around and sending them back the way they came, or sending them toward the continent's coasts by default. But the lingering fear that they might accidentally steer some band of foreign explorers right to Orazca's golden spires haunts the shamans' nightmares.

Dive Down ☙ Magali Villeneuve



Conquerors of the Golden City

The conquistadors of the Legion of Dusk have come to Ixalan's shores with a variety of goals. More than anything, they seek conquest—to subjugate the people of this continent as they have already done to the people of Torrezon, to expand the rule of Queen Miralda over this new land. Some are driven by loyalty to the crown, some by religious devotion, and some by their own greed for power. Some wish to carve out domains where they can rule at a safe distance from the queen, or even amass enough power to return to Torrezon and overthrow the queen. And some have come to conquer Ixalan simply because they have been at war for so long, they don't know what else to do.

Not every Legion commander seeks Orazca and its treasures. Many of the vampires dismiss the legends of the Immortal Sun and the eternal life it promises, and prefer to chase more tangible dreams of gold and glory. Enough conquistador champions have decided to search for Orazca, however, that vampire troops are an all-too-common sight in the jungles, a recurring threat to the River Heralds and other explorers. They tend to travel in large numbers and leave clear paths through the jungle as they march.

The commanders of the Legion of Dusk share the Sun Empire's interest in the ancient ruins scattered throughout the jungle. But the vampires are more inclined to destroy ancient records and what they

Seekers' Squire ➤ Anthony Palumbo

Arterial Flow ➪ Josh Hass

consider blasphemous magic, thus keeping them from the hands of the Sun Empire, than they are to make use of such things. Often, they convert ancient sites into fortified encampments, storing supplies there and leaving human servants to defend them while the vampire explorers strike further into the jungle.

Some vampire clergy take a more scholarly approach to the Legion's missions of conquest. They carefully map the progress of their explorations, record details of their encounters with the Sun Empire and the River Heralds, catalog artifacts found in ancient ruins, and describe the native creatures of the jungle in careful anatomical detail. Some of these vampires even evince a hint of sympathy for their enemies, but they are careful to couch this weakness in pious language, accompanied by assurances of their loyalty to the crown.

Moment of Craving ➪ Steven Belledin

Storm Fleet Spy ➤ Scott Murphy

Plunderers of the Golden City

The tremendous diversity of the captains and pirates of the Brazen Coalition is reflected in their variety of goals and approaches to finding Orazca and the Immortal Sun. Some pirates are driven by the thrill of exploration and of thirst for discovery, and seek Orazca almost as a matter of curiosity. Some are purely interested in the opportunity to gain wealth and power by plundering the city. And some thrill in the conflict with other explorers.

Most pirates are happy to let other explorers do the hard work of discovery and conquest and then reap the rewards. They steal maps and sea charts, follow trails carved or trampled through the forest, and even magically plunder the minds of their rivals to extract secrets and clues. A few ingenious artificers try to create magical compasses or other devices to lead them to Orazca's treasures.

Deadeye Tracker ➤ Deruchenko Alexander

Any scrap of knowledge about Orazca and the Immortal Sun has become a valuable commodity in the Brazen Coalition's odd economy of favors and obligations. Captains are calling in favors owed in order to assemble large crews to explore the dangerous jungles. Meanwhile, the taverns of High and Dry buzz with rumors, typically made up of some combination of useless trivia and invented information meant to throw rivals off course.

Many Brazen Coalition captains, unwilling to abandon their ships, are trying to sail their way to the golden city. Water routes to the Inland Sea have been found, and knowledge of those waterways is highly prized. Captains have also charted many navigable rivers to carry their vessels inland from the ocean. These routes put them directly into conflict with the River Heralds more often than not, but they are a faster way to reach the interior of the continent than tromping through the jungle.

Colossal Dreadmaw ☛ Jesper Ejsing

CAST AWAY

Swamp ☜ Titus Lunter

Jace Beleren

Jace Beleren can't walk away from an unsolved mystery. He believes everything that exists can be understood, and he dreams of one day knowing everything there is to know. And yet his own telepathic powers have created gaps in his memories thanks to the attacks of other telepaths and, in some cases, his own desire to forget.

In his youth on the plane of Vryn, Jace's natural telepathic talents were in turn misunderstood and exploited. He was alienated and harassed for being different, lacking the physical strength to defend himself. Then he was manipulated and betrayed by the powerful sphinx mind-mage who taught him to control his magic. In the process of freeing himself from the sphinx's control, Jace badly damaged his own mind as his Planeswalker spark ignited, sending him to another plane with only a fragmentary recollection of his own identity. Some memories of his childhood remain lost to him even now.

Jace has taken an oath to keep watch over the planes of the Multiverse as part of the Gatewatch. He already holds a similar role on his adopted home plane, Ravnica, where he is the Living Guildpact who keeps the ten guilds of that city-plane in balance. But the Gatewatch offers him the opportunity to think and act on a larger scale, which intrigues him as a mental challenge in addition to appealing to his sense of responsibility.

Jace has come to Ixalan with his memory once again in tatters following a disastrous confrontation with the evil dragon Planeswalker Nicol Bolas. He has forgotten who he is, why he is here, and who his friends and foes are. But his intellect and ingenuity remain his greatest strengths as he makes his way to the golden city of Orazca.

"It's good to learn from your failures, but I prefer to learn from the failures of others."
—Jace Beleren

Jace, Cunning Castaway ➪ Kieran Yanner

Jace, Ingenious Mind-Mage ➪ Clint Cearley

The Gatewatch

Six Planeswalkers—Gideon Jura, Jace Beleren, Liliana Vess, Chandra Nalaar, Nissa Revane, and Ajani Goldmane—have come together to form the Gatewatch. Sworn to protect the Multiverse from dangers that threaten multiple planes, they strive to use their power for the greater good. During their battle against Nicol Bolas, Jace was separated from his companions in the Gatewatch, and rejoining them will be his highest priority—as soon as he can remember them.

Gideon Jura. Fiercely loyal, unyielding, just, and charismatic, Gideon Jura doesn't hesitate to enter combat to defend the innocent. A powerful warrior-mage with the ability to make himself invulnerable, he wields a four-bladed sural and uses law magic against his foes.

Liliana Vess. Liliana Vess is cunning and ambitious to a fault. She wields the dark art of necromancy to reanimate the dead and corrupt the living. She's as sharp as the edge of a razor and lives for the pursuit of power.

Chandra Nalaar. Impulsive, passionate, and short-tempered, Chandra Nalaar is as ready to explode as the pyromantic spells in her ever-growing repertoire.

Nissa Revane. Nissa Revane is a powerful elemental mage who is driven, devoted, and deeply connected to the land.

Ajani Goldmane. Ajani Goldmane is torn between his leonin ferocity and his sense of justice. He is an outcast within his own family, an albino leonin never accepted by the rest of his pride.

Vraska

The mysterious Planeswalker Vraska wields a suite of deadly spells that suit her gorgon nature. She specializes in magic that involves assassination, stealth, and petrification—and she likes to take souvenirs.

Vraska has spent most of her time on the plane of Ravnica, where she provides certain dark services to the Golgari Swarm—one of the less savory of Ravnica's ten ruling guilds. Her magic helps her track her chosen marks through the fungus-choked tunnels of the undercity, where she destroys her victims quietly. When necessary, she can even summon shadowy killers to do her dirty work for her.

The Golgari see her as a useful enigma: a shadowy death specialist who takes only the jobs she wants in exchange for strange favors and obscure trophies. She gets the job done and departs again, not to be seen until another mission interests her. Though she cares little about the internal politics of the Golgari Swarm, she identifies strongly with this guild of outcasts and resents its leaders, whom she sees as vain, power-hungry, and indifferent to the sufferings of the people they're supposed to represent.

Vraska has always believed she had the potential to become a leader in her own right, and at last someone else has acknowledged that potential. The dragon Planeswalker Nicol Bolas has hired her to come to Ixalan and find the Immortal Sun. This has given her the opportunity to lead a pirate crew—a ragtag band she views as family—and accomplish a task with significance beyond the petty politics of Ravnica. Of course, if she should fail in this mission, she will be trapped on this plane forever.

"I have seen things that would reduce a weaker person to blubbering and raving. Want to hear about them?" —Vraska

Vraska, Relic Seeker ➤ Chris Rahn

Costly Plunder ➤ Ben Maier

Nicol Bolas

As far as anyone knows, Nicol Bolas is the oldest Planeswalker in the Multiverse. Ages before remembered history, Bolas established empires across multiple planes, hoarded secrets and treasures beyond number, and vanquished potential rivals ranging from a demon-leviathan on Dominaria to Ugin the Spirit Dragon on Tarkir. Though he no longer wields the power of a god, he is still a dragon—ancient beyond merely human reckoning, with knowledge of spells beyond the imagination of any living mage. His vast intellect still dwarfs the minds of the short-lived minions who serve him. And so he conjures schemes, weaves twisting plans inside of plans, and charts paths that, he knows, will lead him back to divinity—to the power that is his birthright.

Vraska, Scheming Gorgon ➪ Grzegorz Rutkowski

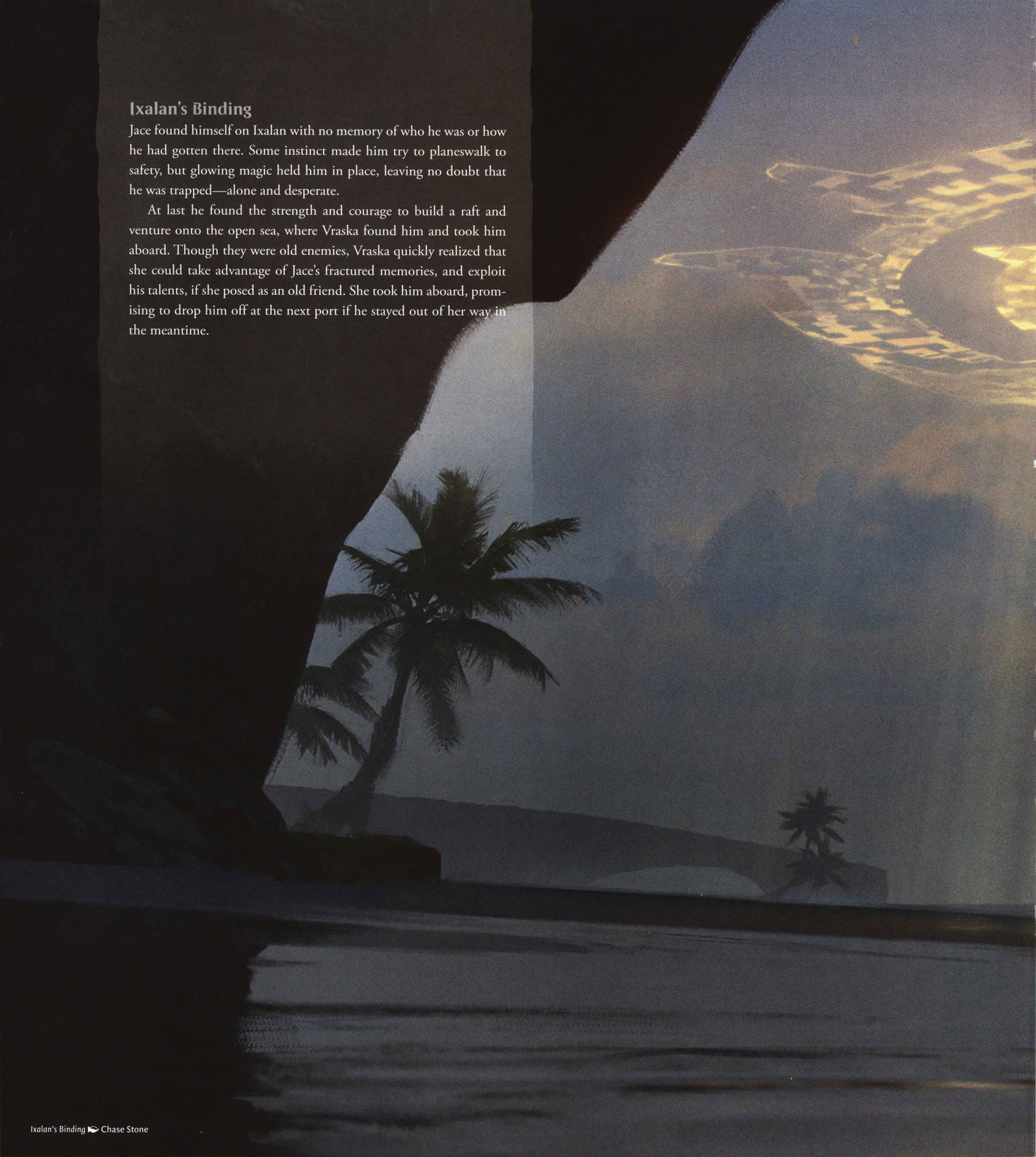
Ixalan

Jace Beleren arrived on Ixalan while the four peoples of the plane were clashing over territory and starting their race to find Orazca and claim the power of the Immortal Sun. During the Gatewatch's ill-fated attempt to defeat Nicol Bolas on the plane of Amonkhet, Bolas lured Jace into the labyrinthine passages of his thoughts—and then crushed Jace's mind. Jace crumpled to the ground as all rational thought fled, then he planeswalked away.

In that last, desperate act, Jace clung to the memory of a strange clue: his old foe, Vraska, had departed Ravnica in an unusual way, her destination unclear. Connecting the fragmentary information at his disposal, he followed Vraska in the hope that she might hold a clue to defeating Bolas. But he arrived on Ixalan with his memory in tatters, unable to recall anything about Bolas, the Gatewatch, his powers of mind magic, or why he had come to this plane.

With no resources to draw on but his natural intelligence, Jace found himself alone and stranded on Ixalan.

Ixalan ➪ Chris Rallis



Ixalan's Binding

Jace found himself on Ixalan with no memory of who he was or how he had gotten there. Some instinct made him try to planeswalk to safety, but glowing magic held him in place, leaving no doubt that he was trapped—alone and desperate.

At last he found the strength and courage to build a raft and venture onto the open sea, where Vraska found him and took him aboard. Though they were old enemies, Vraska quickly realized that she could take advantage of Jace's fractured memories, and exploit his talents, if she posed as an old friend. She took him aboard, promising to drop him off at the next port if he stayed out of her way in the meantime.

Ixalan's Binding ➪ Chase Stone

Vraska's Contempt

Jace and Vraska set sail on the pirate ship Vraska had claimed for herself. When Vraska's ship came under attack, Jace was impressed by Vraska's powers, in particular her ability to turn to stone anyone foolish enough to meet her gaze. After witnessing the power of his illusion magic, she was equally impressed. Long ago, she had invited him to work with her, and this battle had proven that they made a good team. She made him a part of her crew and he agreed to help with her mission in any way he could.

