



Glorantha

THE SECOND AGE



THE CLANKING CITY

WISDOM OF THE
RuneQuest
DUNGEON MASTER



THE CLANKING CITY

credits and contents

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ZISTORWAL REVEALED

'Zistorwal is an enormous edifice of twisted metal rising from an island in God Forgot. Its gleaming foundations extend past the island's footprint into the sea. Twisting ducts and vents climb up its surface like throbbing veins. The infernal hiss and clang of steam engines issues from its high walls. Inside dwells Zistor, a titanic, shrieking demigod combining the qualities of man and machine, and his sorcerous servants, the Zistorites.'

— *Glorantha: the Second Age*

The Machine City of Zistorwal is one of the most unusual settlements in Glorantha, and its presentation will offer a wealth of information to players as well as a host of lore and opportunities for characters in-game. In future ages adventurers will pick through the shell of the place, never knowing exactly what the city stood for and never knowing the truth within the bones of the empire they are looting. They will nod sagely and talk of how the city was doomed from its beginnings, founded as it was in principles that threatened the Great Compromise or patented another rebirth of Chaos in the world.

Those days of scavenging approach, but they are not here yet. For now, the city is a beacon of possibility and a testament to the wonders a traveller can find in Glorantha's epic Second Age. It is not simply a tale told among primitive communities to frighten children about the evils that men do, it is a place of influence and invention – where politics and discovery are mired in ambition, bloodshed and sorcery.

For Games Masters, it is a place to set games. For players, it is a place to become involved in the mystical courts of the most decadent and dangerous Gloranthan legend, or to lurk in its shadows and plot its downfall.

Let the future handle itself. Zistorwal's last decade of life is war-racked, blood-soaked and shows the city at the height of its dark majesty.

Tides of War

This sourcebook is designed to offer plenty of opportunities for players to make Zistorite characters that dwell among the sorcerers of the Machine City. It is a direct counterpoint to the established idea that this dark legend of Glorantha is a site of evil and loathed by most of the world's cultures. While that notion is subjectively true, the fact remains that Zistorwal is a major city in one of the ascendant empires of the era.

The Iron Wars are beginning, but the conflict is not a simple matter of good against evil. Nobility can be found on both sides, as can hatred and treachery. The city is, as of Year 908, a mighty bastion of God Learner strength in the Jrustelan quest for worldly perfection.

This might be something of an adjustment to the perceptions of some veteran RuneQuest players, who have long heard tales of the 'evil city's glorious defeat' at the hands of 'Old Ways heroes'. The truth is not so black and white. The 'Old Ways heroes' are, as of Year 908, a motley collection of opportunists, mercenaries, religious warriors objecting to the threat to the Compromise, freedom fighters resisting God Learner conquering, and professional soldiers fighting not out of innate goodness, but because they are told to fight. For every Old Ways warrior who rails against the unholy nature of the Clanking City, many more simply wish to destroy Zistorwal because they are threatened by the war engines that aid the Middle Sea Empire, because they are jealous of the power and secrets in the city and wish to claim them for themselves or because it is a focal point of God Learner strength and they bear a grudge against the Jrustelan expansionists.

This is not a sourcebook about the city's destruction. This is a sourcebook about life in Zistorwal and the city's purpose in the world. Why was it founded?

Who lives there? What is under the surface city? These questions are answered. What will happen in the future? That is left to the imagination of individual Games Masters and players, and ultimately to Fate. Will the city collapse because the Great Machine is flawed, thus assuring its own doom? Will it be brought down through the sabotage of Old Ways agents, or the culmination of their great seaborne siege? Perhaps it is all three, or perhaps it is none at all - maybe the actions of your Player Characters will ensure the Machine City stands for all time.

So, bask in the decadent glory and learn the crawling secrets at the heart of Imperial Age Glorantha's most notorious city.

Games in Zistorwal

The year is 908: the height of the Imperial Age and the height of the Machine City's power. Zistorwal suffers a siege yet remains standing without harm. The Clanking City is unbreakable, shielded and protected from those who would deliver assault. For every moment the city stands – for each rattle and clang of the Flesh-Machine God's heart beating – Zistorwal grows stronger. Magical weapons are created in sorcerous factories, artificial life is animated in bloodstained laboratories and the living magicians of the city sheathe their frail flesh in mechamagical augmentation that brings their physical forms that much closer to the perfection they seek.

But what types of games are appropriate to Zistorwal? What themes and adventures are possible with the information in this book? Now that the pall of ignorance has finally been lifted, revealing the inner workings of the Clanking City, the following possibilities present themselves for Games Masters and players to explore.

Political

Probably the most obvious style of game is one centred on the politics of Zistorwal and within the splintered divisions of the Cogs of Zistor. The Machine City is a hotbed of political strife, both clean and dirty, as the sorcerers each try to outdo one another in advancements, influence, inventions and personal power. Above the level of the individual is that of the faction, where sorcerers with shared ideologies band

together in order to turn the social focus and consensus of the entire city to their personal designs. This is the main stage of conflict, where Zistorites clash over the possibilities of their city's power.

In these kinds of games, characters are likely to belong to a single faction (or allied factions) and will work to further their own political agendas while seeking sorcerous advancement in order to humble rivals and triumph over enemies. The focus of the Player Character cabal will depend on the focus of their chosen faction. If they work with Ascension, they will probably be dedicated to healing the rifts between the factions of the Cogs of Zistor. If they ally with the Legion of Purification, they may leave Zistorwal completely and lend their aid to the unfolding war between the Middle Sea Empire and the Empire of Wyrms' Friends.

Very serious, very real power is possible through political games. Characters may find themselves advancing in the hierarchy of the city as they advance through the Cogs of Zistor, and that will draw the ire of rival sorcerers, assassins paid to eliminate political enemies and new opportunities for allies. It will also mean the characters become infamous throughout Glorantha – at least to those who take note of the Machine City's rulers – and that will draw troubles of its own. Citizens and nobles of the Middle Sea Empire are likely to greatly respect such Zistorite notables, while warriors and magicians of the Old Ways, resenting the God Learner Alliance, are likely to hunt the Player Characters down mercilessly.

Conquest

The sorcerers of the Machine City are still God Learners when all is said and done, and that means that many of them leave Zistorwal in order to aid the Alliance. Some will do so out of imperial loyalty, while others – perhaps short of coin – realise that the conquest of other nations is a decent way to amass the fortunes required for mechamagical surgery and further development.

Zistorites are not rare in the lands of the Middle Sea Empire but they are not exactly common; most will warrant a second glance, even if only because they look so unusual and shocking to many Gloranthans.

When they are seen on official business, it is most often as the advisors and sorcerer allies of nobles or as officers in the imperial army. Others serve as mercenaries (admittedly very powerful mercenaries) working for the empire in order to earn coin.

HeroQuesting

Mechamagical augmentation and God Learner Sorcery are not the only paths to power. The former is a pious act that not only increases the sorcerer's competence but offers reverence to Zistor, and the latter is the standard method of accruing magical power in the Middle Sea Empire. HeroQuesting, however, offers the Zistorites rewards as great – if not greater – than their own unique paths.

Even though the Zistorites have a different focus from their brethren in the Alliance, they are still God Learners and still have access to the wealth of HeroQuesting knowledge cycling through the magical hierarchies of the Middle Sea Empire. Accordingly, HeroQuesting is something that occupies the time and energy of a great many Machine City sorcerers. Whereas Zistorwal-born weapons are known to behave erratically outside of the Machine City, items gleaned from adventuring on the Hero Plane are reliable worldwide. Conversely, other Zistorite magicians with no such concerns for material treasures might delve into HeroQuests in order to come to a greater understanding of the flawed gods worshipped by other cultures.

Espionage

Although *The Clanking City* is written with God Learner characters in mind as the principal focus, there is still a war on. Spies tread the streets of the Machine City and the Zistorites are occasionally deceived by agents of the Old Ways and the Empire of Wyrms' Friends who infiltrate the city and learn all they can of their enemies through espionage. A particularly successful example of this can be found in *The Machine City* (page 31), where one of Delecti the Inquirer's men infiltrates Zistorwal and sees much more than the Zistorites would prefer.

Characters in games where the focus is on spying while inside the Clanking City will have a devil of a time remaining uncaught but the benefits for their people and any masters employing them will be huge

indeed once valid information begins to trickle back. It stands to reason that such dangerous work will come with an appropriately high paycheck...

Adventuring

Not all Zistorites spend their entire lives in the Clanking City and those that leave may not be motivated by patriotism or the desire to earn coin through the crushing of nations. The pursuit of adventure holds as much appeal to the Zistorites as it does for any other culture, and many sorcerers leave the boundaries of their empire in order to travel with like-minded fellows.