Vraska was attempting to navigate her way to Orazca by using a magical "thaumatic compass" given to her by Nicol Bolas, but she struggled to make sense of the information it was giving her. Jace continued to prove his usefulness by helping her with the device.

Vraska's Contempt Clint Cearley

River's Rebuke

Now following the directions indicated by the thaumatic compass, Vraska sailed her ship into a cove—where it immediately came under attack by a group of River Heralds. The merfolk summoned a colossal wave to engulf the ship and smash it to flinders. The survivors found their way to shore, but the two Planeswalkers were separated from the rest of Vraska's crew. They escaped the chaos by traveling up a nearby river, sure that other enemies were hot on their trail.

River's Rebuke ◁ Raymond Swanland

Spires of Orazca

Jace and Vraska proceeded on a perilous journey through the jungle. One misfortune after another slowed their progress or led them off course. But Jace was finally able to unlock the secrets of the thaumatic compass, keeping them heading in the right direction.

At long last, Jace and Vraska discovered the spires of Orazca. But the Sun Empire warriors were hot on their trail, and a group of River Heralds had been shadowing their path as well. The search for the golden city entered its desperate final stage.

Thaumatic Compass ➢ Yeong-Hao Han

Perilous Voyage

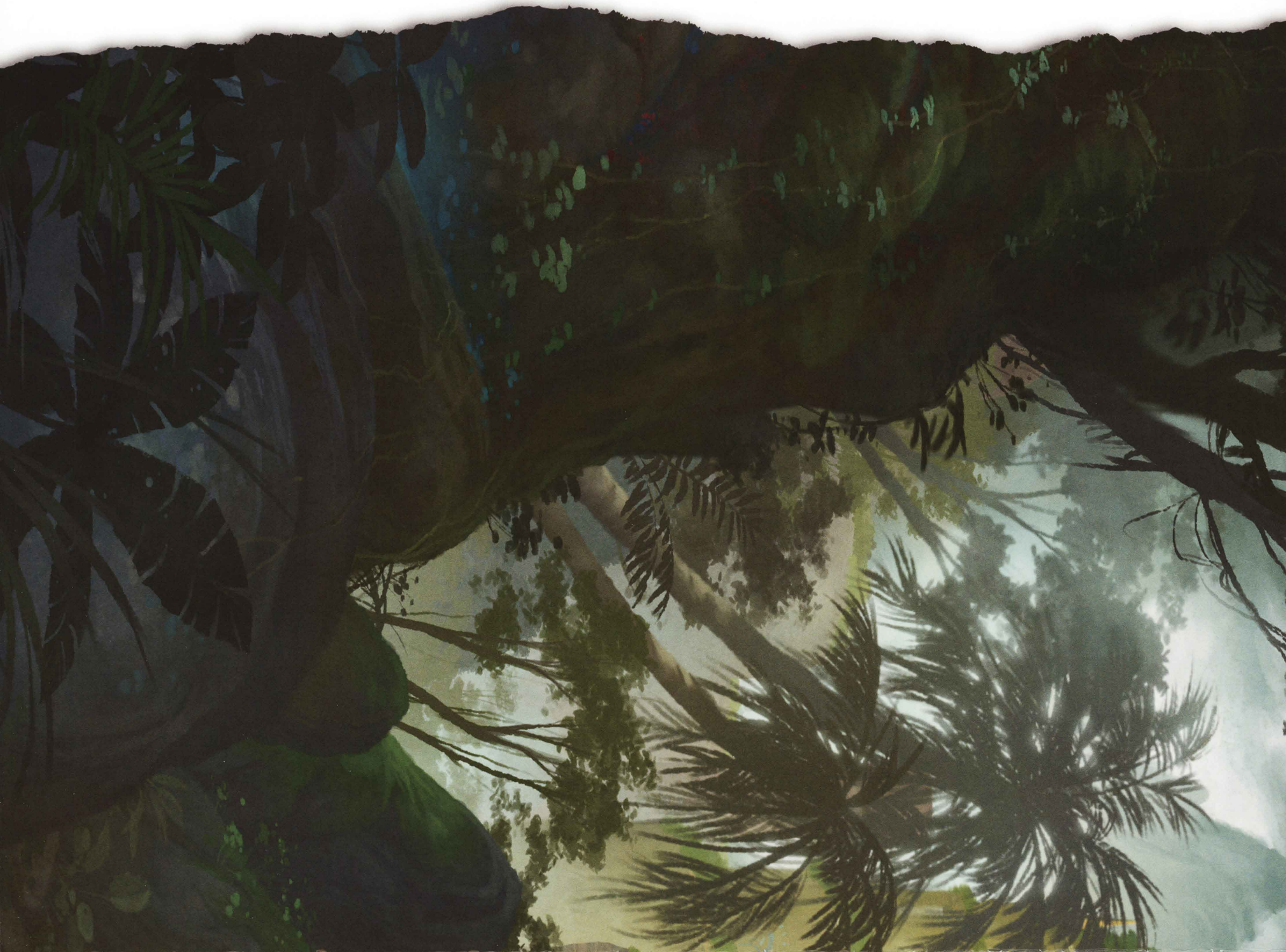
The River Heralds, led by the hotheaded shaman Kumena, were the first to call on the power of Orazca. Standing amid the golden spires, Kumena opened the cocoon of earth that hid the golden city away, tearing the ground asunder. The ground opened like the petals of a flower around the city, creating towering waterfalls and sheer cliff faces striped with gleaming gold. The city stood in the middle like an enormous pillar, impossibly intact, as though the earth had been carefully cupping the buildings in its gentle hands.

The rivers surged and winds howled as the merfolk shaman's heightened power summoned a torrential storm. Rivers that had quietly rolled through the jungle became rushing torrents plunging into the abyss that now surrounded the opened city, and hurricane winds held Kumena aloft above the city's central spire.

In the chaos and tumult, Jace was caught up in a surge of water and carried over a waterfall!

Perilous Voyage ▸ Wesley Burt

Into the Golden City



Enter the Unknown ➪ Howard Lyon

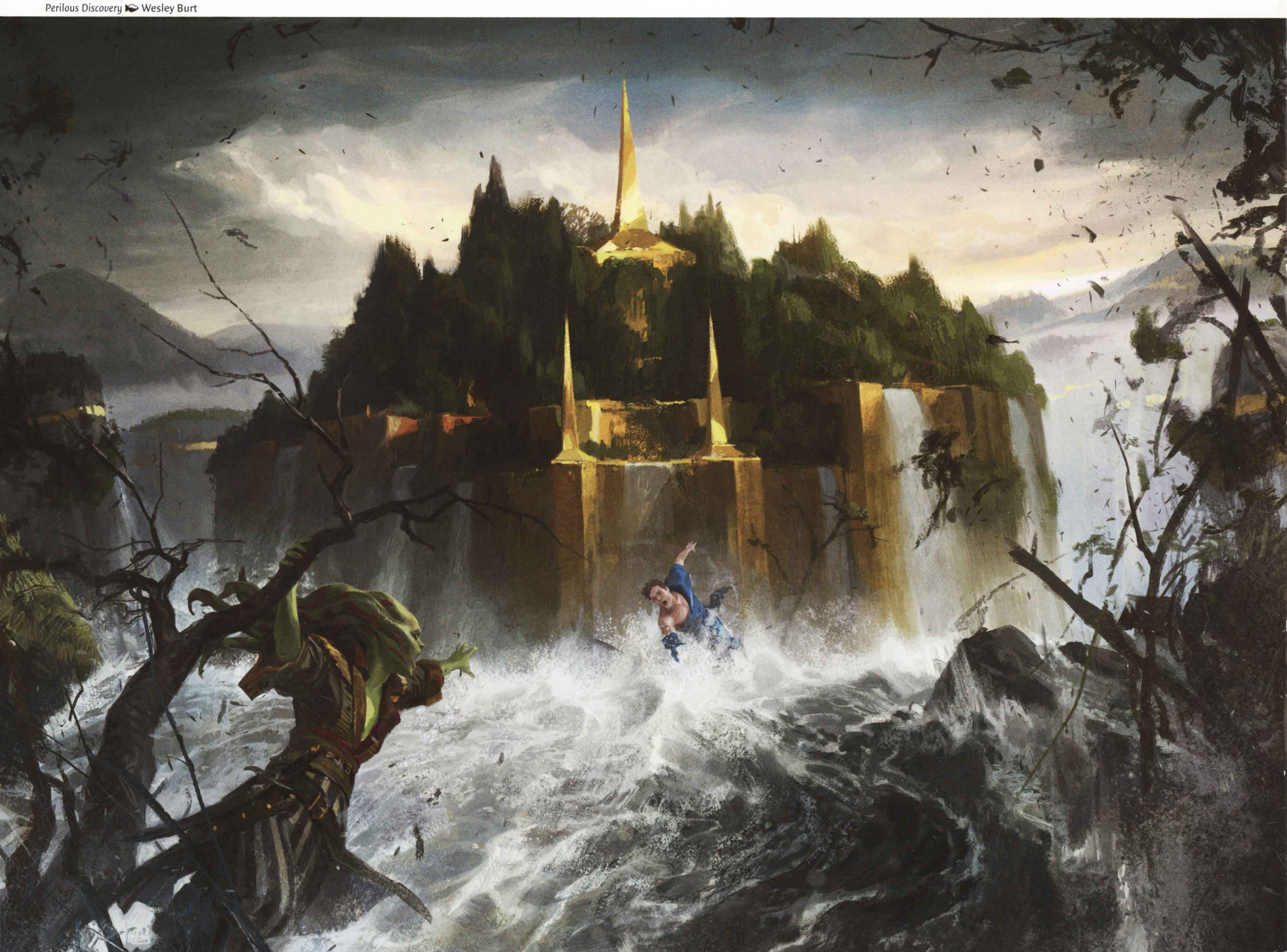
Orazca, the Golden City

When Kumena called on the ancient magic of the Immortal Sun, the ground opened like the petals of a flower around the golden city, creating towering waterfalls and sheer cliff faces striped with gleaming gold. The city stood in the middle like an enormous pillar with a gleaming golden temple at the top. Ornate ramps and stairways climbed upward toward the pinnacle, and smaller buildings perched atop other rock formations surrounding it. The sun shone on its gleaming golden spires for the first time in centuries, and the jungle covered the city like a verdant blanket.

Kumena was the first to enter the Threefold Temple at the summit of the city, where the Immortal Sun was set into the floor like a dais. Opening Orazca was a significant shift for the River Heralds. For centuries, they had protected the golden city by steering everyone away from it, keeping the Immortal Sun safe by ensuring that no one—not even them—could wield its awful power. But then Kumena defied tradition and entered the golden city. Initially, his bold move seemed to work: he drew on the power of the Immortal Sun to call up an enormous storm that battered the intruders. But when he lost control of the temple, it was a devastating blow.

Legion of Dusk forces, led by Vona of Iedo and Mavren Fein, seized control of the Threefold Temple and shrouded the golden city in darkness. Consumed with zeal for the long-lost Immortal Sun and the hope of finding Elenda, the vampires were gripped with an insatiable bloodlust as they fought to drive the heretics out of the golden city.

Perilous Discovery ➢ Wesley Burt



Kumena, Tyrant of Orazca ➢ Tyler Jacobson

Kumena's Awakening ➢ Zack Stella

The opening of the golden city revealed what turned out to be the Sun Empire's greatest asset during the struggle for control of the city: the enormous elder dinosaurs inside it, which had been held in stasis during Orazca's long hibernation in the earth. Towering over even the largest of other dinosaurs, these creatures were nearly impossible to dominate or control, but Huatli was able to harness an elder dinosaur's power and use it in her bid to seize control of the temple.

With several different pirate captains desperately searching for the golden city, its discovery tested the strength of the bonds holding the Brazen Coalition together. Jace and the gorgon Planeswalker Vraska were the first to reach Orazca and were present when Kumena's River Heralds first opened the city. But the opening of the city and the monstrous storm created by the River Heralds inadvertently created a virtual beacon guiding other teams toward Orazca and the promise of its treasure. Angrath the Flame-Chained and Brandis Thorn both reached the city while the fight for control of the Threefold Temple raged on.

Rivals of Ixalan

The River Heralds tore open the earth to expose Orazca once more. Kumena opened the golden city in a desperate, last-ditch effort to prevent any of the intruders from claiming the city and its power, but all too soon, control of the Threefold Temple at the city's heart was wrested away. Then everything the River Heralds had feared came to pass: pirates, vampires, and Sun Empire warriors fought against one another to claim the city and its power. At the center of the conflict was the Immortal Sun—the same object sought by Vraska on behalf of her master, Nicol Bolas.

Rivals of Ixalan ➢ Chris Rallis

Flood of Recollection

After the cataclysmic opening of the golden city, Jace awakened in a pool at the bottom of a waterfall. His head swam with snatches of memories pulled at random from his childhood on Vryn, his life on Ravnica, and his adventures across the Multiverse. Before he could sort through these scraps of memory, though, he found himself surrounded by a group of vampires who spared him only because he assured them he could help them reach the temple at the pinnacle of the city.

Vampires of the Legion of Dusk, Huatli and her Sun Empire compatriots, Angrath and his pirate crew, Vraska, and Jace all made their way through the city, skirmishing with each other and overcoming obstacles put in their way by Kumena from his perch in the Threefold Temple. Eventually Kumena was unseated, and control of the temple's power shifted from one group to another.

Flood of Recollection ➤ Magali Villeneuve

Induced Amnesia

While the battle for control of the temple raged above, Jace and Vraska found their way into the chambers below the temple. There they found the Immortal Sun and its mighty guardian, the sphinx Azor.

Thousands of years ago, Azor created the Guildpact—the magical law that bound the guilds of Ravnica into an uneasy accord. Jace had since become the Living Guildpact, and his encounter with Azor was the last jolt to his mind that brought all his memories flooding back.

Jace finally remembered who he was and how he had come to Ixalan, as well as who Vraska was and the full implications of her mission. He explained to Vraska the terrible evil that Nicol Bolas was capable of, painting a vivid picture of the ruin that would befall Ravnica under the dragon's reign. Just as bad, when Vraska returned to Bolas, he would plunder her mind, seeing every shred of doubt and deceit and all her interaction with Jace. For the safety of them both, she asked him to seal those memories away so Bolas wouldn't see them. So he reached into Vraska's mind and wiped all trace of himself from her memory.

Induced Amnesia ➤ Chris Rallis

Mastermind's Acquisition

According to plan, Vraska activated a special beacon that sent a signal through the Blind Eternities to another of Bolas's agents: Tezzeret, who had battled the Planeswalkers of the Gatewatch on Kaladesh.

On Kaladesh, Tezzeret had worked to perfect magical technology that would allow the transportation of unliving matter from one plane to another. Though the Gatewatch's members believed they had destroyed that technology and defeated Tezzeret, the planeswalker had in fact incorporated the core functionality of the Planar Bridge into his own partially artificial body. Then, at Vraska's signal, he opened the portal and took the Immortal Sun away.

Her mission complete and the Immortal Sun's planar binding removed, Vraska planeswalked away to receive her reward from Nicol Bolas. Jace left soon after to rejoin the rest of the Gatewatch.

Mastermind's Acquisition ➤ Svetlin Velinov

An Ixalan Bestiary

Charging Monstrosaur ➪ Zack Stella

Itlimoc, *Cradle of the Sun* ➢ Grzegorz Rutkowski

Ancient Brontodon ➢ Jakub Kasper

Dinosaurs

Dinosaurs are the dominant form of animal life on Ixalan, the absolute rulers of the coastal lands held by the Sun Empire and a force to be reckoned with in the interior jungles.

The Rumbling Herds

The largest of the dinosaurs are huge, long-necked herbivores that feed on the leaves of tall trees. The enormous size of these dinosaurs means that a single beast—often a young, old, or injured one that gets separated from the herd—can feed a whole pack of smaller predators.

Grazing Whiptail ➤ Gabor Szikszai

The magnificent altisaurs wander across the plains and through the sparse forests of the Sun Coast, grazing on the tops of trees.

Brontodons travel in herds, and when they build up any speed the earth thunders beneath their tremendous weight.

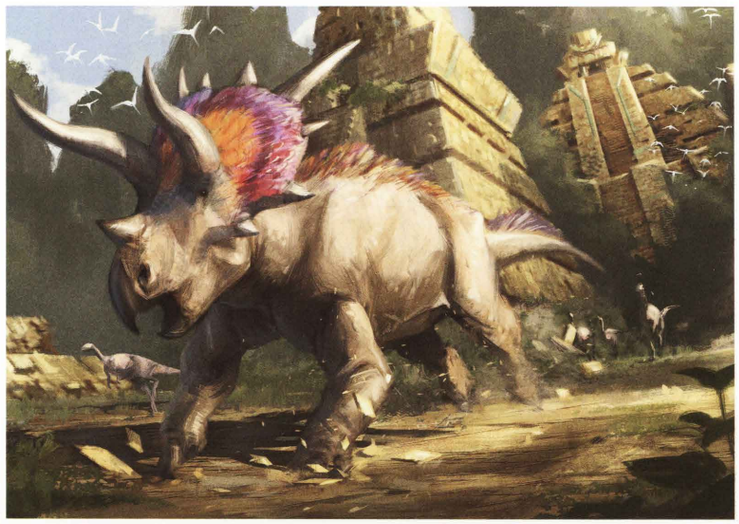
"It is taller than all but the tallest trees, and older than all but the oldest. The earth shakes and shatters where a brontodon walks."
—Huatli

Belligerent Brontodon ➤ *Dan Scott*

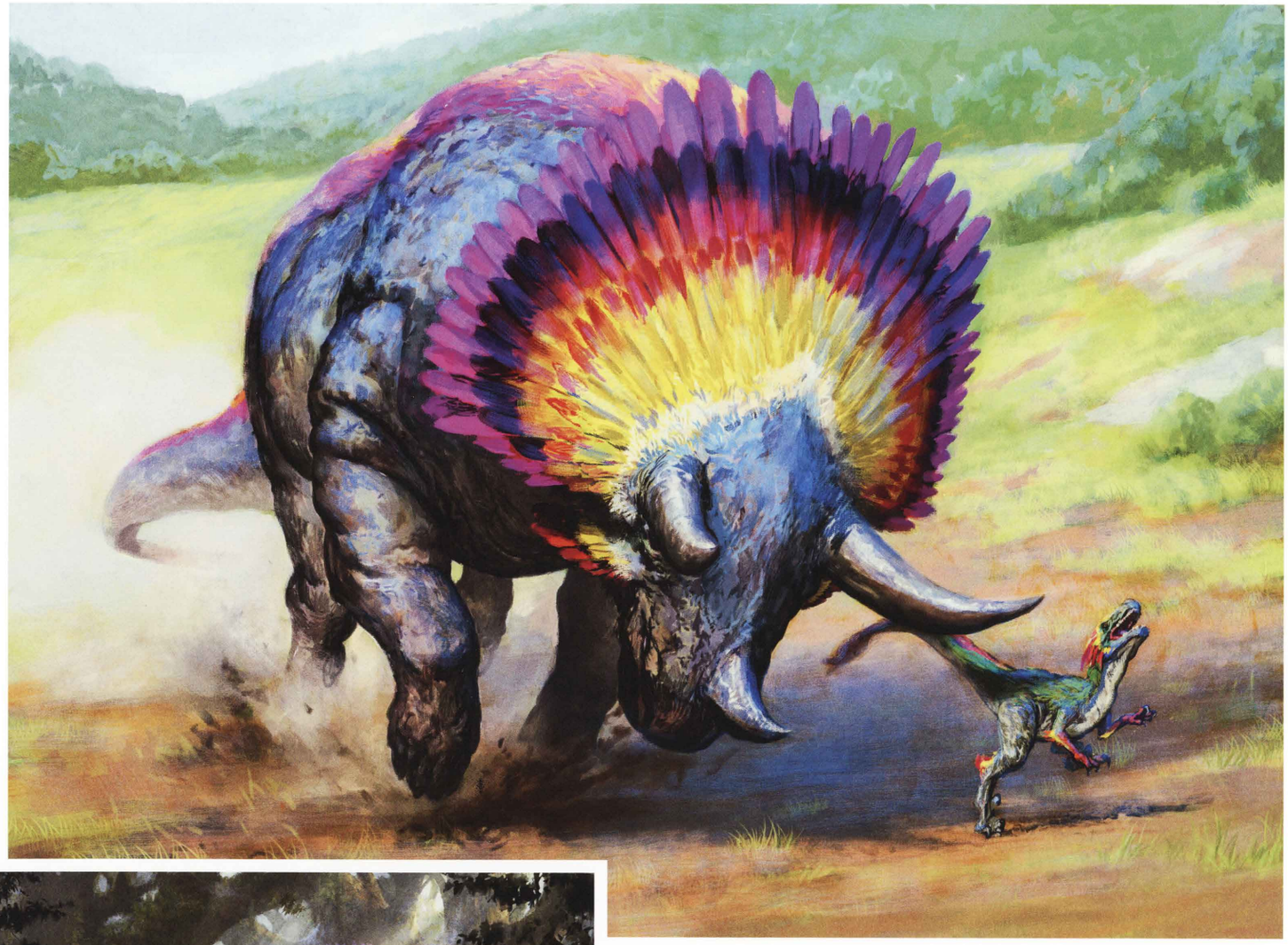
Horned Herbivores

Many smaller herbivores are found on the plains of Ixalan. Rather than depending on size for protection, these dinosaurs are protected by plated scales, sharp horns, or spiked tails. They tend to be aggressively proactive in chasing off predators before they are attacked, and the people of the Sun Empire find them among the hardest dinosaurs to control.

Stampeding Horncrest ➪ Jonathan Kuo



Siegehorn Ceratops ➪ Filip Burburan



Goring Ceratops ➤ Zezhou Chen

Spike-Tailed Ceratops ➤ Lius Lasahido

Ceratopses sport enormous horns on and around the large feathered frills that protect their necks. The related snubhorns lack the sharp, pointed horns of their cousins. Despite their surly temper, ceratopses make excellent mounts.

"You don't tame a horncrest. You convince it that it's easier to destroy something else."
—Amautl, *knight of Atzocan*

Huatli's Snubhorn ➤ Randy Vargas

Steadfast Armasaur ➢ Greg Opalanski

Scales, Spikes, and Hammers

For dinosaurs without the prominent horns of the ceratopses, armored plating and deadly tails are their best defense against predators.

Aegisaurs' backs are covered with thick, armored scales that resemble turtle shells. Their tails are tipped with massive, bony clubs than can smash an aggressor's skull.

Armasaurs also have plates on their backs, but these rise up like spikes along their spines. Their whiplike tails also bear sharp spikes for protection.

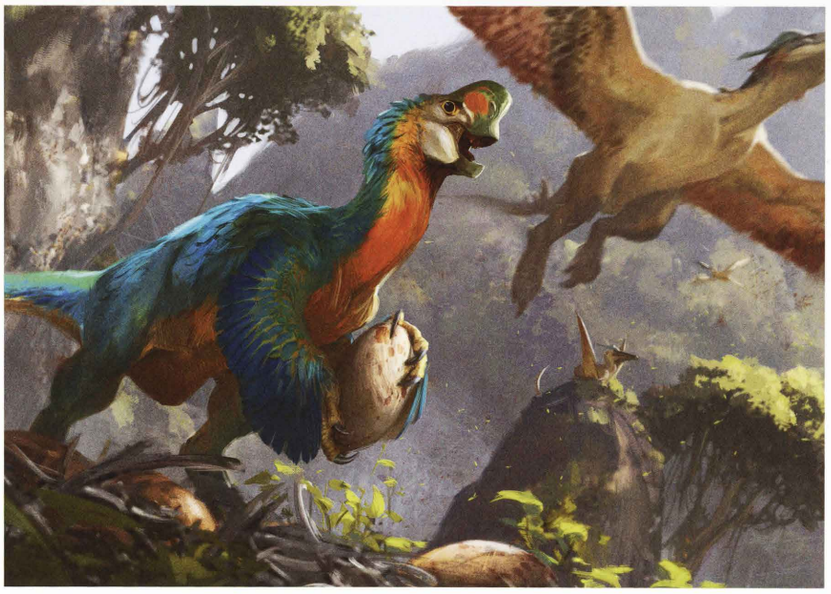
Bellowing Aegisaur ➢ Craig J Spearing

Territorial Hammerskull ➪ Lars Grant-West

Even lacking horns or spikes, hammerskulls can protect themselves with their thickly plated heads.

Other herbivores rely on speed, stealth, or numbers to aid their chances of survival.

"Like the mighty armasaur, we will defend against all who invade our shores."
—Itzama the Crested



Nest Robber ➪ Jonathan Kuo

Shining Aerosaur ➽ Dan Scott

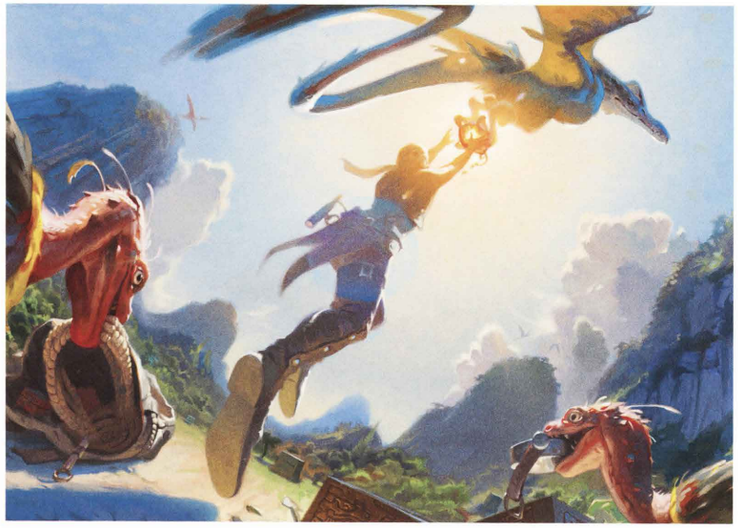
Soaring Flocks

Aerosaurs include several varieties of large reptiles with leathery wings, including pterodons and sunwings. Though they are generally clumsy fliers, better at gliding from high perches or riding coastal updrafts than at lifting themselves from the ground, they are sometimes used as mounts by knights of the Sun Empire.

Sky Terror ➤ Johann Bodin

"The invaders cloak themselves in the shadows of dusk. The aerosaur hides in the brilliance of the noonday sun."
—Caparocti Sunborn

Kinjalli's Sunwing ➤ Simon Dominic



Blatant Thievery ➤ Victor Adame Minguez

Strength of the Pack ➪ Tomasz Jedruszek

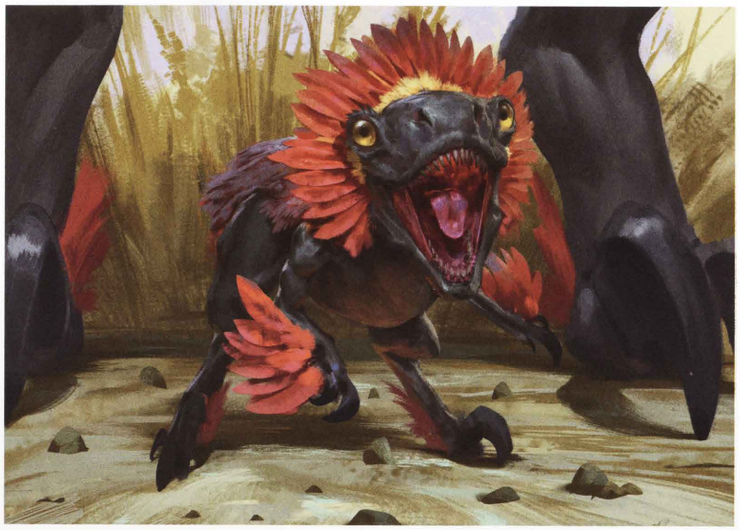
Ripjaw Raptor ➽ Ryan Pancoast

The Flesh Eaters

The most feared dinosaurs are the aggressive bipedal predators that hunt other dinosaurs—and aren't averse to feeding on human flesh. Despite (or more likely because of) their ferocity, they make excellent mounts, since they do not balk or shy away from combat. These dinosaurs include a huge variety of raptors, ranging from dog-sized creatures that hunt in terrifying packs to monstrous raptors large enough to carry an armored knight into battle.

Sun-Blessed Mount ➽ Joe Slucher

Raptor Hatchling ➪ Even Amundsen



"Every little hatchling has a parent's claws to guard it."
—Sun Empire saying

Thrash of Raptors ➪ Jonathan Kuo

Rampaging Ferocidon ➢ Jonathan Kuo

Teeth and Frills. Ferocidons are particularly vicious relatives of raptors, specialized to take down much larger prey.