Whether they are accepted is another matter. It can take a Zistorite adventurer some time to find a welcome among a band of travelling adventurers due to the stigma of the sorcerer's city. However, with the right people and an opportunity to display his magical talents, a Zistorite can find a place within an adventuring group and pay little heed to the call of his empire or his flesh-machine deity within Zistorwal's walls. To think that every Zistorite is a fanatic slaved to working non-stop in devotion to the Great Machine is to fall victim to bias or Old Ways propaganda. At the end of the day, Zistorites are still people like any other, curiosity and a passion to see the world burns in their hearts as much as it does in anyone. In stricter bloodlines or factions, such wandering might be frowned upon, but the Cogs of Zistor only offer true censure to their members if a sorcerer actively harms the Great Machine.

War

With the Iron Wars now picking up pace, characters may be called upon to leave their city in order to lead Zistorite forces against the besiegers in an attempt to turn them back from Zistorwal's walls. The defence of the city and the Great Machine is vital to the Cogs of Zistor after all. Of course, the sorcerers of the Machine City are so well-defended that they have little to worry about just yet, but that does not stop them from showing their mechamagical might from time to time, just to silence the catapults and battle cries of the would-be invaders.

On the flip side of the coin is the notion that players might be portraying characters who are involved in

laying siege to the Clanking City. That might be a lot of fun for RuneQuest fans who have waited years to find out the decadent secrets of the Machine City and now want to be part of those who bring the place down once and for all.

Whichever path a Games Master and his group choose, the future of the Machine City is a consideration: canon sources state that Zistorwal stands for another decade before its destruction. That said, there are two ways to get around this without cheating anyone out of potential achievements – everyone likes to make a difference, after all.

The first method is to simply *ignore the canon*. If the Games Master and his players decide that the future is unwritten and that the actions of their own campaigns will decide Fate, then so be it. It will likely be immensely rewarding to forge the future and write your own legends in such a manner. Perhaps it comes down to the notion of independence, with players not wanting to be shackled to a predetermined course of events. Again, that is fine. It is your game. Run with it.

The second method is a way of becoming involved in the Iron Wars without contradicting the canonical timeline established in decades of out-of-game Gloranthan background, which will almost certainly be a route preferred by many players. The group takes it as fact that they know (and their characters do not) that the Clanking City is destined to fall in nine years' time. While they may not destroy the city before then, they can still contribute to the war effort; weakening key defences, destroying mighty war machines, assassinating or capturing important Zistorites, making alliances with others who will then join the great siege... The possibilities go on and on. The city is fated to fall but the besiegers still need to work at it, and perhaps your group can become a key part in the events that lead to the city's end.

This Book

So what can a player expect to find in this book? This volume provides players with the information they need to allow their characters to walk the streets of the Machine City, join the Cogs of Zistor and its splinter factions, replace parts of their bodies with

mechamagics and stand among one of the most notorious (and powerful) cults in Second Age Glorantha. Mechamagical technology and God Learner Sorcery are both detailed in *Magic of Glorantha*. While that volume is not necessary for using *The Clanking City*, it will vastly increase the number of options available to a Zistorite character.

Chapter 1: The Zistorites deals with the sorcerers themselves: the Cogs of Zistor's internal divisions and the castes of Zistorwal that have arisen since the city was founded.

Chapter 2: The Machine City is a grand tour of Zistorwal, from the moment of arrival to the very heart of the Great Machine. A certain spy in the employ of Delecti the Inquirer makes an all-encompassing report to his master, and reveals the details of the Clanking City in the process.

Chapter 3: Wonders of Zistorwal reveals new mechamagical implants, spells and magic items – all used by the magicians or created in the factory-forges of the Machine City. It also presents the template models of the Enslaved beings that serve the Zistorites, and displays several examples of the gigantic war machines used in the Iron Wars, along with tips on how Games Masters can fashion more for their own campaigns.

Chapter 4: Faces of War presents a selection of potential allies and enemies for Player Characters to interact with, aid, hinder, fight, flee or stymie. Personalities from every stratum of Zistorite society are represented, allowing play at all levels.



ON COGS AND IMPLANTS

In many places throughout this book we make reference to the cult 'the Cogs of Zistor' and the mechamagic implants common – ubiquitous, even – to the inhabitants of Zistorwal. Full details for the Cogs of Zistor can be found in *Cults of Glorantha: Volume II* and full details for mechamagical implantation can be located in *Magic of Glorantha*. However, in order to allow you to make the fullest use of this book without reference to those tomes, we present here abridged and summarised details of the Cogs of Zistor and mechamagical implants. If you have access to the books referenced, that material supersedes what is presented here.

The Cogs of Zistor

Sorcerer-apprentices of the Flesh-Machine god.

Worshippers: Machinists, engineers, makers of magic items, Zistorites.

Worshipper Duties: Uncovering the secrets of machine magic, maintaining and expanding the Great Machine.

Cult Skills: Craft (Device), Engineering, Evaluate, Lore (Alchemy), Mechanisms, Perception.

Cult Rune Spells: Bladesharp, Detect Machine, Detect Dwarf, Repair.

Cult Sorcery Spells: Animate (Metal), Damage Boosting, Form/Set (Metal), Glow, Holdfast.

Gear (Initiate) Membership

To achieve this level of membership in the cult, the candidate must have had the Dream of Zistor, which costs them 1 POW.

Spoke (Acolyte) Membership

Spokes get training in Athletics, Dodge and Stealth as Cult skills, and are only expected to spend 10% of their time pursuing business for the order.

Wheel (Rune Priest) Membership

Wheels must have designed or recovered a war machine. They gain a +20% bonus to understand mechanical artefacts.

Mechamagical Implants

Zistorite mechamagic is not cybernetics, or clockwork, or medicine. Rather, it is a fusion of dead metal and living flesh made possible only by the might of God Learner sorcery.

Armoured: Any mechamagical implant that replaces an entire hit location has 6 armour points without a Skill Penalty. Wearing normal armour over a mechamagical implant causes great pain and malfunctions, so no one does it twice.

Electrical Vulnerability: Mechamagic implants that replace entire hit locations suffer double damage from electrical attacks.

Healing: Damaged mechamagics do not heal naturally. The God Learners have two sorcery spells that will repair mechamagical implants, but no other magic can restore hit points to a damaged mechamagical hit location.

Inhibited Spellcasting: Mechamagical implants, while constructed of various metals and alloys, always contain some quantity of iron. While the Zistorites are masters at overcoming the natural magic-inhibiting properties of Gloranthan iron, all implants reduce the owner's maximum number of Magic Points as indicated in their descriptions.

Obvious: All implants make some degree of noise, and many also emit sparks or gases. Consequently, all implants bear a penalty to Stealth checks.

THE ZISTORITES

'The air thrums here. The ground trembles. All within the city's borders is a carefully controlled part of our organised chaos. Howling machinery creates weapons and tools for the Jrustelan war, sorcerers replace parts of their own imperfect bodies with holy mechamagics, while the distant sounds of the invaders' armies are drowned out by the earth-shaking steps and divine shrieking of our Flesh-Machine God.'

This is Zistorwal, the Machine City. Those who call it the Clanking City are deaf and blind to the truth. They see none of the poetry and hear none of the song inherent in its form and function. We care nothing for their scorn. The opinion of any Fleshborn is meaningless to us. We will drag them to perfection whether they would have it or not.'

— First Councillor Shingallion,
Mech Lord of the Machine City

The Fortress-City of Zistorwal lies in the south end of the Leftarm islands in God Forgot, off the southern coast of Kethaela. Here you can find ugly metal towers clawing at the sky, roaring forge-foundries turning out identical weapon after identical weapon with an inexorable rhythm, and blasphemous automata of metal and flesh that stalk the streets under the iron mental control of their sorcerous masters. It is an imposing citadel where the crashing of iron upon bronze rings out across the surrounding seas day and night.

The entire city is said to be born from scientific secrets stolen from the mostali coupled with new innovations in Jrustelan sorcery. Whatever its origins, the final result is a blasphemy against the world

of Glorantha, for here rises one of the strongest bastions of God Learner strength in the Imperial Age – a city where the magicians of the Alliance have managed to create their own mechanical god and imbue it with life.

To the residents of Zistorwal, the holy city is a sacred site of worship, a sign of human ingenuity and a mark of God Learner dominance in the world. Yet even by the standards of the stereotypical Jrustelan lust for new power, the Zistorites work to achieve goals considered alien by their peers and fellow sorcerers. Yet they remain God Learners to their very cores; the personal and national ties that bind the divergent sorcerous ideologies together are not so easily broken.

City of the Lost Rune

Beneath the surface of Locsil Isle, which is increasingly becoming known as Zistorela as the infamy of the city spreads, the real city lies hidden from sight. Here in the subterranean darkness is the massively complex, sprawling World Machine. This is Zazistor, the True Zistor, a city-sized engine built to catalogue, categorise and comprehend everything in the world so that it could later be broken down and restructured along more perfect schematics. It is the ultimate aim of the God Learners to use the power of their created god and the lost rune they believe they have discovered – the Zistor Rune – to remake the world in a harmonious image.