Sailbacks are predators that lurk in lakes and rivers to ambush unwary prey.

The dinosaurs aptly known as deathspitters can spit venom to blind their prey before closing in for the kill.

Snapping Sailback ➢ Dan Scott

Sun-Crowned Hunters ➽ Aaron Miller

"*All raptors are aggressive, but ferocidons seem to enjoy their prey's pain.*"
—Chitlati, *Lightning Rider*

Frilled Deathspitter ➽ Zoltan Boros

Dinosaur Tyrants. Ixalan's largest predators are a family of dinosaurs with large heads, bladelike teeth, and short, almost vestigial front legs. These terrifying creatures bear names like monstrosaurs, dreadmaws, swordtooths, regisaurs, and tyrants, and the mere sound of their roars inspires terror. Most of them are solitary hunters, but regisaurs in particular are known for hunting in small packs.

Raging Regisaur ➤ Bayard Wu

Deathgorge Scavenger ➤ Tyler Jacobson

Regisaur Alpha ➪ Jonathan Kuo

"Seeing a pack of these monsters hunt together, I'm at a loss to imagine the size of their prey."
—Adrian Adanto of Lujio

Dinosaur ➪ Filip Burburan

Elder Dinosaurs of Orazca. The opening of Orazca, the golden city, reveals the existence of six huge and ancient elder dinosaurs, apparently preserved for centuries inside the city. Compared to their smaller cousins, they have less colorful plumage and more grayish scales, but their feathers are a bright gold that matches the city itself. They are strong-willed and ferocious and thus hard to control, but the power of the Immortal Sun gives the Sun Empire warriors who wield it the ability to bring these elder dinosaurs under their command.

Etali, Primal Storm ➪ Raymond Swanland

"Kinjalli crafted us from the clay. But the Threefold Sun shaped the elder dinosaurs from the bones of the earth. They embody all of nature, from the rising of the sun to the rotting of the swamp." —Huatli

Zetalpa, Primal Dawn ➪ Chris Rallis

Tetzimoc, Primal Death ➪ Zack Stella

Ghalta, Primal Hunger ➤ Chase Stone

Imperial Aerosaur © Jesper Ejsing

Coatls

The River Heralds believe that the waters of the world are divided into two spheres: the river and the sea are the lower half, and the jungle and the sky are the upper. They believe the sea possesses an unfathomable wisdom, the deep musings of the unspeakably ancient world. But the wisdom of the sky is embodied in coatls—winged serpents that wind through the air like rivers across the ground.

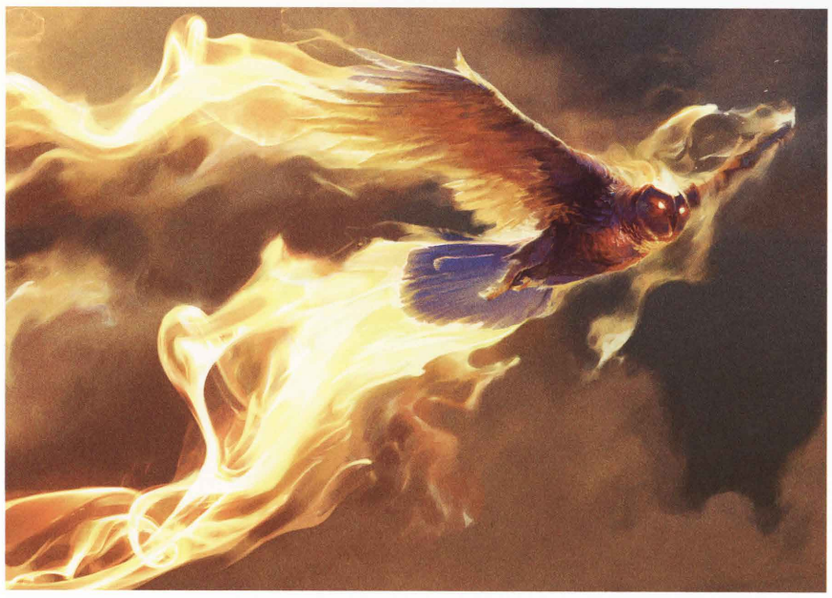
Coatls are immortal guardians of the sky, dwelling among the clouds and never touching the ground. The River Heralds say that they can be called down by the earnest supplication of the wisest of merfolk shamans. They are said to be wise beyond mortal measure, and incapable of speaking a falsehood, so their advice is sometimes sought in times of desperate need. The sight of a coatl is thought to foretell favorable winds—a belief that has begun to spread from the River Herald shamans to the pirates of the Brazen Coalition.

Favorable Winds ➢ Shreya Shetty

Rekindling Phoenix ➤ Jason Rainville

Sunbirds

The people of the Sun Empire revere certain dinosaurs as incarnations of the Threefold Sun, but fiery phoenixes, or sunbirds, are thought to be messengers of Tilonalli, embodying the destructive aspect of the sun but also the rebirth that follows. Legends hold that somewhere within the mountains sleeps Xuatl, a scaled bird formed from the sun's fire which molts its skin and feathers during the summer months, often setting the trees and slopes ablaze.

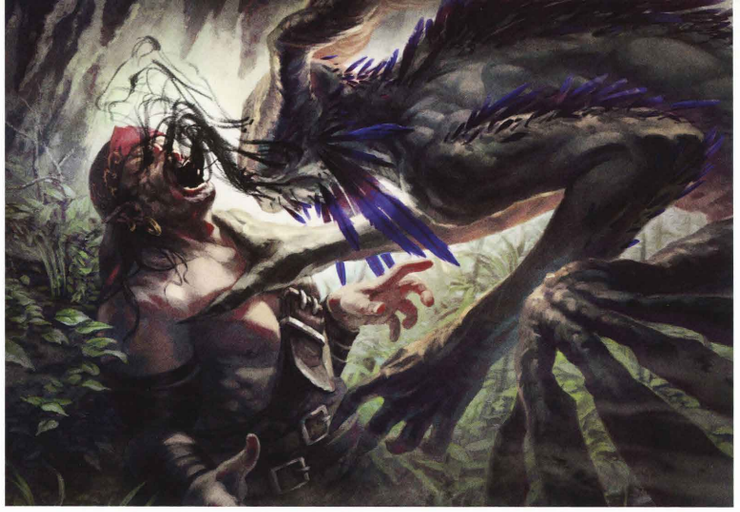


Sunbird's Invocation ➤ Christine Choi

Night Terrors

The legends of the Sun Empire are populated with the enemies of the sun, terrible monsters that threaten to devour its light and undo its work. Unfortunately for the people of Ixalan, these are not just monsters of legend, but real creatures with supernatural power that lurk in the darkness of night and the shadows of ancient ruins and crypts.

Lurking Chupacabra ➤ YW Tang



Dark Nourishment ➤ Josh Haas

Demons

Resembling twisted bats, the demons of Ixalan are the spawn of a bat god, the source of all darkness. While the sun's aspects include destruction as well as creation and growth, the demons represent stagnation and decay. The sun consumes in glorious fire; demons work through rot and degeneration. They are said to be active at night, when the sun is hidden, and their efforts are directed toward preventing the sun from rising again each morning. In the meantime, they spread plague and corruption across the land.

➤ Zack Stella

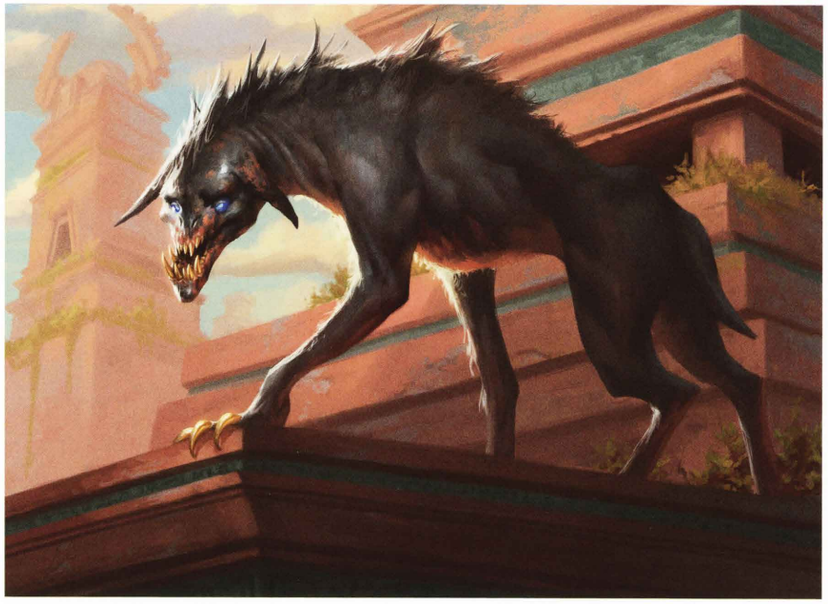
Mausoleum Harpy ✒ Randy Vargas

Harpies

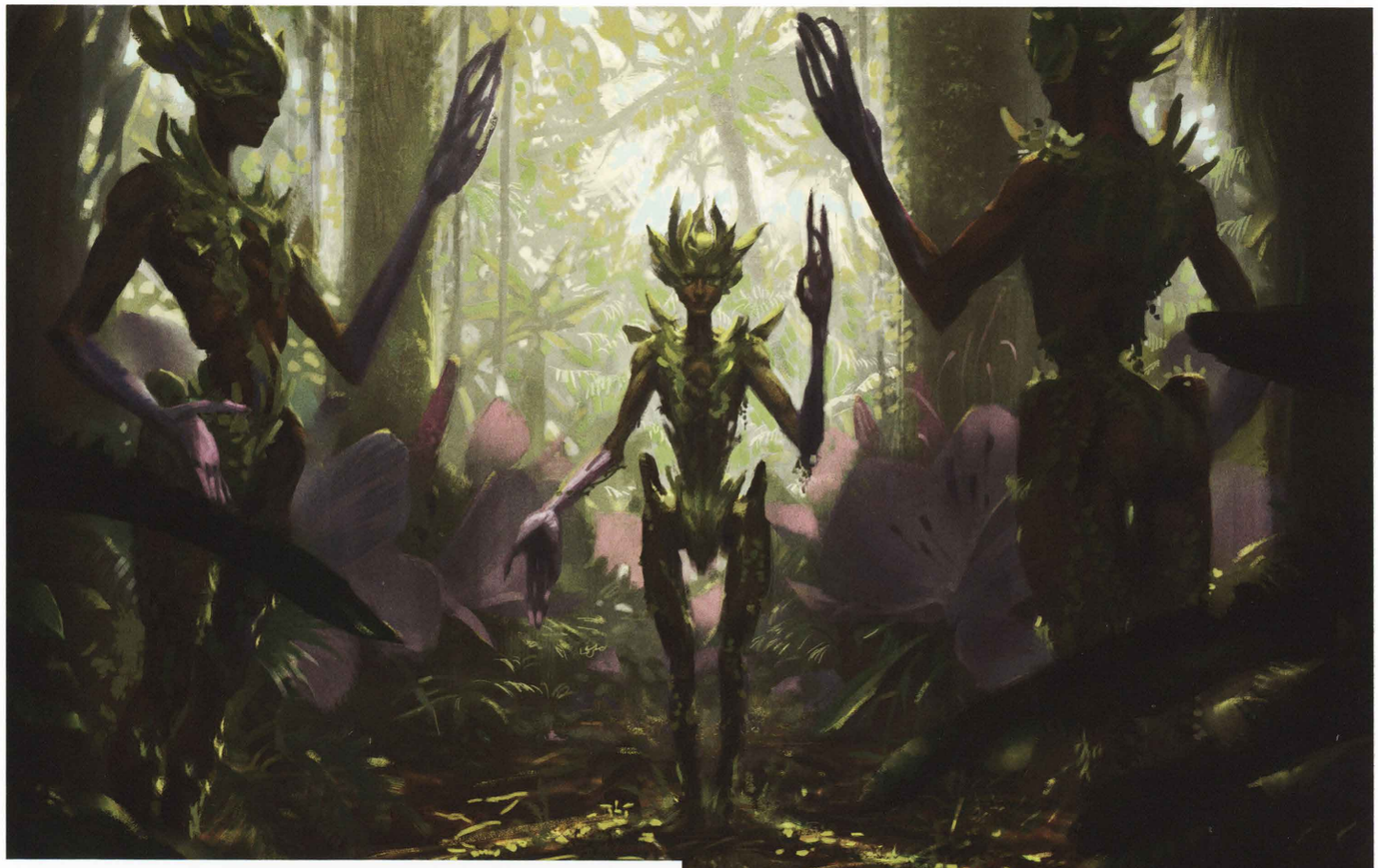
Harpies are the mortal servants of demons, and they resemble them in general outline. Their faces are like those of owls, and they have large feathered wings that suggest their corrupt connection to the Sun Empire—or perhaps their heritage as sirens who were warped by the evil of the demons. Utterly nasty in temperament, harpies inhabit many of the islands in both the Stormwreck Sea and the Inner Sea, as well as high cliffs on the mainland of Ixalan. Their filthy bodies carry disease, which they can spread through their bites.

Horrors

Indescribable creatures of nightmare lurk in the ruins and dark places of Ixalan. They are thought to be the corrupted remnant of the life energy and brilliant light left behind in places the Sun Empire has abandoned. They include a semi-reptilian creature that lurks in the darkness of the jungle and feeds on the blood of mammals and dinosaurs, called the chupacabra. It is stealthy and elusive, known more by the blood-drained prey it leaves behind than by actual physical sightings.



Ravenous Chupacabra ✒ Daarken



Old-Growth Dryads ➤ Yongjae Choi

Blossom Dryad ➤ Shreya Shetta

Nature Embodied

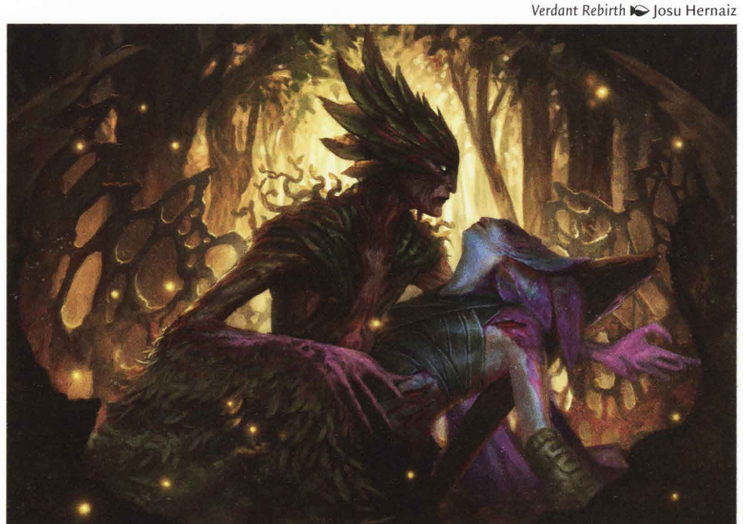
The forest surrounding the Great River teems with both plant and animal life. In the space between, or perhaps encompassing both, are creatures that embody life itself.