Yet all is not well in the waters around Zistorwal. War has come to Zistorela in the Leftarm archipelago. The Machine City endures a mighty siege – a siege that will be talked about until the stars die and the world of Glorantha is rendered lifeless by Time.

The Iron Wars have begun.

Blasphemy & Battle

The sorcerers here are part of the battlefront in the war for Glorantha's future. The Clanking City is a focal point for those who detest the God Learners because many of

the Alliance's greatest sins against the world are being committed wholesale here. Though a mechemagically-enhanced Zistorite loremaster might look down from the impenetrable battlements and consider the invaders just another front line in the war between the empires (called the 'Jrustelan War' with a superior smirk), this is typical Zistorite understatement blended with God Learner confidence.

The truth is that the Machine City is now enduring a relentless siege. The mostali are here in force, as are Dara Happan, Orlanthi and other Old Ways traditionalists seeking to strike a decisive blow against the hated empire. Even the uz come sailing to God Forgot, seeking to tear down the blasphemous walls of this unholy city. It is believed that by mass-producing weapons and artefacts of magical power, the Zistorites endanger the Great Compromise that has set the universe in balance since the Godswar. The unconquered people of Glorantha come here to fight the war for their world.

The God Learners dispute these mewling cries and repel the assaults upon their black-iron and dark-stoned walls. The Zistorites are certain their calculations are right; that their Machine God is a holy construct worthy of worship; that the weapons they create for the Jrustelan War will find great use in the fists of Alliance soldiers.

The Zistorites knew that the forces of the Old Ways, blinded by their fear of change, resentment of the God Learners' star in ascension and unable to see that their eras were now fading into history, would never be able to breach the City-Fortress alone. However, when the Dragonspeakers arrived with a fleet under the leadership of the Imperial Force Commander Varankol the Mangler, the God Learners began to take a more active hand in the defence of their citadel.

There will never come a more decisive moment in the existence of the Clanking City. The war that sees Zistorwal's destruction has begun. The wheels of fate spin inexorably toward their destination, but the fight is not over yet. The Machine City still has several years of dominance at the very height of its power before it becomes the ruins of the future.

Zistorite Society

'To understand the Machine City one must first understand its people. We are dealing with souls that, through their twisted genius, have shaped Zistorwal and the worship of Zistor from a spark of belief into the most dangerous and complicated construct in the world. They were not shaped by their city or their religion, never conformed to a dominant culture. They actually manufactured an ideology to suit their own ends. I expect in the years to come after we have dragged the walls of the city down, we will remember all of them with an admiration born of hindsight. 'Industrious to the last,' we will say of them and it shall be absolutely true.'

— Delecti the Inquirer,
traitorous God Learner

The Foundations of War

The mostali insist that the Zistorites stole their ideas and principles. The Zistorites deny these accusations, citing that the dwarfs are simply bitter that their flawed reasoning has come to naught even after millennia of development, while in a few short decades the God Learners have assembled the Flesh-Machine God and their holy city Zistorwal. Who is right? Perhaps both sides are right, perhaps neither.

What the Zistorites are reaping now is the last stand in a war that has spanned generations. The descendants of those originally wronged carry the hatred once borne by their ancestors. As Glorantha's Imperial Age spirals toward an eventual cataclysm, this conflict is a microcosm of the instabilities between the cultures and empires of the Second Age.

Ultimately, this ancestral game of one-upmanship means nothing. The mostali can rave all they want about the theft of their flawed lore, but it does not matter to the God Learners of today whether the Zistorite secrets were born of dwarfen lore or were invented wholesale. The point is that it all works now. This fact is what has brought Zistorite culture to its lofty position.

The Heart of Zistorism

The Zistorites of today came about through a series of magical and philosophical orders in Jrustela bonding through shared conclusions. Central to the premise of the Zistorite movement is the concept of Runic Identification, as codified some four centuries before by an order known as the Runists of Nerep.

Runic Identification blossomed from the premise that Glorantha was inherently flawed. Though the Core Runes that made up the world and universe had created Glorantha, contaminations between the Core Runes had made flawed, faulty concepts throughout the history of creation. Thousands upon thousands of these flaws exist in various the concepts, magical principles, natural laws, living beings and unliving elements that make up the world. The Runists believed that by purifying themselves of their own flaws and through meditation, daily rites and sorcerous rituals, they would be able to harmonise their own bodies and souls with one of the Core Runes that make up the pillars of the universe. In doing this, they reach the state of Solace: perfect harmony with the way creation would be, *should* be, if the world itself were purified.



The changes in these Runists were obvious to their sorcerous colleagues and social peers. They seemed invigorated and more attentive and aware as they went about their studies and work. As many solid new principles were wont to do in the evolving Jrustelan magical-political climate, the idea spread. The Philosophy of Runic Identification became a minor movement within Jrustela, acknowledged by all and practised by many. The tenets remained the same for many years: focussing on betterment of the self through purification and Solace with a chosen Core Rune. It soon became known by the more formal name of Reconstructionalism. Reconstructionalism had two opposite scales of Being: that of *Everything* and *Solace*. 'Everything' represented the world as it was, with the Core Runes blended to create impurity. 'Solace' was the state of things returned to their separate, perfected components.

Almost 200 years after its first roots were founded by the Nerep Runists, the leaders of the widespread movement were recognised by the growing religious culture and climate being formed around the Abiding Book. The official Orders of Core Runes were formed, each sub-cult based around one of the principle Runes of creation. One of these sub-cults formed over time and manifested as the Purificationist movement. These scholars argued over the possibility of one of the universe's Core Runes having been lost from the ken of mortals from time out of mind. Exactly how this had happened or which Core Rune it was became a subject that raged in debating parlours and in busy libraries and laboratories throughout Jrustela.

A century ago, the Great Debate was held in Frowal and overseen by officials in the Malkioni Church. It was decided here by the leaders of the Orders of Core Runes that the missing Core Rune was *Purity*. Since creation began, the world and the concepts which had founded it had undergone series after series of contaminations, clashes, mixings and ultimately, devolving. Glorantha itself and all living on it were becoming increasingly impure with no connection to the Core Rune that should have originally maintained the Solace of the universe.

It was in the early 800s that Jrustelans first saw the Malkioni Church begin to channel worship into the newly discovered Purification Rune in the hopes of

bringing it about and lending it strength through belief. One of the groups that took this premise to heart was the fledgling order that came to be known as the Zistorites. These proto-Zistorites, either through their own genius or through the theft of mostali lore (depending on just whom one decides to believe) developed a process by which they sought to codify and comprehend the entire universe, from the most advanced and complex aspects to the most simplistic and mundane. This was termed Systematicism. The God Learners analysed the systems and laws by which everything in the world functioned, before seeking different and simpler ways of making each process occur.

'My former brethren have a gift for couching the mundane in long-winded terminology. Systematicism is simple enough – many God Learners practise it. It is a process designed to understand how everything works. Every aspect of creation is broken down and examined, be it a physical object, an emotion, an animal or even a spell. By adding all this gathered information together, it is hoped that the entire universe can be understood through a view of how Everything functions together.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

The Great Machine

On Locsil Isle, a conclave of God Learners largely made up of the Zistorite faction gathered to begin construction on a machine capable of cataloguing, understanding and eventually destroying all the flawed processes in the world, with the intention of then restructuring them in the state of Solace. The God Learners had not only found a way of comprehending the universe – they now believed they had a way to remake Glorantha in the image of perfection as would align with the lost Purification Rune. Much of the Great Machine's innards were mundane materials such as various metals, though no shortage of esoteric components were acquired (often at great expense or difficulty) in order that the Great Machine would function. Items and substances from every land in Glorantha were gathered, and in some cases even living beings were entombed within the developing machine, with the flesh and fluids of their bodies becoming components in the final creation.

Even before the construction of the Great Machine, a sect of monks from various Orders of Core Runes also arrived on Locsil and established a monastery there. These pious God Learners would later convert to the Order of Purification, then forming the spiritualistic core of the Zistorites when the Alliance sorcerers of the island eventually joined together as the Cogs of Zistor cult. The term Zistor grew from conclaves of these sorcerer-scholars debating the nature of the lost Core Rune. They believed, through restructuring the world, they would be channelling the power of a Core Rune they were actually creating in the process. This was the Zistor Rune, born from the God Learner ideology of seeing the world through its component pieces before understanding the whole. The Zistorites planned to bring about Solace by creating a replacement for the lost Purity Rune. Along the way, almost as a test of their abilities, they set about creating a god to go with their master plan.

For these reasons, no God Learner is ever really surprised that the other races and peoples of Glorantha rage against the rise of the Machine City. Even in their genius, the sorcerers are self-aware enough to recognise just how hubristic they are being with this epic endeavour. The crux of the matter is that they are certain they will be able to handle it, and judge that their intentions will succeed no matter the cost.