Dryads

It is said that the only force on Ixalan not interested in finding the golden city is Ixalan itself. Dryads, as incarnations of the land and its will, prove the saying true. Their only concern is the health of the forest: when the trees and ferns are healthy, the dryads flourish. But when the vampires' dusk fog or a demon's unwholesome influence cause the jungle to wither, the dryads suffer. They are therefore generally friendly with the River Heralds, who live in harmony with nature, but hostile to the Legion of Dusk.

The dryads otherwise have no stake in the conflicts among the people of the land and its invaders, but they are creatures of life and growth, and they hate to see any living being suffer. Thus, they have been known to tend to wounded people left in the jungle to die, sharing their own abundant life energy with those in their care.

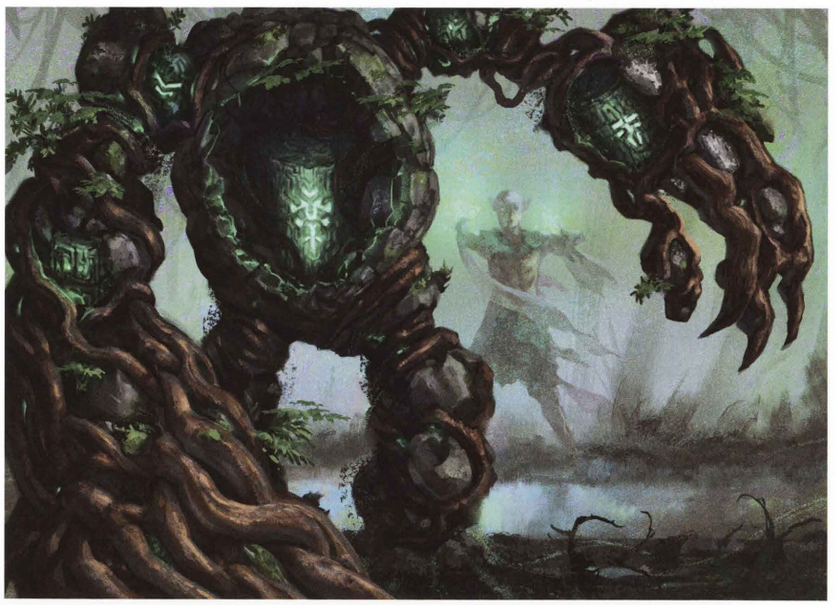
Verdant Rebirth ➤ Josu Hernaiz



Fire Shrine Keeper ➤ Zoltan Boros

"Hear me, stone, root, branch: be the fist of this land. Turn back those who trample upon your domain."
—Song of the Shaper

Wildgrowth Walker ➤ Ryan Alexander Lee



Elementals

Elementals are an even more primal embodiment of natural forces. They are living beings of raw natural energy, but magic can shape and bind them into physical forms composed of wind, water, fire, or the verdant growth of the forest. The River Heralds construct jade totems that hold elementals in stasis until activated by a trespasser. Then the totem opens, the elemental's physical form comes together, and the intruder is quickly dispatched.

The River Heralds make use of elementals formed of air, water, or vegetation. In ancient times, when the River Heralds and Sun Empire worked together, they harnessed fire elementals into guardians that still keep watch over some forgotten ruins.

Air Elemental ➤ Tomasz Jedruszek

Blight Keeper ➢ Ben Wootten

Life of the Forest

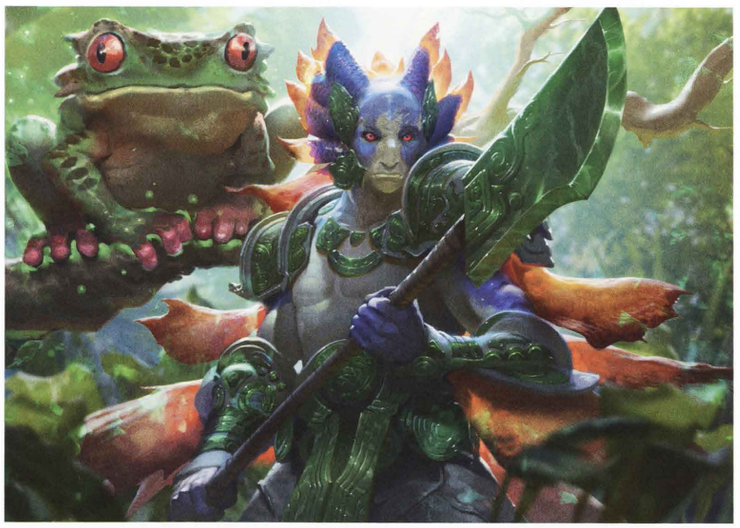
The river and rainforest boast a teeming multitude of species from the canopy to the depths of the water. Animals live and feed in every layer of the forest, from the tops of the tallest emergent trees to the ferns, leaves, and roots reaching deep into the soil. And certain plants are just as active in hunting prey as predatory animals are.

Bats. Bats are common sights in rocky caves and jungle trees. They are considered enemies of the sun and closely associated with demons, even though most varieties are harmless.

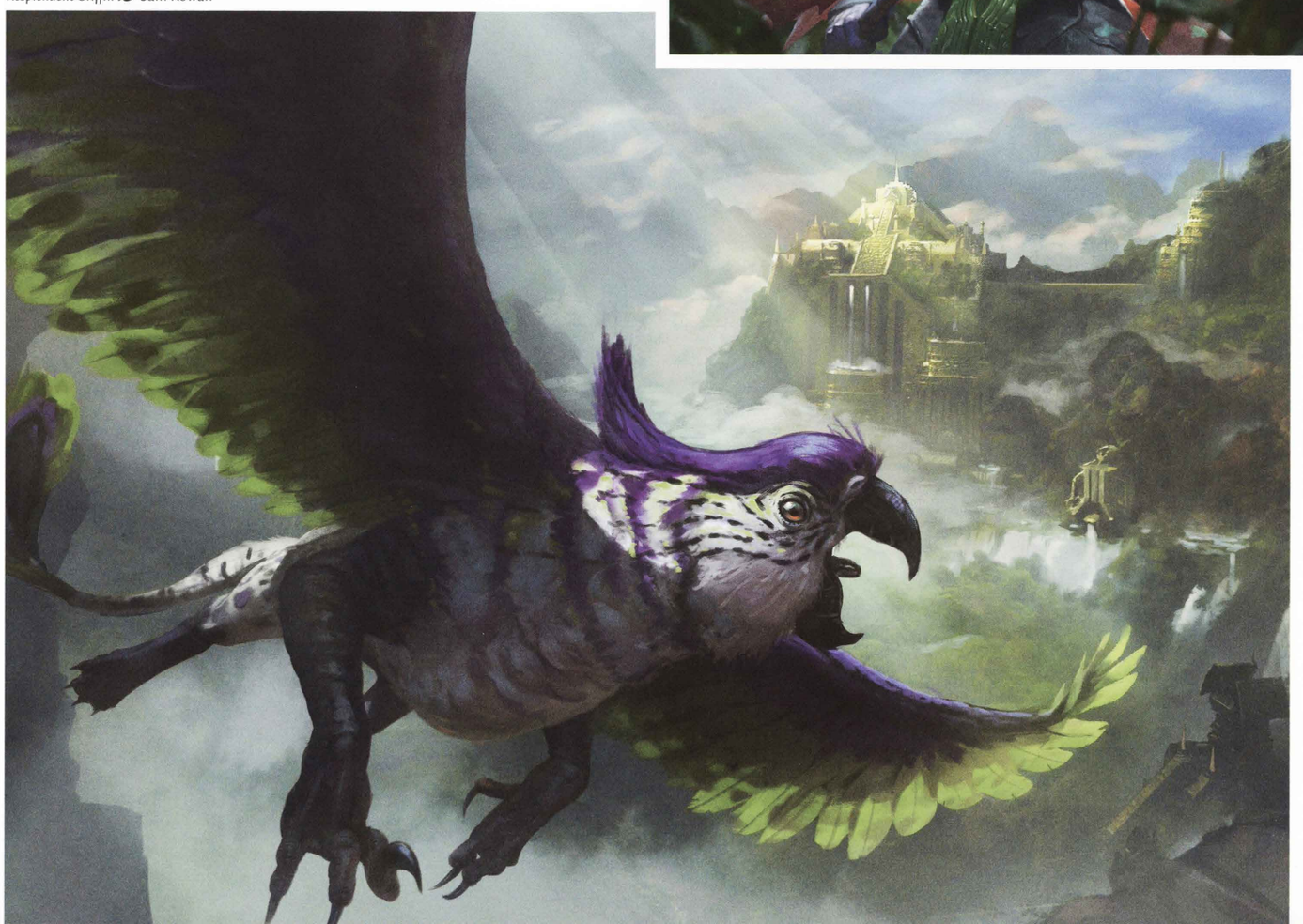
Birds. A wide variety of native birds are found throughout Ixalan, singing complex songs that contribute to the chorus of sounds within the jungle. Large macaws and parrots make their homes in the trees and can often be found gathering over clay licks along the sea coast and along riverbeds. The wily birds enjoy toying with the pirates from the trees, many of them calling out in imitation of humanoid voices to lead them astray as they explore the jungles. Hummingbirds are sometimes poetically described as embodiments of freedom and the pursuit of pleasure.

Frogs. Frogs are more commonly heard than seen in Ixalan, joining their voices to the vivid soundscape of the jungle. They range from tiny poisonous tree frogs found in the branches of tall trees to huge horned frogs that lurk in marshy areas.

River Heralds' Boon ➢ Alex Konstad



Resplendent Griffin ➢ Sam Rowan



Crushing Canopy ➤ Tomasz Jedruszek

Griffins. Colorful griffins combine the heads and wings of jungle parrots with the sleek bodies of jaguars. They are intelligent and noble, and they share the River Heralds' desire to ensure that the power of the Immortal Sun is never again unleashed on the world.

Insects. The forest teems with all manner of insects, spiders, and other arthropods. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water and swarm around any animal with blood. Centipedes, millipedes, roaches, and beetles crawl through the detritus and humus on the forest floor. Wasps, dragonflies, spiders, scorpions, ants, and beetles are everywhere, ranging in size from diminutive to gigantic.

Rile ➤ Igor Kieryluk

Skittering Heartstopper ➤ Aaron Miller

Plants. Many predatory plants attract food by producing smells redolent of food—from the smell of sweet nectar to the odor of decaying meat. They then close jawlike leaves around their prey or capture them in sticky pools of digestive juice. A few plants are more active. They lunge up from the forest canopy to grab flying dinosaurs in woody claws or tangle them in vines, or they pull up their roots and creep across the forest floor in search of good hunting grounds.

Fleet Swallower ➽ Tomasz Jedruszek

Life of the Waters

The rivers and seas of Ixalan teem with life as plentiful—and as dangerous—as that of the forests.

To ships on the Stormwreck Sea, storms are only the most prominent and visible dangers. Bone-plated fish, squid, sea serpents, turtles, and whales can grow large enough to capsize a ship, pull it underwater, or smash it to flinders. The largest sharks are the most feared, but even smaller sharks can be deadly alone—and more so in schools. Their taste for blood makes them a fearsome threat to anyone at sea, especially those forced to walk the plank of a pirate ship.

The Inner Sea is less prone to storms but more crowded with reefs, rocks, and narrow straits. It is home to similar monstrous swimmers, with the addition of large saltwater crocodiles.

Canal Monitor ➽ Zezhou Chen

The waters of the Great River and all its tributaries are home to fish that serve as one of the most important food sources for other animals in the forest. They include large predatory fish as well as churning swarms of small biting fish such as piranhas. Enormous crocodiles and monitor lizards lurk in the waters and bask on the riverbanks.

On the beaches and banks of the rivers and seas, crabs scuttle across the sand and birds wade in the shallow water. Trilobites are among the most common shore dwellers, including predatory varieties as well as scavengers and filter feeders that feed on scraps they find in the sand.

Shore Keeper ➽ YW Tang

Nezahal, Primal Tide ➽ Sam Burley

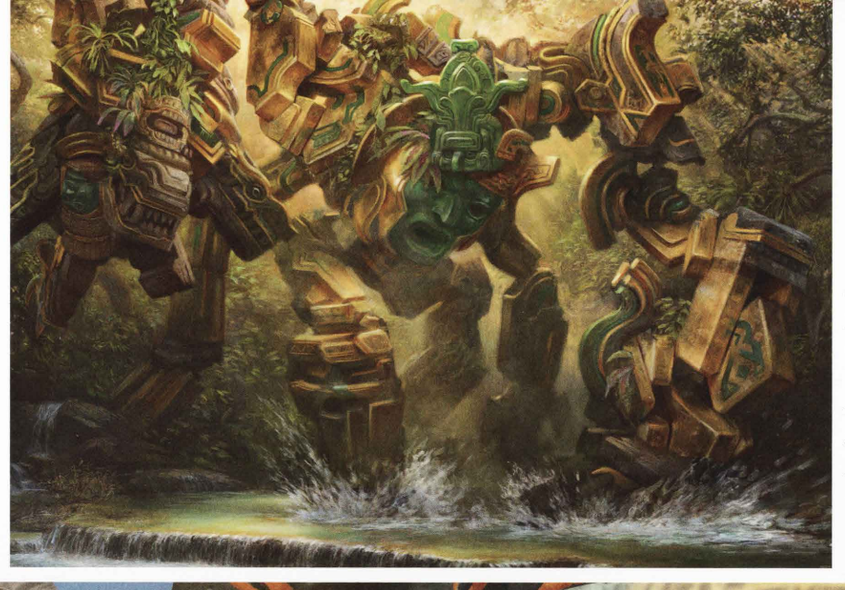
Gilded Sentinel ➢ Izzy

Stone Guardians

During the heyday of the Sun Empire, when its emperors ruled from Orazca, its priests crafted huge stone guardians to protect its cities and their temples. The incredible magic of the Immortal Sun gave a semblance of life to these artificial creatures, endowing them with the ability to move their stone bodies, a keen awareness of their surroundings, and a limited ability to think and reason in order to help them carry out their orders. They were tasked with standing guard—constantly alert, vigilant to any danger, unsleeping, and unswerving in their duty.