Time will reveal the truth of that judgement.

Zistorite Culture

The ranks within the Cogs of Zistor order are not the only means of ascertaining social status among the Zistorites, nor is it the only cult that makes up the Zistorite movement. In truth, the ranks of the Cogs order are used for little more than understanding the relative comprehension and sorcerous potential of each cultist. They mean practically nothing in terms of social standing, which is more commonly determined by faction allegiance and 'caste'.

There are families of nobles and a clear aristocracy in Zistorwal, though noble birth is merely an indication of having been born to a wealthy God Learner bloodline rather than anything that means one deserves respect in the here and now. The aristocracy is made up of those high-ranking members of the Cogs of Zistor and whichever members of the Five Factions (see below) are currently in good political standing. Political standing

is a matter of who one's mentor is, what faction one belongs to, where in the faction's rankings one stands, what contributions to the Great Machine one has made and what other accolades or duties one has managed to achieve inside and outside the Machine City.

To those rare souls who manage to visit Zistorwal without being members of the Cogs of Zistor, as well as those intrepid few who manage to infiltrate the city for dark business, the Machine City can appear a nightmarish amalgamation of oppressive magic mixed with twisted technology and construction. But the prejudices and beliefs of the Zistorites are sufficiently alien enough to unnerve even those who can take the architecture in their stride. After all, these are sorcerers who believe they are reshaping flawed parts of their own bodies into something resembling a mechanical god's perfection, seeking to become more like him through intense magical surgery.

The Castes

The first divisions within Zistorwal's society are those of caste. They are informal but nevertheless are responsible for a great deal of prejudice that occurs within the city. The recognised castes are **Fleshbound**, **Enslaved**, **Enhanced**, **Transcendent** and **Machine Lord**. Political influence and magical power have no place in how the lower castes are divided – they are purely matters of temporal rights arising from a sorcerer's physical form. Machine Lord is the exception to this rule, for it is the rank of those worthies present on the Council of Flesh and Metal.

Fleshbound

To Zistorites, any living being with no mechamagical implantation or modification is considered Fleshbound. A Fleshbound has few rights at all in Zistorwal, be they a visiting ambassador, a hero from another nation or a beggar on the streets – all are equal. To be Fleshbound is to stand at the lowest, most wretched level of existence. The Zistorites believe only those God Learners arrogant enough to see themselves as born utterly perfect would refrain from augmenting their bodies with mechamagics. As for those in cultures where there is simply no opportunity to share in the harsh sorcery-surgery of the Zistorites? Well, they are to be pitied for being unable to think their way out of their own weakness.

It must be said that this is an extreme outlook and many Zistorites do not hold to it personally. It is a traditional prejudice, largely seen in the hierarchies of the Machine City's nobles more often than the lower echelons of the cult. Most Zistorites will hold no immediate disdain for those unwilling or unable to augment their physical forms. It is a personal matter, coming down to faith and prejudice. Whereas one Zistorite might see his God Learner companions' refusal or ignorance of Zistor as their own personal choices, another will see them as weak for scorning their chance at becoming more perfect. Allowances are made, of course. Due to the extreme costs of mechamagics, many Zistorites have no ability to afford them for many years, if at all.

But the law is the law: Fleshbound have very few legal rights in Zistorwal. This is not to say that every resident within the city without augmentation is left to die on the streets. It simply means that they are deemed unholy in the eyes of the lords seated on the Council of Flesh and Metal. No Fleshbound can ever appear before the rulers of the city with a legal complaint; no Fleshbound may ever assault an augmented citizen; and no Fleshbound may ever meet the eyes of the Zistor automaton. They must look to the ground or at the god's feet as he passes.

Fleshbound may be killed with impunity. A member of a higher caste killing a Fleshbound will suffer no punishment from the rulers of Zistorwal. Of course, simply killing a diplomat from another nation is total idiocy. Just because the Council of Flesh and Metal do not recognise Fleshbound as holy beings, does not mean that it is acceptable to slaughter them on a whim. Intelligence is prized as highly as piety in the Machine City and a Zistorite who lords his faith over the Fleshbound, killing them as one might kill any animal, is soon regarded as a lunatic or a fool by his peers.

He will, however, remain unpunished.

The slaves of Zistorwal, largely made up of prisoners of the Jrustelan War, are all Fleshbound. Slavery is not illegal in the Machine City – quite the opposite, in fact – and estimates put the number at perhaps 4000 slaves currently serving here at the whims of their masters.

Enslaved

In the complex field of Machine City politics, a race of created automaton slaves are actually given a higher legal standing than regular people. The reasoning behind this is that the Enslaved are closer to Zistor than the Fleshbound, born as they are from chunks of living matter and sheathed in mechanical bodies.

The Enslaved are among the God Learners lesser attempts to simulate life. They are smaller, more manageable and much less sophisticated versions of the Zistor automaton and the Flesh-Machine God itself. Enslaved are essentially automatons with flesh components such as human brains or bones lodged inside metallic bodies. They are relatively rare, employed only by very powerful God Learners, since the creation process involves intensive magical and surgical effort as well as no small amount of craftsmanship. In short, they are the reverse of augmented Zistorites – where the sorcerers are men who modify themselves with machines, these automations are machines created with additional human components. The reason flesh or other human matter is added to one of these beings is simple enough – they are traditionally created as menial, lesser reflections of the sorcerers themselves. Making a pure automaton is not creating something in Zistor's image. He is the *Flesh-Machine God*, after all.

It is often incredibly disconcerting to be around one of the Enslaved, since they are human remains kept stable in a mechanical frame. This means that they tend to smell of a terrible combination of oil and metal mixed with rotting meat. When the human components within an Enslaved rot away to uselessness, the automaton is usually used for scrap. Their life span (if such an existence could be termed such) tends to be between a few months and few years at best.

Enslaved are barely sentient. They understand the language of their creator and will obey the orders of their master and any others he demands the automaton listens to, but they are generally used for intimidation purposes and guard work. Enslaved are discussed in detail later in this book, though they are mentioned here because any harm or damage caused to an Enslaved is considered harm to the creator. Fleshbound have been executed in the past for damaging an Enslaved, though it must be noted that these fearsome 'mechanical undead' servants are notoriously difficult to destroy.

Enhanced

Also called the 'augmented', the Enhanced are the majority of citizens in Zistorwal. Any God Learner within the city with a mechemagical enhancement is automatically considered one of the Enhanced. To be Enhanced in Zistorwal is not to be special or exalted above the masses – it is to be *part* of the masses. It is to stand at the desired level of purity and piety, showing the proper respect due to the walking god of the city.

The Enhanced are the Zistorite God Learners detailed in *Magic of Glorantha* and since they are the majority of Zistorwal's God Learner population, they are also the main focus of this book.



Transcendent

A great deal of unease surrounds the existence of the Transcendents. When a God Learner replaces almost all of his physical form with mechemagics, it is usually because of illness or injury; perhaps some soft tissue damage that some how can not be healed by mundane or magical means. Shingallion, lord of the Zistorites in the Machine City, is little more than a brain and half a face, with the rest of his head and body made up of gleaming bronze and iron mechemagics. He is not only an example of a Transcendent, he is the father of their caste and considers himself the purest of all Zistorites as well as being the closest living being to Zistor.

This is not quite as clear-cut as it seems. Suspicion falls upon the Transcendents for taking their faith too far. In worship of the Flesh-Machine God they seem to be almost entirely Machine to the exclusion of Flesh. It makes other Zistorites as uncomfortable as normal humans are around the Enhanced.

This puts the Transcendent caste somewhere outside of the already mangled social hierarchy, for while they are still technically Enhanced, they are almost always wealthy and extremely powerful sorcerers and tend to prefer the company of their fellow Transcendents over the 'less pious' Zistorites below them. It creates a complex system of leadership when some of the Machine City's leaders are isolationist in this way. Currently, due to the fact that the Transcendents are a small but extremely powerful group of high-ranking Zistorites, the caste is viewed as an unofficial cabal of leaders rather than an exclusive coven of fanatics. In public at least, most Zistorites will consider the Transcendents to be the former of these two terms, and in private, the latter.

Machine Lord

A solid rank above Enhanced is that of Machine Lord – also known as Mechamagical Lords, and often shortened to Mach Lord or Mech Lord. It is a caste based on authority first and foremost, indicating a seat on the 13-strong Council of Flesh and Metal. Currently a full eight members consider themselves Transcendents, which highlights how influential the relatively small movement truly is.

To rise to the rank of Machine Lord one must attain the highest rank in the Cogs of Zistor cult and be nominated for the Council of Flesh and Metal by at least two other Machine Lords. Machine Lords must also by tradition have at least one mechamagical implant. Then it is a matter of being voted into the inner circle, for the Council of Flesh and Metal selects all replacements for old members from the population of the city.

Machine Lords, like Transcendents, technically have all the same legal rights as the Enhanced of Zistorwal. The real difference in justice comes from the vast wealth and power these worthies are able to call upon when they need to.

ZISTOR

Here is the pinnacle of the Zistorite ideology. The god they created, Zistor, born from God Learner ingenuity and the sorcerers' tendency to forge concepts from the material world up. Gods need not always be found in the realm of the Divine and brought to the physical world through faith. Through sorcerous rites and complicated theorems, the physical world could be used to create a god that would then reach out its power into divinity.

The pagans and pantheists of Glorantha look upon this steaming, shrieking mechanical god with dismay and terror, for here is the personification of Zistorwal's danger to the rest of the world. Their understanding of the Great Machine in the endless subterranean bowels of the city is a focal point for the loremasters, the enlightened and educated, but here in the form of a roaring god of stone and blood and bronze... Here is blasphemy incarnate.

Even from the siege lines, the invaders can see this titanic god-machine. Sometimes it seems to aid in the city's construction, other times it stands motionless for many days at a time, simply staring out across the sea or the lands to the north. Alarmingly, the construct at times appears to be involved in some kind of religious observation or bawled prayer to the heavens in a language none outside the city can comprehend. What few will ever know before the city falls is that the Zistor figure is actually another part of the great and complex Machine in the under-city, and it prays to Zazistor, its father, as the factories and forges of the surface do their work.

Faith & Politics

Politics within Zistorwal are many-tiered and rarely straightforward. They are certainly equal in complexity to political climates in Glorantha's largest cities and a great deal more convoluted than most. For a city of monks dedicated to purifying themselves and sorcerer-scholars seeking the world's ultimate enlightenment, there is a great deal of bitterness between noble families, treachery in the highest castes, and a thriving tradition of getting away with murder. Political assassination is almost as large a part of the culture as magic, and it is an open secret within Zistorwal's walls that murdering one of the Enhanced is perfectly fine, so long as the killer is Enhanced himself and takes the

appropriate precautions against getting caught. Such precautions usually involve bribery, misdirection and in some cases, framing someone else to take the fall.

The Cogs of Zistor, as introduced in *Glorantha: the Second Age* and fully detailed in *Cults of Glorantha: Volume II*, is the primary cult of the city. In fact, it is a fundamental part of the city's working, to the point where those who are *not* members are the exceptions rather than the majority. Since practically every God Learner in the city is a Cog of Zistor and the ranks within the Cogs have such little social impact, the Zistorites break up their political and social landscape depending on each sorcerer's allegiance to a smaller sub-cult, formally known as the Prime factions or, more commonly, the Five Factions.

The Five Factions

The name is misleading since there are now somewhere in the region of fifty or sixty factions within the city, but each stem from one of the first five to rise from the initial founding of Zistorwal.

A character wishing to join one of the Five Factions must be a member of the Cogs of Zistor parent cult. That is the only criteria in terms of game mechanics. Actual acceptance is based on social manoeuvring as well as the Zistorite's ethos and worldview.

It should be noted that all Zistorites are members of one of the Five Factions and characters may only be a member of one faction at a time. When a character finds a mentor or ranking Cog cultists to indoctrinate him into the Cogs of Zistor, the aspirant is already dealing with someone in the Five Factions and is likely to mentored only if he agrees with his mentor's allegiance. Joining the Cogs of Zistor is usually a matter of seeking out a God Learner of the character's preferred faction and joining that as he joins the parent cult from the outset. Few Zistorites join the Cogs and then choose a faction afterward.

It might seem petty to an outsider but a Zistorite that stands outside the Five Factions (or their myriad lesser sub-factions) is seen as something of a miscreant to be pitied, rather than admired for his independence. Players wishing to create their own factions are more than welcome to do so (Games Master permitting, of course) but those who wish to dive deep into

the established political landscape should find the following descriptions of the Prime factions useful for their characters.

They are the **Legion of Purification**, the **Once-Men**, **Ascension**, the **Cabal of Night's Eyes** and the **Teeth of the Saw-Blade**.

Legion of Purification

'There is a war raging across the world. We are avoiding lending our strength to our own empire simply so we may hide behind walls so strong they do not even need us to defend them. And while we conserve our strength, our brothers in the God Learner Alliance fight and die in a war that could decide the fate of Glorantha before our Great Work is ever completed. I urge you, brothers, sisters, friends... Rise up with me. Let us march with the other God Learners. Once stability has been achieved in the world, we can bring about the perfection of the lost Rune.'

— Delgod Goldgrip, Second of the Six, Machine Lord of the Council of Flesh and Metal

The most militant of the Five Factions is currently in a weak position within Zistorwal. The Legion of Purification is still among the most numerous of the splinter cults, though their ideology has never really gained political favour even if it sees widespread membership. This has created a curious divide: the cult's numerous members are respected socially, though they have little influence over the politics of the city. Even high-ranking Zistorites of this faction are afforded less respect than their fellows of equal position, purely because of secular allegiance.

The Legion of Purification operates under a slightly divergent ethos to the parent Cogs of Zistor cult. Rather than remain within the city and attend to the needs of the Great Machine, this faction believes that it is the duty of the Zistorites to lend significantly more aid, manpower and resources to the God Learner Alliance in this age of war. While the great project continues, these sorcerers argue that the so-called Justelan War is not going as well for the Alliance as

propaganda would have the masses believe. If the Old Ways uprisings continue and the Empire of Wyrms' Friends are allowed to complete their foolish draconic ambitions and bring about the Great Dragon To Come, the face of Glorantha will be drastically altered and the Zazistor machine will have to amend countless calculations in the aftermath.

This must never be allowed to pass. To that end, members of the Legion leave Zistorwal regularly, hitting the Gloranthan roads and allying with other God Learners to strike at the Empire and the races currently conquered by the Alliance who yet still show signs of uprising. The majority of Zistorite God Learners in adventuring groups and fighting the forces of the EWF are drawn from this faction, for they are not content to hide behind Zistorwal's impregnable walls and let the world turn untouched by their influence. Solace is fated to be achieved, but the path to perfection is not an easy one. The other nations and races must be subdued into some degree of compliance before the restructuring of the world can take place.

Many sorcerers belonging to this faction are scholars as well as warriors, knowing that they do what they do only because they must. Yet it is not all lofty idealism and violence based on forethought. A great many Zistorites join the Legion of Purification because they see the Great Machine clanking away perfectly as it is, and they are loyal enough to the God Learner Alliance that they do not wish to let their non-Zistorite fellows suffer unaided.

Some, admittedly, just like to kill. The Legion of Purification is a prime breeding ground for the noted God Learner traits of arrogance and superiority complexes. If a Zistorite joins the faction purely to go out into the world and kill in the name of the Jrustelan Empire (or simply to feed his own passions), then so

'I have met Delgod before, though I did not know with whom I was dealing. I deeply regret not killing him when I had the chance. That man is dangerous and worse, he is exceptionally intelligent. His rise among the Zistorites bodes ill for all that oppose the Machine City.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

be it. Ultimately, the subjugation of other cultures is the goal; it does not matter what emotions drive the deeds. A wide variety of personalities are found in the faction: for every Zistorite that regrets the pain he causes, there will be another who revels in the suffering he inflicts and three more who have different emotional responses.

Though these Zistorites will sometimes be found accompanying large God Learner armies, they are most often involved more on the Player Character level of things, working with smaller groups to upset the balance within regions to favour the Jrustelans, or working with fellow sorcerers to achieve dominance over a given community.

The faction is very democratic in nature. It is traditional for the Legion of Purification to hold annual elections to decide who will serve on the sub-cult's leadership council, which hold sway over the increasingly common political decisions that fall to a faction level. This council is called the Honoured Inquisitive within the cult, though many other Zistorites refer to it with as the Council of Wrath with a semi-serious tone, since the Honoured Inquisitive seems utterly dedicated on making decisions that send members of its faction out into the world in order to shed the blood of other cultures. The six sorcerers who serve each year take their numerical position as a title. For example, 'Delgod Goldgrip, Second of the Six'. It is generally seen that the First of the Six holds highest rank, though in actuality he is merely the most popular candidate, having received the most votes from faction members.

Though the Legion of Purification is informal by the standards of many cults, occasionally one of the Honoured Inquisitive (or all of them if the need is dire enough) may issue direct orders to members. These often take the form of specific tasks in the vein of assassinations, regional destabilisations, or hunting for myths to aid other God Learners in the Jrustelan War. While any member is free to refuse such a task, the rewards are usually worthwhile enough to tempt most Zistorites, such as free mechamagical surgery, runes or access to new spells.

The symbol of the faction is the mechanical hand of Zistor with the black outline of an hourglass on the palm.

Allegiance Requirements: Sponsorship from an existing member; interview with one of the Honoured Inquisitive.