Golem ➢ Svetlin Velinov

Most of these stone guardians are inactive now. In ancient ruins lying far from the old capital, the magic that gave them life has faded over the centuries. Even within the golden city, many of them have become inert. Yet those who would explore Orazca or any ancient ruin must be on their guard, for any carved figure might be a mere statue or a stone guardian that once held magic and has become inert, but it could also be a guardian that is simply waiting for a threat before it activates and drives the threat away.

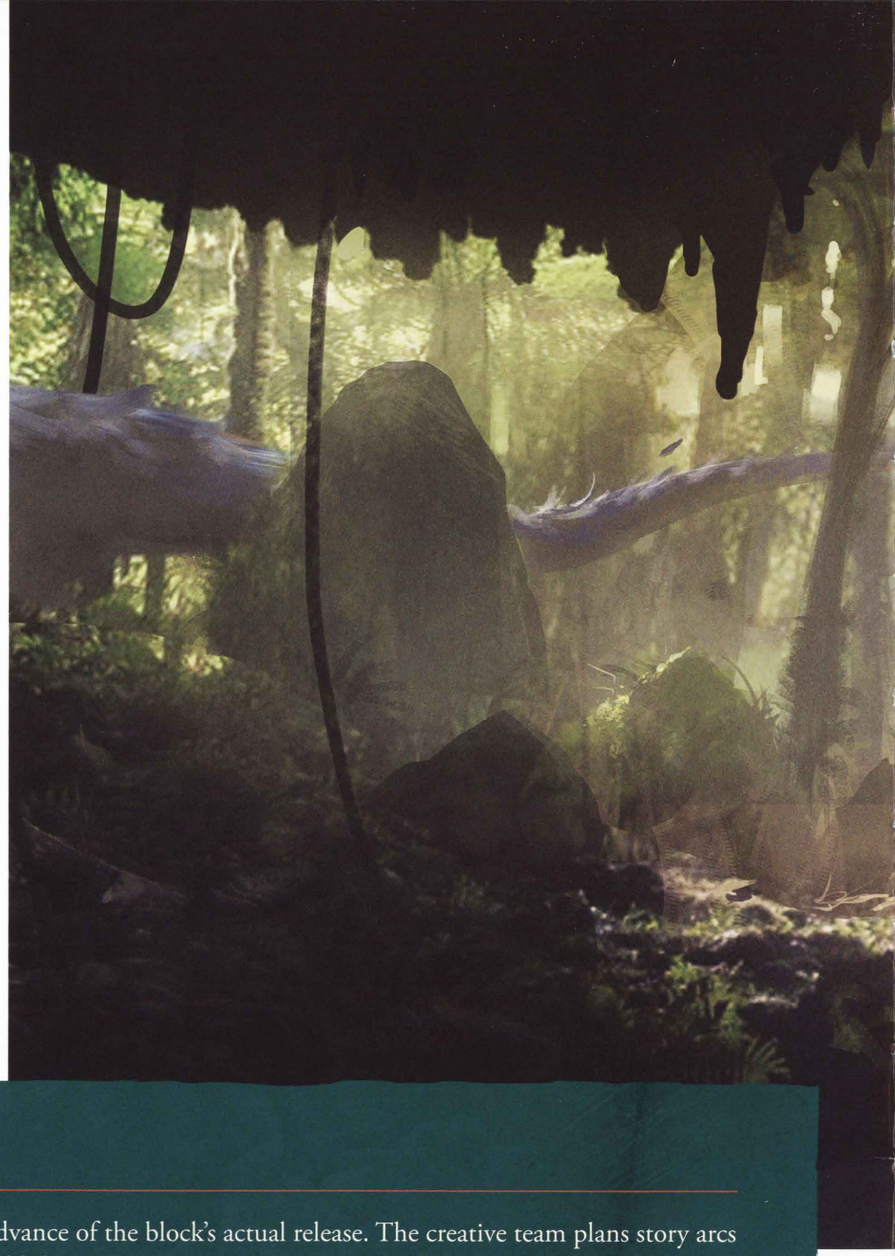


Awakened Amalgam ➤ Zack Stella

Golden Guardian ➤ Svetlin Velinov

Appendix: Concept to Card

By Cynthia Sheppard, Senior Art Director



It was the late summer of 2015. I had come to Wizards of the Coast earlier that year to be a commissioning art director, one of the folks who works with amazing illustrators around the world to make the art you see on the cards. But times were changing! In the wake of Jeremy Jarvis leaving the role of senior art director, commissioning art directors (including myself) began to step in and assist with worldbuilding—where in the past several years Jeremy had been the one to guide the art vision.

A meeting popped up on my calendar for what was then only referred to by its ridiculous codename: HAM and EGGS. It was the first time I'd been invited into a room to discuss a new plane with members of the *Magic* story and worlds team (or just "creative" for short if you're in the office), including creative lead James Wyatt. I don't know if there was a plan all along to get me involved in worldbuilding, or if I showed up on a day someone else was sick, or if maybe my excitement was just very evident during this first meeting, but shortly afterward I was appointed as *Ixalan*'s art lead.

Throughout the next several months, Story & Worlds worked alongside Design to hammer out details of the setting before we knew anything about what it looked like.

How to Build a Plane

The process of creating a world for a *Magic* card block begins years in advance of the block's actual release. The creative team plans story arcs stretching out as much as seven years, with at least a basic idea of the world that will be the setting for each block. As the process unfolds, each world gets its own concentrated period of attention in a process that looks roughly like this:

1. ***Exploratory World Design.*** Work on fleshing out that basic idea begins long before the block will eventually release. Starting from a core concept, the team explores tropes and ideas connected to that core. The goal of this stage is to provide inspiration for the design team to do its own exploratory work, testing out rough concepts for what rules mechanics might appear on cards in the block.
2. ***Prewriting.*** Next, the creative team fleshes out the exploratory concepts into the bare bones of what will eventually become the world and story guide.
3. ***Concept Push.*** When prewriting is done, art directors bring artists into the building to translate those ideas into the visual look of the plane. Over the course of a few weeks, these concept artists generate hundreds of images, exploring the look and feel of every aspect of the world—its people, its places, and its monsters.
4. ***World Guide.*** Taking the prewriting and the visual concepts, the creative lead and the art director for the block put together the world guide. This collaboration results in art and text that fit seamlessly together and reinforce each other and the card mechanics, creating a totally coherent world. The finished world guide goes to every artist, writer, designer, and developer who works on cards in the block.

Concept Art ➤ Sam Burley

The Concept Push

After enough details were decided on and captured by the vision team, as art lead it was my responsibility to art direct the world guide, which you'll see many snippets of throughout this section. It's a 208-page tome filled with hundreds of concept illustrations for environments, characters, creatures, and motifs, plus text that gives artists and writers a holistic capture of the world. (Much of that text, in a refined and polished form, appears throughout this book.) It's our main tool to keep visual and tonal consistency across a card set when a hundred different hands are touching the final product.

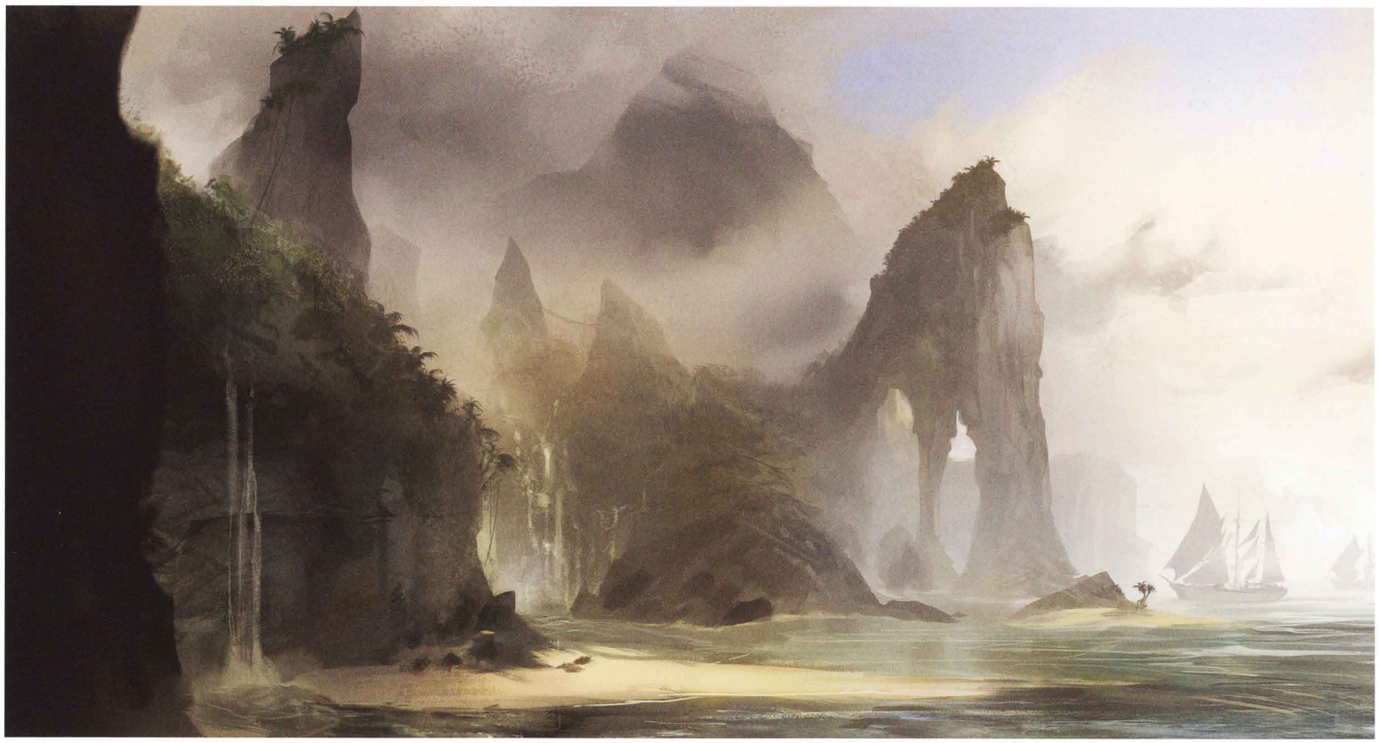
The majority of the look of a world is hammered out in an intense three-week exercise called a concept push. Along with our in-house concept artists, we bring in a handful of our talented *Magic* card illustrators on contract from all over the world to create piles upon piles of concept art that end up feeding the final world guide. The *Ixalan* concept artists were: Sam Burley, Tyler Jacobson, Christine Choi, Chris Rallis, Aleksi Briclot, Daarken, Steven Belledin, and Chris Rahn.

I worked closely with James to kick off the push by giving the artists a detailed presentation on the world vision, and for the next three weeks we had a reciprocal feedback process: art got tacked up on the wall, then the story and worlds team gave me feedback, which I then interpreted and used to help guide the artists in biweekly art reviews.

As grueling as all that sounds (and can be), we also like to give the visiting artists the opportunity to have fun both inside and outside the office. The *Ixalan* push fell during the relentlessly rainy and cold month of January in Seattle. Outdoor activity was limited, but we managed to get members of "Team Ham" on one excursion downtown, hung out and played games off the clock. Movies were watched, jokes were made. Perhaps most notably, Daarken photoshopped all the artists into pirate costumes and posted it on the concept wall. Good times.

Imagining Ixalan

The main focuses for the *Ixalan* concept push were building a world ripe for exploration, with dense jungles and sweeping coastlines, as well as defining unique visuals for the four major groups that would be locked in combat over a legendary lost golden city that hides deep in the jungle. Here's one of Sam Burley's early images that helped set the tone:

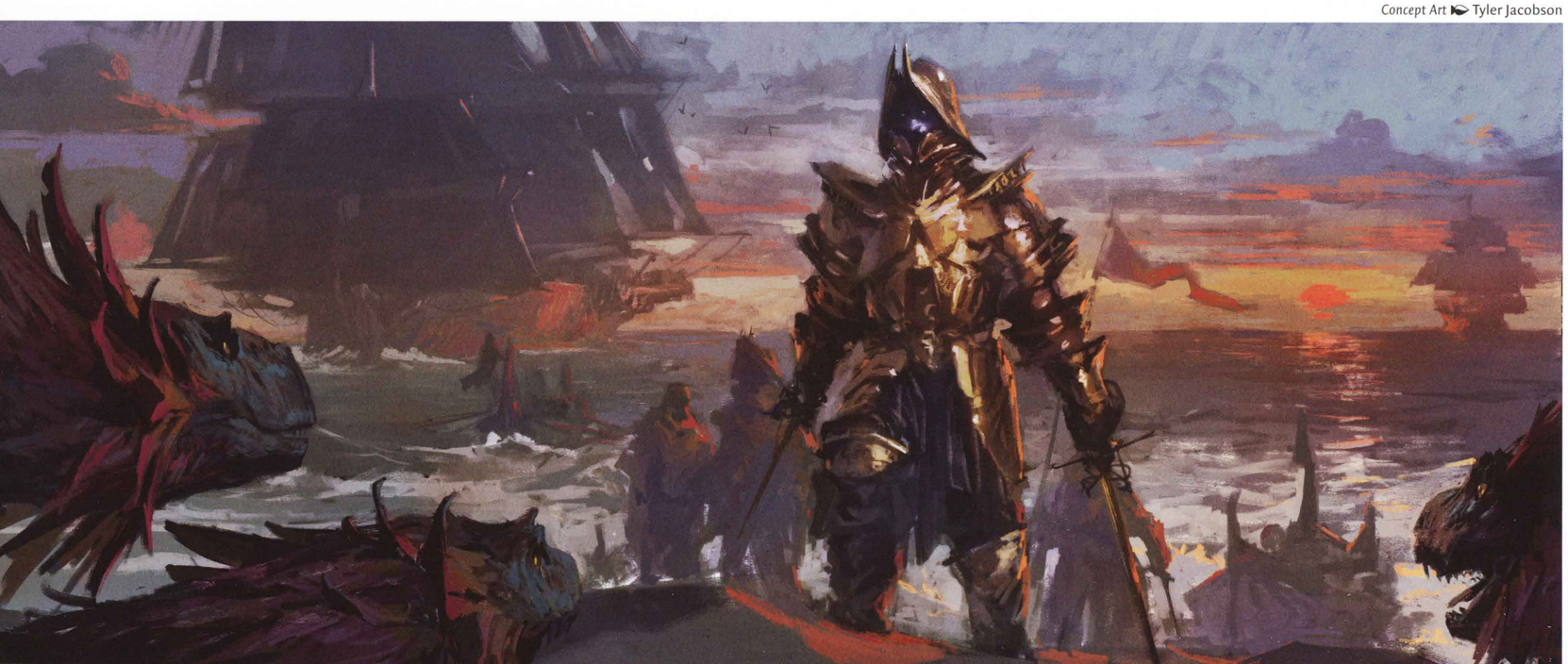


Concept Art ▶ Sam Burley

The Legion of Dusk

This was how *Ixalan* began, with the Creative team's original pitch for "vampire Conquistadors." The vampires set out from the distant continent of Torrezon in search of new land to conquer, and an artifact that would bring everlasting life (beyond vampirism) that could be found in the legendary golden city.