Faction Mechamagic: Knuckle-knives

Delgod Goldgrip

He is a tall man with sharp, aristocratic features. Dressed in robes of a dark blue akin to the sky at midnight, he flexes his right hand – a gold-plated mechamagical replacement – into a fist before opening the fingers again, like a metal flower blooming. It seems to be a nervous habit of his, or perhaps an indication that he is deep in thought. He turns to face you; dark green eyes flickering with a moment of inquisitiveness. Before he speaks, he rests his hands on his belt, the human hand hooked into the black leather, the metal gauntlet resting on the pommel of a sheathed rapier.

Delgod Goldgrip is the Second of Six in the Honoured Inquisitive. He is calm, well-mannered and unfailingly well-spoken. His only mechamagical replacement is his right hand, which looks more like a piece of art due to the fact it was forged by a Zistorite goldsmith at great expense, and acid-etched with runic symbols of sorcerous import. The hand's beauty belies the wicked, curved bronze claws that will flash from the fingertips at a moment's mental impulse.

Delgod was voted into the Honoured Inquisitive because he is skilled, learned, ambitious and popular. He has developed new spells, written essays and treatises on the nature of the world that see publication amongst his peers and he has experience in aiding non-Zistorite God Learners against the EWF, personally slaying three Wyrms' Fang Exultants of the Order of Crimson Purity.

At the last election three years ago, he was chosen to serve on the Council of Flesh and Metal as one of the city's ruling Machine Lords. He accepted the honour with grace, hoping to turn the eyes of his fellow sorcerers to stare outside the city walls. He is a firm believer in the notion that the world is changing so fast, destabilising so quickly, that the Great Machine's calculations will be ruined if the downward spiral is allowed to continue. The wars must be brought to an end with God Learner dominance as the result, and peace need only be kept long enough for Zazistor to fulfil its task.

Delgod, at 30 years of age, is the youngest Machine Lord in the history of the city. He despises Shingallion, who he regards as more than halfway to becoming an inhuman construct and pities the elder Zistorite for his lost humanity. Delgod loathes the continued inaction proposed by the First Councillor and believes that Shingallion is somehow working on his own plot to ascend to the position now occupied by the Zistor automaton: avatar of the Machine God.

The nickname Goldgrip was coined by his students, obviously based on his hand, though it is used as a term of mockery by Delgod's political opponents in regards to the amount of money he spends on paying agents to venture out of the city. A great many members of his faction are dispatched across Glorantha to aid the other God Learners. Delgod receives messages from his many allies within the Alliance, asking for reinforcements or Zistorite specialists to assist them in their efforts in the Jrustelan War, and Goldgrip provides for them whenever he can. If players and Games Masters are looking for a wise mentor who will entrust characters with duties outside the city, Delgod Goldgrip is a fine choice. His close ties with Malcrex Dark-Eye of the Cabal of Night's Eyes also opens the door for unified groups of characters from either faction.

The Once-Men

You all seek to look elsewhere for trouble. That is not our way. We did not build this holy fortress-city in order to please others or heed their cries. That is not our way. We constructed it in order to perform our work in solitude. That is our way. And now you say, again and again and again, that we must leave the sanctum of Zistor and interfere with a world we care nothing for? That is not our way. You would have us fight the wars of others? That is not our way. You would have us shed blood and haemorrhage sorcerous power in actions and deeds that do not concern the Great Work? That. Is. Not. Our. Way.'

— First Councillor Shingallion,
Mech Lord of the Machine City

This faction is made up of the Transcendents and those who aspire to be like them, but lack the means, the coin or the courage to replace their entire body with mechemagics. The Once-Men are currently enjoying a political apex in the city, with their leader Shingallion as First Councillor on the Council of Flesh and Metal and a further six members also sitting as Machine Lords on the city's board of leadership. In fact, only one Transcendent on the Council is not a part of the Once-Men movement: Darius Thell, a venerable and quiet man who had his body replaced because of magical illness inflicted upon him by the EWF during his ambassadorial duties across Glorantha.

While the Transcendents are viewed with guarded awe and suspicion as a caste, the Once-Men faction is respected (albeit sometimes grudgingly) for the power it commands in the city. This authority is not simply a matter of dirty politicking – the Once-Men have among their number some of the most unique thinkers and creative geniuses in Zistorwal. Many of the most skilled inventors or mechemagical surgeons belong to this faction, and the respect the Once-Men receive for their talents as well as their political position is monumental.

What separates a Once-Man from his peers in the other factions is his pursuit of mechemagical technomancy and Zistorite ingenuity for their own perfection, just as ruthlessly as all Zistorites pursue the perfection of the world through the Zazistor machine. It is a selfish outlook in a sense, for they twin their personal enhancement as having equal importance as the world's resurrection. Yet among the Cogs of Zistor, it is a worldview that holds great appeal; many Zistorites believe if they can perfect themselves before the Great Machine's computations are completed, they will remain unchanged when the world is remade, rather than suffer the alterations to mental and physical forms that all other beings will go through. Essentially, the Once-Men operate under an ideology of self-perfection and inward reflection, rather than worrying about what occurs outside the walls of their mighty city.

Due to their introspective natures, few of the Once-Men leave the city on any business pertaining to the Jrustelan War or the Iron Wars. If one of Shingallion's faction do leave Zistorwal, it is usually on some personal business between themselves (or their masters) and another God Learner elsewhere in the world. Once-Men rarely serve as field agents in any conflict, even if they have the power and rank to do so



effectively. They are the epitome of Zistorite aloofness, attending to their own needs and business before ever considering the needs of others. Not all of the Once-Men are callous or snide about their priorities, but few alter them.

Little prejudice exists within the faction when it comes to how advanced and comprehensive a sorcerer's mechamagics are. All acknowledge that by virtue of membership in the faction, a Zistorite intends to perfect his flesh with mechamagical surgery when he is able to do so. Therefore the current Transcendents rarely look down on their less-modified brethren. Patience is a virtue in the Once-Men. Perfection will come if the sorcerer is dedicated enough to make it so. Of course, sorcerers who seem to avoid ever redeveloping their body with mechamagics are soon ostracised and cast out of the faction. It has happened more than once in the past, where a Zistorite has joined the Once-Men in the hopes of advancing his political career without clinging to the sub-cult's true doctrines. Shingallion, in his machine-hearted and unemotional state, often orders these traitors exiled from the city. If a Player Character succumbs to such a fate, it is his choice whether to devote his life to helping the non-Zistorite God Learners and leave Zistorwal forever, or seek a way back into the city through various legal appeals or secret treacheries.

On a day to day basis, many of the Once-Men are deeply involved in politics, pitting the influence, power and riches of their families against their social rivals. Prestige means a great deal to those of this faction, and the infighting between the Once-Men and the others among the Five Factions can reach vicious intensity at times. The other sub-cults of the Cogs of Zistor tend to see little import or glory in defeating rival families over ancient grudges or new developments, yet the Once-Men make an intricate social hierarchy out of such things, awarding each other prestige and faction-wide recognition for cleansing the city of 'weaker' bloodlines.

Such political conflict rarely takes the form of outright war or murder – even assassination is relatively rare – and instead focusses on humbling and humiliating opponents, or forcing them to swear fealty and act as vassals or apprentices. It should be noted that as sorcerers come closer and closer to the state of

Transcendence, their human passions for this social one-upmanship weaken and their attention begins to focus more on the function of the Great Machine. Whether this is a sign of maturity or simple distance from human mindset is something debated at symposiums more often than one might imagine, since the loss of humanity is something that concerns (or at least intrigues) many Zistorites.

The symbol of the faction is a black square background with a skull in the centre. Half of this skull is human, the other half is mechanical.

Allegiance Requirements: Sponsorship from three existing members; interview with Shingallion; at least three mechamagical implants. Transcendents automatically gain membership if they desire it.

Faction Mechamagic: Mechamagical Digestion

First Councillor Shingallion

The highest-ranking sorcerer of the city is no longer human in any obvious capacity. He appears as a bronze skeleton sheathed in iron armour-plating. Though his robes cover a human torso, even this is packed with humming, clicking, whirring mechamagical organs. His arms, legs and head are replaced by polished bronze and dusky black-iron augmentations, with only his nose and upper lip remaining as outward evidence Shingallion was ever human to begin with. His voice is the lifeless, passionless drone of a machine, and as he speaks the two ruby lenses where his eyes once were whine softly, focussing and zooming as they receive electrical impulses from the Machine Lord's brain.