Concept Art ▶ Tyler Jacobson



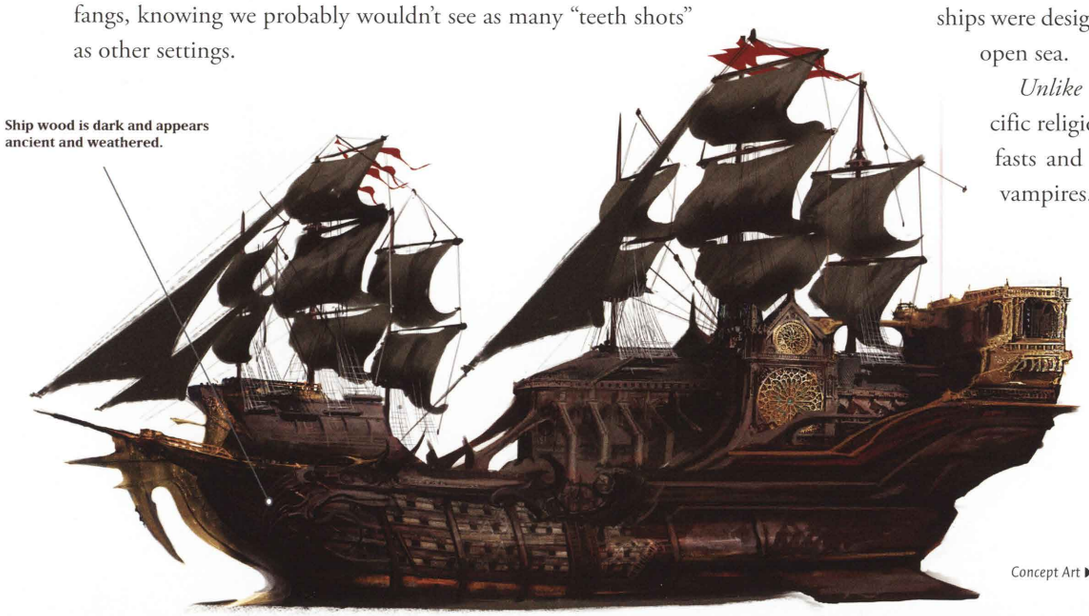
Concept Art ➢ Chris Rallis, Chris Rahn, Tyler Jacobson

Not to put too fine a point(s) on it... The vampires' helmets became a minor obsession for me. During the concept push, we knew we wanted to loudly say "conquistador" with their costuming, and that largely came down to styling choices and helmets. We decided to give the iconic helmet shape a two-pronged twist to reference fangs, knowing we probably wouldn't see as many "teeth shots" as other settings.

We carried the two-pronged motif into their weapons, and sometimes their armor and banners.

In a way that alludes to historical conquistadors, religion plays a big role in the Legion of Dusk. I was enamored with the idea that their ships doubled as their places of worship, and thus their ships were designed as huge wooden churches on the open sea.

Unlike historical conquistadors, their specific religious orders required things like blood fasts and other rituals related to being, well, vampires. One of the artists illustrated a vampire with a white collar early on, and I wanted to keep it as a common motif: how do you tell if a vampire has broken their blood fast? Blood on their collar, of course.



Concept Art ➢ Aleksi Briclot

The Sun Empire

Native to Ixalan, the people of the Sun Empire were the original stewards of Orazca, the golden city, but the city's legacy has survived only in their stories. Some now seek to reclaim their ancestral home.

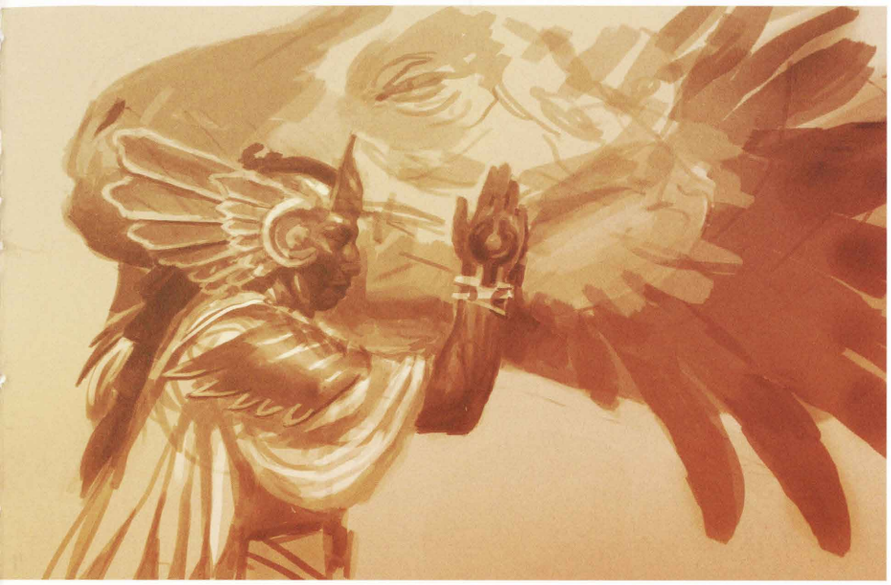
Designing the People. Our target was to create a powerful and thriving culture inspired by ancient South America and Mesoamerica, with some of the materials and shape language of pre-Cortés-era civilizations—but with a fantastical twist. In ways similar to how we often diverge from history, the Sun Empire became a civilization that harnesses magic from the sun and rides fearsome dinosaurs into battle.

Concept Art Tyler Jacobson & Chris Rahn

Concept Art Chris Rallis

We knew we wanted the vampires to wear a lot of gold, so silver armor felt like a natural fit here visually, but the choice of silver had story support as well—what if they had done away with wearing gold after giving up control of the golden city? This is one of those things that would probably never be explained on the cards, but was an extra worldbuilding detail that helped guide our choices.

Feathers. One of the earliest decisions about the Sun Empire, made before we even knew there *was* a Sun Empire, was that the dinosaurs of this world would have feathers. There was little discussion—it went something like this: "Hey, any objections to feathered dinosaurs? No? Great!" When designing the feathers, we looked at a lot of parrots and other jungle birds for inspiration. Letting yellows and warmer, brighter colors sit closest to attachment points gave them a "radiant" effect, and made it look like the dinosaurs are also connected to the sun.



Concept Art ➤ Chris Rahn

How to Ride a Dinosaur. The Sun Empire's relationship to its prehistoric mounts had to be solidified during the concept push as well. We wanted the dinosaurs to maintain some aggression and wildness, not feel like docile pets. The warriors of the Sun Empire do have a magical kinship with them, but that doesn't mean they're easy to tame—or ride.

The dinosaur harnesses imagined by Tyler, Chris Rallis, and Aleksi put riders high up on their necks, which would help keep both the rider and the dinosaur in frame in a tiny art box, and make it feel distinct from riding a horse or other mounted creature.

Concept Art ➤ Tyler Jacobson

Architecture was designed with taller doorways to allow dinosaurs access to the interior of their cities.

Concept Art ➤ Sam Burley

The River Heralds

The River Heralds are the other continental natives—a tribe of merfolk who are the guardians of the golden city. Long ago their elders used their nature magic to conceal the city, and its location has been forgotten even by the newest generation of guardians.

In early worldbuilding discussions, merfolk felt like a great fit in the trope space, but originally we had them slated to be the blue race in the pirate crews. Then, shortly before the concept push, it turned out we needed a different color balance, so we broke them out into blue and green and made them their own group. We were then solving two challenges—how to give them their own identity that was as cool as they would have been among the pirates, and what does "merfolk in green" mean?

I wanted to give the blue and green merfolk their own separate identities, drawing on the fluidity of blue and the "groundedness" of green, but tie them together with inspiration from colorful amphibians and jade armor. When the blue merfolk cast their magic to redirect wind and water, I wanted their movements to be graceful and elegant, like dancers, while the green merfolk were sturdier and apt to physically reshape terrain.

Concept Art ➤ Cynthia Sheppard & Tyler Jacobson

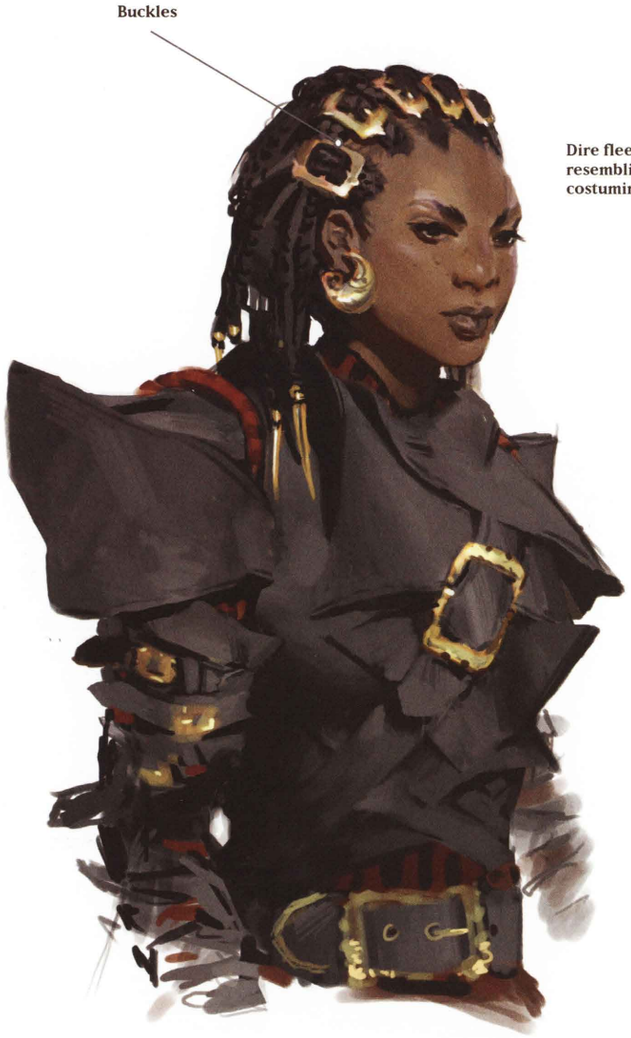
Concept Art ➤ Daarken

The Brazen Coalition

One of the best things about getting to tackle pirates for *Magic* was listening to James Wyatt yell "ARRRR!!" over the top of the wall between our desks a lot.

The pirates in *Ixalan* are classically motivated by riches and treasure, and there's nothing quite as shiny to them as the idea of a golden city.

A Motley Crew. Unlike the merfolk, I wanted the pirates to bleed across Magic's colors into different two-color crews, as well as unaffiliated individuals, to keep them from looking too similar across the set. The idea was to give us enough flexibility to show off a lot of interesting and different pirates across the cards and not end up with a case of "these are the red pirates," but also build some cohesion between them. All of *Ixalan*'s pirates only had a couple things in common at most, like asymmetrical costuming, pirate hats, and what Jeremy Jarvis referred to as "cuffsiness"—his word for special attention to interesting boot cuffs.



Dire fleet pirates use leather resembling boot cuffs in their costuming.

Concept Art ➤ Cynthia Sheppard & Tyler Jacobson

The Dire Fleet earned the nickname the "boot 'n' buckle crew" during the concept push for pretty obvious reasons—they took "cuffsiness" to an extreme. This is probably what happens when you ended up with a surplus of boots instead of booty during your last offshore raid and no one on board your ship knows how to sew. Anyway, these were our black/red assassins and cutthroats, the loudest of the bad-guy pirates. More skilled at swordplay than fashion, they're more often holding a saber than a sextant (and it's probably pointed at your throat).

Concept Art ➤ Steve Prescott

The pirates of the showy Storm Fleet in blue and red adorn their costuming in wooden ship-like ornamentation and colorful clothing. These are the most daring (and sometimes whimsical) of the pirates, who might strap themselves to a kitesail or swing aboard your ship from a long rope with a dagger in their teeth.

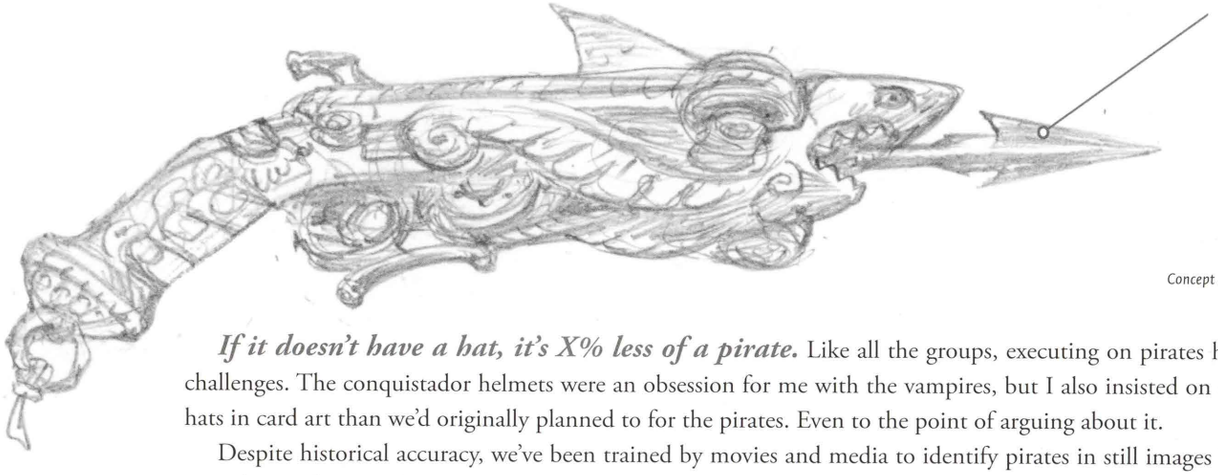
The Deadeye pirates are meant to resemble a crew that was previously part of a military faction that defected to a life of piracy. They're the "matchiest" of the pirate crews, wearing dark blue coats, but their individuality shines when they adorn themselves with plundered baubles and treasures.