Shingallion is the head of the Council of Flesh and Metal, which elects its own leader from among its number. He is a mess of paradoxes, for he encourages the political infighting between the factions of the Cogs of Zistor, yet plays no obvious part in them himself. He seems too inhuman, too aloof to become involved, yet he praises the efforts of those who are, saying that thinning the herd promotes strength within the order. His many supporters see him as a living icon of Zistorite perfection. His critics, who are rarely as vocal as his detractors, say that he is swamped in his own hubris, detached from the real issues of Zistorwal's society and, whispered by some, that he is involved in his own scheme to somehow unify with

the lost Core Rune so completely that he becomes the avatar of Purity. This last theory seems far-fetched, but in a city of magical technology where world-altering wonders are commonplace, it has seeded enough conviction among the ranks that Shingallion has been the target of a dozen or more failed assassinations in the past three years.

As the nominal cult leader of the Zistorites, Shingallion counsels that his brethren turn their attentions and exertions inward, working purely to better themselves and bring about the final glory of the Great Machine. If this means ignoring the world outside the city walls, then so be it. The only being beyond Zistorwal's walls that ever seems to enter into the First Councillor's thoughts is Force Commander Varankol of the Empire of Wyrms' Friends.

'Of all the sins made by the machine-heresy, even above the metal god and the fri-man, this Shingallion is the worst, blackest stain on the world. It defies the gods purely by existing in its breathless unlife. Once I have disembowelled this monster, I will feed the metal body parts to the trolls and strike out all instances where this creature wrote its name. History must be taught not to remember such foulness.'

— Varankol the Mangler,
Empire Force Commander

The Mech Lord maintains a large network of agents in the city, dedicated primarily to providing him with information about the doings of Zistorites in the other factions, as well as relaying him a constant stream of information pertaining the Great Machine's functionality. Collectively, these two agencies are grouped together under the blanket expression of **Shingallion's Eyes**. To be a member of the Eyes is an honour, though it is expected that any sorcerer will throw down whatever he is doing (as long as it does not endanger the Great Machine) whenever the First Councillor requires something of them. The rewards for serving Shingallion as an Eye are subtle, such as training in new spells or political boons, since the Mech Lord does not wish to announce the identities

of his agents. The Eyes are already an open secret in the city as it is.

Within the Eyes, those who have earned Shingallion's trust above all others are inducted into an informal inner circle called **Shingallion's Spears**. The Spears are Shingallion's weapon against his enemies within his own society. They are his most trusted agents – though their skills and areas of expertise are wildly variable – and serve him as assassins. A Spear is not always a stereotypically stealth-based killer, which is not always possible with loud mechamagical augmentation anyway. Some are noblemen who work with poison, subtle magic or character assassination by ruining their target's reputation and credibility. It is the perceived aim of these Spears to achieve enough power over their rivals that their opponents are forced into apprenticeship or servitude to Shingallion out of shame, social debt or as penance for (invented) crimes.

Other Spears are scholarly *agents provocateur*, working to make others' work look fault and flawed so that Shingallion can publicly discredit their findings, while privately ensuring their research is claimed by his allies as their own inventions. Lastly, of course, many Spears are simple murderers. These are the wretches that subsist in the slums of the city, secretly wealthy from their work and trusted by the Mech Lord implicitly, yet appearing as beggars and failed sorcerers in order to remain as Shingallion's hidden weapons.

Shingallion and his associates are responsible for an immense amount of mistrust and unrest within Zistorwal, and many of the Zistorites sense that the unending game of political warfare and scientific competition is actually the fruit of Shingallion's labours. Outsiders coming into the Machine City look at the horrific political landscape and wonder why, within a unified cult such as the Cogs of Zistor, such vicious infighting occurs. Again, the Once-Men insist it is because through strife, Zistorwal's best sorcerers are strengthened and the chaff of the society is stripped from the wheat. Again, in response, Shingallion's critics cite that such shadowy warfare is ruthlessly logical and probably the only way the inhuman First Councillor can relate to his people.

Ascension

'The streets of our city are awash with God Learner blood. If we continue to kill each other and argue over matters of how Zistorwal should be run, the enemy outside the walls will have their victory handed to them. United we stand. Divided we fall. And, honoured brethren, we are falling.'

— *Triumvirate, Leader of Ascension, Machine Lord of the Council of Flesh and Metal*

Ascension is a group founded around principles of appeasement, compromise and reconciliation. In a harsh political climate like Zistorwal, such views would not be considered popular unless the faction was guided by respected sorcerers. Luckily for Ascension's agenda, this is the case. The group are led by a Zistorite God Learner who is known across the city as Triumvirate. This 'man' would draw attention to his faction purely by virtue of his unique nature, but he also happens to be a well-learned scholar and an insightful member of the Council of Flesh and Metal.

Ascension believes that a position between the political extremes must be achieved and maintained before the city tears itself apart in civil unrest. The group is well aware of the war currently underway in the shadows, where sorcerers assassinate their scholarly rivals in order to be the first to make a discovery, or kill their political rivals in order to put forth an agenda unopposed. The Zistorites of Ascension are aware of the conflict and stand above it, never lowering themselves to the treacherous, poisonous behaviour that goes on throughout the city's hierarchy.

The faction is something of a mediatory presence in city politics. They recognise that many Zistorites wish to leave the safety of the citadel and venture across the world, perhaps out of natural human curiosity, perhaps to stabilise the world so as to protect the Great Machine's calculations and perhaps out of a desire to help the other God Learners. Such actions are to be lauded, not railed against. Similarly, Ascension believes that those who wish to remain and attend to the Great Machine are not blind to a greater truth; they

are fulfilling their vital role as guardians of the city and its divine engines. Both outlooks must be allowed to coexist without conflict.

It is said of the faction that Ascension look inward, not outward, in seeking a path for the future. These sorcerers perceive the truest threat to the Great Machine is not the Iron Wars or anything outside the city, but is instead the bitter infighting between the factions and noble families of Zistorwal. These scholars believe that the instabilities within the Zistorite movement itself will bring about the great project's failure, and they seek to stop such a future from ever coming to pass. To this end, they allow that each sorcerer must be allowed to follow his own wishes on a personal path to Solace, rather than become mired in bitter politics. In short, Ascension advocates personal freedom as long as one still does a duty to the Machine City. The irony is that in seeking such freedom, Ascension's members are often snarled in the web of politics, trying to make themselves heard, understood and obeyed.

It is a thankless and difficult task, holding the fraying society together. Not every member of the faction deals with it in the same way as others. A division exists even within the sub-cult, between those sorcerers who try to peacefully bring unity between the factions, and those who wish to bring unity at any cost, even if it secretly involves killing agitators and vocal political opponents. Again, the irony gripping Ascension is palpably bitter, but these violent agents of the faction are convinced that if the right voices are silenced forever, unification can be achieved. Unfortunately, there are many voices to be silenced.

Ascension's members also often serve as ambassadors outside the city, since they are generally seen as the 'lesser of evils' option for such roles, half-trusted by factions that trust none of the others. It is not uncommon for God Learner nobles to request a Zistorite councillor – in fact it is rather in vogue at the moment, as mechamagical implant technology spreads across the Middle Sea Empire. In imperial courts, army camps and as advisers in God Learner noble households, Zistorites serve the Alliance in the name of promoting a greater connection between Zistorwal and the larger empire. Sometimes Ascension members take these roles for personal honour, to get out of their

hellish city or in the hopes of developing a network of useful contacts. Other times it is just to deny one of the other factions such a role.

The symbol of the faction is a black circular background with three white hands – two human, one mechanical – touching fingertips in the centre.

Allegiance Requirements: Sponsorship from an established member; interview with Triumvirate.

Faction Mechamagic: Viridian Vambrace

TRIUMVIRATE

Three figures stand by the window overlooking the roaring, clanking factories of their beloved city. As you approach, you realise with a sickening sense of discomfort that the three figures – all naked except for various body parts replaced by glistening bronze mechamagics – are joined by copper cables and hundreds of small wires stretching between their skulls. They move with fluid grace, as if a single creature with one mind; three heads turn as one, six unblinking eyes always stare in the same direction. When this strange being speaks, all three mouths speak at once in an eerie chorus. ‘We are Triumvirate,’ the hybrid creature says. ‘And Triumvirate lives only to serve the Great Work.’

Triumvirate is something of a horrific ‘first’ among the Zistorites. It is a gestalt entity comprised of the mechamagically-augmented bodies of three of Zistorwal’s sorcerers irrevocably joined together through psychic links and spell-enhanced machinery within their brains. It is said that Triumvirate is the most expensive example of God Learner mechamagics in existence, even above the Transcendents with up to 95% of their flesh replaced. Nobody is entirely sure who made Triumvirate or if it somehow made itself, but the expense and skill required without killing the three patients would have been legendary.

To be entirely accurate, Triumvirate is an ‘it’ not a ‘he’ or a ‘they’. It no longer acknowledges any recognition of its own gender, referring to itself as ‘we’ or simply ‘Triumvirate’ in the third person at all times. Dark rumours have always abounded that the odd conjoining surgery was performed on three renegade sorcerers who threatened the Great Machine, and their punishment was to serve as slavishly loyal adherents of the city

‘This creature is an abomination. When I take the heretic city I will tear the tri-man limb from limb and piss on the unburied remains while they rot and rust in the sun.’