Concept Art ➢ Christine Choi

Concept Art ➢ Steve Prescott

Finally, the Fathom Fleet pirates adorn themselves with ropes and sails—similar to the way the Storm Fleet uses wooden ornamentation in their clothing. Steve Prescott pulled inspiration from ship's rigging to create a unique costuming motif.

Projectile weapons are common, but avoid literal guns and bullets

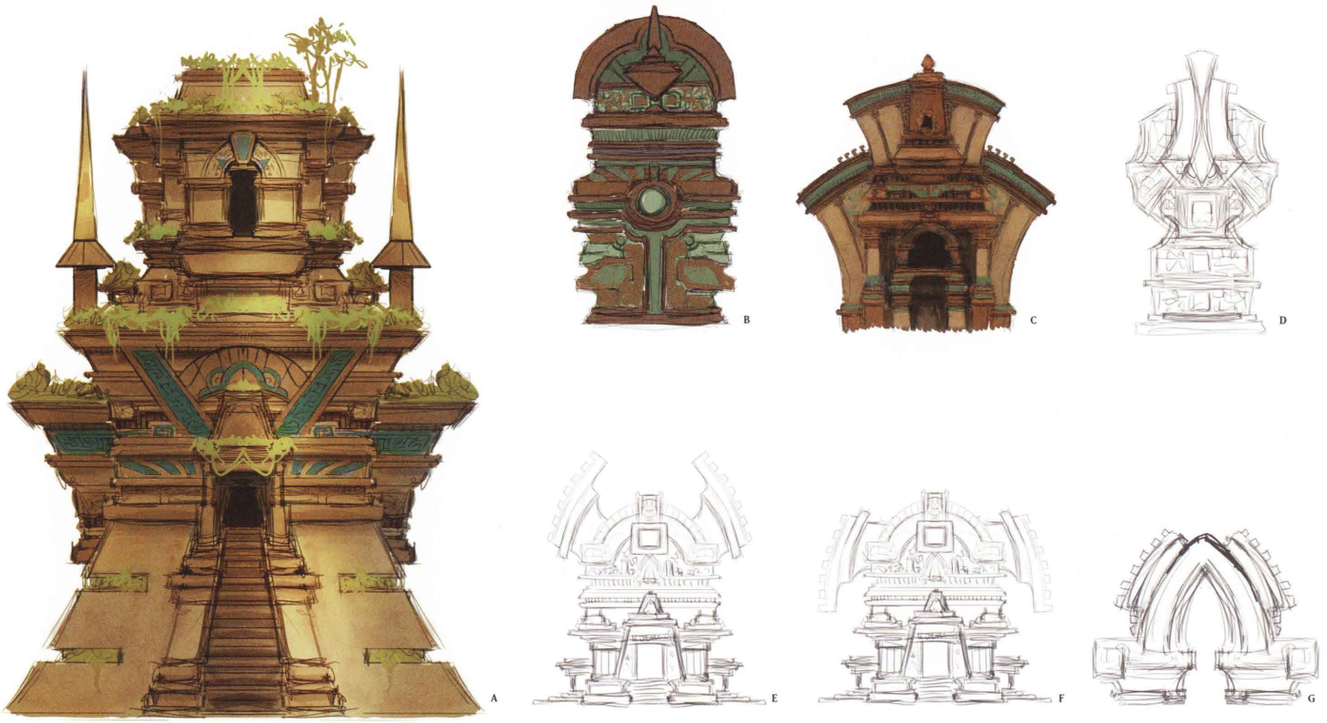


Concept Art ➢ Steve Prescott

If it doesn't have a hat, it's X% less of a pirate. Like all the groups, executing on pirates had its specific challenges. The conquistador helmets were an obsession for me with the vampires, but I also insisted on showing more hats in card art than we'd originally planned to for the pirates. Even to the point of arguing about it.

Despite historical accuracy, we've been trained by movies and media to identify pirates in still images by their headwear (remember, we don't get the benefit of movement or sound in card art). This is especially true when they're seen outside the context of a pirate ship, like when they're running through the jungle being chased by dinosaurs.

Another challenge with pirates was how to make them true to our (wildly inaccurate but popularized) perception of them without depicting firearms. Artist Steve Prescott had engineered some great solutions for *Innistrad,* contriving handheld weapons that weren't literal guns, and that was one of the many reasons I wanted to work with him on *Ixalan.* The pirates here have projectile weapons powered by magic, or by ropes and springs, instead of gunpowder.



Concept Art ➤ Christine Choi

The Golden City

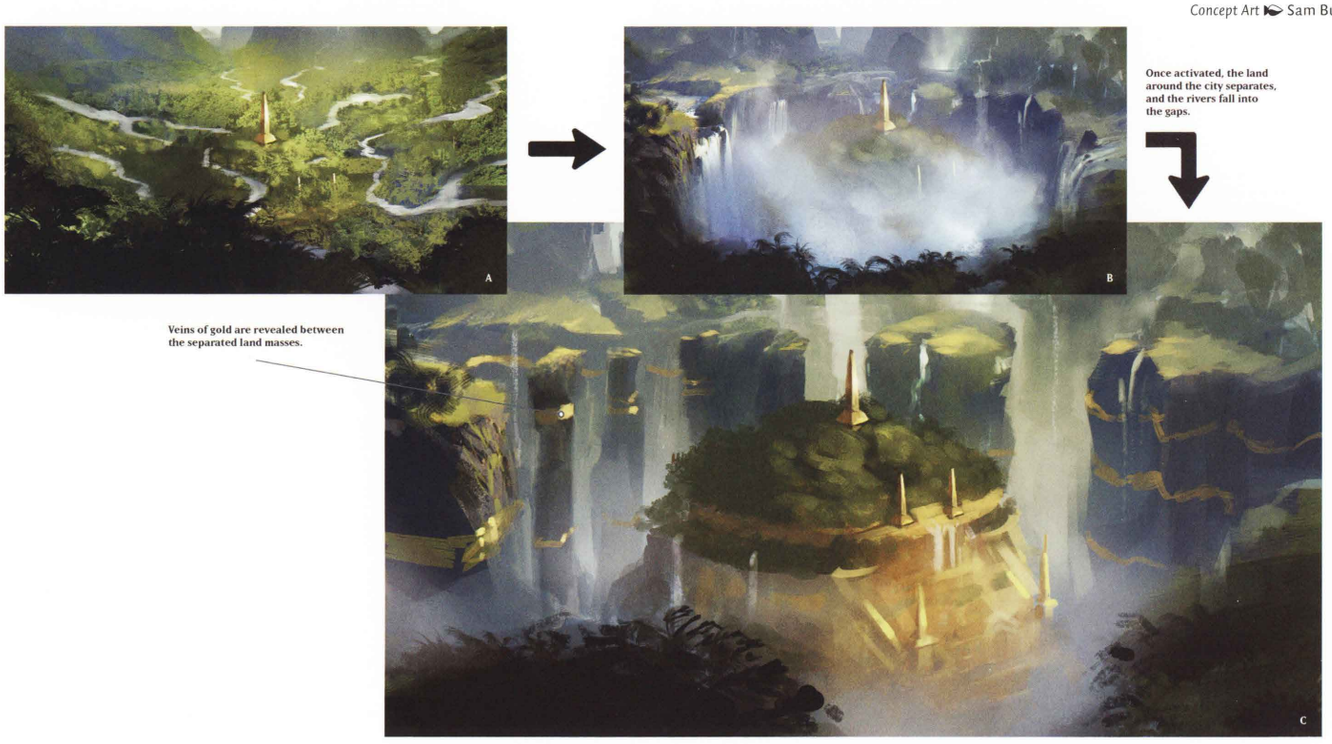
In our two-set-block model, every setting requires a tonal shift between the first and second set in a block.

The first set, *Ixalan,* is about exploration and discovery, but by *Rivals of Ixalan* the golden city has been discovered and the conflict turns to a game of who controls the city, so I knew I wanted to "put the camera" there for a good portion of the second set. But we had already crunched through a few days working out how the city gets revealed (when the terrain around it is reshaped by a dissenting River Heralds leader), and the concept push was quickly running out of time.

Some of the most useful assets we get during pushes are motif pages—plates that show off patterns or shape language that can show up on lots of cards in costuming and architecture. Christine Choi did a page of these for the golden city, and we got a lot of mileage out of it, referring to it in art descriptions then letting the artists use their own creativity to reinterpret the shapes in their illustrations.

I also wanted to make sure we didn't completely abandon the jungle in set two, so where the full city isn't shown in card art, we used its gold spires (resembling a compass point) that could be seen from a short distance as an indicator the city was close by.

Concept Art ➤ Sam Burley



After the Concept Push

While the world guide was still in its infancy getting laid out by concept artist Sam Burley and a graphic designer, James and I were called on to present the world and its concept art to other teams so they could begin their work.

It turns out "presentation" doesn't equate to running into a room yelling "OMG DINOSAURS!" We also tried yelling "ARRRR!" Other teams don't seem to respond well to yelling.

In all seriousness, what helps us show off and summarize the output of the concept push in a useful way are tone plates like the image below.

These more detailed concept illustrations do multiple jobs. They inform you about the environment (here we get a glimpse of a coastline near the open sea, showing off one of Ixalan's many coastal areas), about some of the people here, and also about their roles and their relationships to one another. This piece immediately says to the viewer "there's an Age of Exploration theme in this set, and there are dinosaurs here."

Concept Art ➤ Tyler Jacobson

Commissioning Art for Ixalan

Magic: The Gathering requires at least one piece of art for every card, so working with freelance illustrators to make that art is the steady drumbeat behind a *Magic* art director's day.

Let's reset the stage: Design is finished. Development is ongoing. But now it's time for the creative team to get involved in turning the information in the database into actual cards. When development says a card is ready, it might look something like this:

Rampaging Tyrant 4R
Creature—Dinosaur!
Trample, haste
5/5

Concept Art ➢ Sam Burley & Tyler Jacobson

So the creative team takes that and runs with it. First we have a series of meetings called "toplining," where the creative lead, the lead developer, the art director, and a smattering of other people get together and take a first stab at translating the rules mechanics on the card into something in the world. Here, development communicates to us that the Dinosaur creature type can't change by marking it with an exclamation point.

B

C

James Wyatt then turns his notes from our toplining meetings into an art description:

Rampaging Swordtooth
Setting: Ixalan
Color: Red creature
Location: In the jungle, on rocky ground
Action: Show a HUGE DINOSAUR similar to a TYRANNOSAURUS, using 59A as a starting point. It is charging forward, with its head near the ground and its tail held high, trying to catch a FLEEING PIRATE (maybe 103C) in its jaws. We might see a PIRATE ROWBOAT crushed beneath one of the dinosaur's feet. To the extent possible, we might see more than one fleeing pirate, perhaps including a siren (106A) who is flying away (and safely out of the dinosaur's reach).
Focus: The huge dinosaur
Mood: The unquestioned tyrant of the forest!

There are a few things to notice about that art description. First, the cards have working titles. The square brackets serve a couple of purposes—they remind the concept writer that they're done with this card, and they remind everyone else that this is not the final card name. You'll also notice the reference to "page 59A," which directs the artist to look at that page in the Ixalan World Guide, which looks like what you see on these pages.

Our art descriptions sometimes use "we might" and "maybes" to give the artist some choices. Ultimately the art needs to help communicate what the rules text on the card is doing (in this case, it's just a large dinosaur with **trample** and **haste**), but there's some flexibility with how we can align the two.

Commissioning occurs in a six-week cycle, beginning with reviewing all of the art descriptions in that cycle (called an "art wave"). Each image is crafted to tell the player something about what the card does from its tiny art box across the table. Does the card have **flying**? The art might need wings. What color is it? If it's a creature, what are its power and toughness? What kind of tokens does this spell make? Is there a specific visual cue tied to a mechanic?

The art is as much a gameplay communication aid as it is fun to look at, and we consider all of that during commissioning.

In addition to the individual art descriptions, we provide all of the artists working on the set with toplines that summarize the tone and feel of the plane, with notes such as "please set your illustrations during the day unless otherwise noted."

We then hand select from around 150 artists for each assignment, taking into account everything from the individual artist's strengths to conversations we've had with them about what they're most interested in painting. I chose artist Zack Stella for this piece because of his ability to handle scenes that tell a small story but still keep the focus where it needs to be (in this case on the creature, because this is a creature card), and because I know he really likes painting dinosaurs. He provided us with a few options, shown at right.

Every sketch that comes in (and keep in mind we're working on hundreds at a time) goes into the review queue in our asset management system, and the art directors and writers use the system to communicate with each other about the art.

Comments in the system look something like this exchange between me and James:

JWW 10/18/2016: Wow, yeah.
CS 10/18/2016: #1 sells trample and haste best. remove siren, it's cluttering the scene.
JWW 11/07/2016: Hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee

In this case, I was looking for the sketch that was the best version of the "dinosaur crashing through the trees" trope, and worked best with trample and haste, so I picked the first version. I also thought the siren was overkill, so I recommended we just focus on the dinosaur and pirate. The notes in the system are normally short and seem terse out of context, but they're just there to remind us what we told the artists, and sometimes they capture our excitement, like James's "Hee hee hee hee hee hee hee hee." We know that if we're having fun with it, the artists and the players will probably have fun too.

Charging Monstrosaur sketches ➤ *Zack Stella*

Charging Monstrosaur ✒ Zack Stella

After the final art is in, our imaging department takes over to color correct the art and place it in frame. The card is given a final name, like Charging Monstrosaur, and flavor text is written, both based on submissions from teams of freelance writers. Editors make sure the templating is correct. At last we have what looks like a *Magic* card that's ready to be approved for the set!

What I love about this final illustration is that it perfectly captures the trope of the T. rex crashing through the trees, shows off a bit of the jungle, and inspired some of the most fun flavor text in the set.

In Summary

One of the chief jobs of the Story & Worlds team is to keep Magic fresh, and evoke different feelings through worldbuilding every time you play with a new set. Here, you get to feel like an explorer, or ride a dinosaur, or sail a pirate ship—really, it's your choice. We had fun making it, and we hope you get to share in that fun as you play *Magic* and look at the art of *Ixalan*.

About the Author

JAMES WYATT is a Senior Game Designer on the creative team for *Magic: The Gathering*. His work at Wizards of the Coast since 2000 includes five novels, more than 20 short stories, one poem, and dozens of *Dungeons & Dragons*® game sourcebooks. This is his fifth book in the *Art of Magic: the Gathering* series.

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