— Varankol the Mangler, Empire Force Commander

after some experimental mechamagics were done to them. Whether this is true or not is something either no one knows or never admits to knowing. Triumvirate denies such a tale when asked of its origins. It cites that it was simply the result of three ambitious, gifted Zistorites who sought to combine their intellects and consciousnesses to create a unified whole. Clearly, Triumvirate is a powerful (if creepy) symbol for the unification of Zistorwal and for Ascension’s agenda.

Triumvirate is not just clever and is more than simply gifted – it is the most viciously intelligent being in the city; perhaps even the Middle Sea Empire, and certainly among the greatest geniuses in the world of Glorantha. It thinks with the mind of three powerful God Learners’ combined intellects, applying staggering mental faculties to the problems within the city. As a natural choice for leadership of Ascension (and some say created specifically for that purpose) Triumvirate was voted onto the Council of Flesh and Metal over 40 years ago on account of its wise counsel and well-considered responses to the city’s problems. Shingallion publicly respects Triumvirate, though both the First Councillor and the gestalt creature are aware of the Mech Lord’s true distaste for the tri-being. Triumvirate is also aware that much of Shingallion’s resentment comes from the fact that Ascension is rising in popularity and the Once-Men are slowly getting reduced to the prestige of the other factions – in no small part thanks to the cunning and skilled political manoeuvring of Ascension’s leader.

Triumvirate maintains an extensive web of agents throughout Zistorwal and out into the larger Jrustelan empire. It is always seeking new contacts and good relations with other God Learners, sometimes working directly with other faction leaders to support the work of non-Zistorite sorcerers. Triumvirate regularly employs members of Ascension to mediate disputes within the city or assist other Zistorites with their work

The Truth of Triumvirate

Oh, the possibilities. Games Masters are spoiled for choice when it comes to detailing Triumvirate in their campaigns. What if the real reason the leader of Ascension tolerates the militants among his sub-cult is slightly more sinister than appearances would have others believe? Think for a moment on the notion that Triumvirate is not a self-made being dedicated to cleansing the Zistorites of hostility. Think instead that he might be a puppet, created to be the perfect leader for a cult that seems benevolent but harbours a secret and formal inner cadre of killers. In this interpretation, perhaps all of Ascension is a lie, though most members do not realise this. In this imagining, Triumvirate is controlled by a sorcerer who remains hidden from his peers, never betraying the fact that he wields the gestalt being like an expensive and complicated toy. It might even be Shingallion or one of the other cult leaders...

There is also the dark possibility that Triumvirate is indeed self-made but that something in its immensely complicated construction went wrong. It might be considered a split-personality of sorts, but the fact is that Triumvirate is not itself all the time. While the public face of the being is that of Ascension's mild and eerie genius leader, away from scrutiny the creature is conflicted because of the clash of personalities within its psyche. Its darker side not only knows of Ascension's militant members, it secretly patronises them, charging them with orders to kill those who stand in the way of unification. This double-sided existence has remained hidden from the public for many years – will the characters blow open the secret or seek to serve the malicious half of the leader's twisted soul?

if it believes guidance is required. Such interference is not always welcome, but any Ascension member worth his salt expects resistance and prepares accordingly.

The only noted personal dislike Triumvirate seems to hold is for Brundul Fulmar, the leader of the Teeth of the Saw-Blade. When asked about this, Triumvirate apologises for any offence caused but says it is uncomfortable around a creature that has reshaped its physical form not for enlightenment or piety, but purely for warfare and the ability to inflict pain. In many ways, Triumvirate is a sensitive creature. It knows of the existence of the militant, murderous factions within Ascension and does not approve of them at all, though it knows censuring them will mean they splinter off from the faction and will become even harder to control and cause even more harm.

The Cabal of Night's Eyes

This faction is probably the least involved with the political scene of Zistorwal, yet paradoxically holds almost as much social power as the Once-Men. The Cabal of Night's Eyes has one guiding principle: whatever goes on in the city above the Great Machine is meaningless. The only thing that matters is Zazistor – the heart of Zistorwal – and it must be maintained and protected no matter the cost. The faction name

comes from its' members' habits of spending most of their time in the dark subterranean complex beneath the city.

This attitude has created a significant divide in the political scene of the city. In a city where respect from one's peers and influence over others is more valuable than gold, here is a faction that spits on the notions of politics and social manoeuvring, instead focussing on what it means to be a Cog of Zistor. Let the other factions wage war against each other because they cannot agree on which lesser path the cult should take; the Cabal of Night's Eyes, toiling in the subterranean bowels of the city, care only for the cult's main goal.

The aforementioned divide arises when one realises that that despite their apolitical stance, the Cabal holds significant power in the parent Cogs of Zistor cult because the faction's members work so dutifully not on their own development but to maintain the Great Machine.

In many ways, to be one of the Night's Eyes is a difficult and lonely path, more suited to extremely pious sorcerers with a love of hard work. These Zistorites are often seen by the other factions as 'priests' of the Flesh-Machine God, ignoring all outside interference

'This bickering is pointless. You fools on the surface fight over scraps of honour and notions of prestige, yes? I ask you this: what is honour? What is prestige? Can you feel them, touch them or use them to power your spells? No? Do honour and prestige matter to the Zazistor machine at the city's heart? No? Then tell me exactly why you have summoned me to another council meeting where we should discuss pointless, worthless matters that mean nothing to the completion of the Great Machine's work. I have better things to be doing, brothers. Perhaps you have forgotten, but so do you.'

— Malcrex Dark-Eye, Overseer of the Cabal of Night's Eyes

in order to further their god's cause. It is a demeanour that can make other Zistorites humbled or angry, though many will see the Cabal of Night's Eyes as dangerously deluded. While all of the city's sorcerers work toward the perfection that will be brought about by the Great Machine, most consider themselves human enough (or at least individual enough) to pay attention to personal concerns. Ostensibly, the Cabal of Night's Eyes do not. They work in their labs and factories, always seeking to increase productivity and doing all they can to maintain the Zazistor machine.

The truth has a few more facets, of course. The Cabal is not made entirely out of selfless, pious sorcerers who never feel the pressure to impress their peers. It is fair to say that the majority of the cultists do consider themselves above such petty things, but a 'majority' is not 'all'. There will always be those who use the deep respect that the faction earns, manipulating it for their own ends, such as sorcerers presenting a façade of piety and diligence while secretly behaving much like any other Zistorite – hoping to be the one who creates the most useful and popular inventions; hoping to be the one who is respected above others for his skill and power; hoping to be the one to achieve perfection and praise in their eyes of their perfect god-to-be.

Some of the cultists have turned to the Cabal of Night's Eyes not because of piety and unrivalled love for the Great Machine, but because of a disgust

at the depths of inter-cult conflict and treachery that the Cogs of Zistor has become. As one of the largest cults in the Middle Sea Empire – and perhaps the world – the Zistorites have thousands upon thousands of members. Few other cults fall into such bitter infighting while still largely working toward a greater goal, and the Cabal of Night's Eyes represents a part of the Cogs of Zistor that have had enough of the secret civil war going on. Rather than seek to heal the wounds of treachery, as Ascension would do, the Cabal of Night's Eyes retreat from their deluded brothers and their tarnished society, concentrating instead on more important matters. These sorcerers do not see Zistorwal's culture as something that can be fixed or brought back into alignment; they simply wish to let it implode on its own and occupy their time with the cult's main agenda.

Sorcerers from this faction rarely leave the city. When they do, it is usually on a specific mission for something that will maintain or improve some aspect of the Great Machine. Few of these Zistorites pay any mind to either the Jrustelan War or the Iron Wars. It is simply beneath their notice, as is the factionalised unrest between the city's politicians and sorcerer-nobles.



The symbol for the Cabal of Night's Eyes is the white hand of Zistor with a black eye on the palm.

Allegiance Requirements: Sponsorship by an existing member; interview with Malcrex Dark-Eye.

Faction Mechamagic: Tracer Gem

Malcrex Dark-Eye

The man before you stares back with one natural eye and one of jet black mounted in a bronze socket. His left arm is sheathed in mechamagics and he wears an oil-stained white robe. At his hip is a plain short sword, clearly for use in battle rather than for decoration. He has a noble air about him, but it is one of a king who toils alongside his subjects, or a general who fights at the vanguard of his armies. Everything about Malcrex lends the impression that despite his high birth and sorcerous power, he is deeply involved with the gears that drive the city onward. When he speaks, it is with a patrician's voice edged with impatience, as if there were always other business he should be about. 'Welcome to my sanctum. Now, if you will excuse my manners, I'd ask you to relate your business concisely. The stanchion in sector 80G-EXT-G collapsed this morning and I need to be supervising the repair efforts.'

Malcrex Dark-Eye is a man who has run out of patience with the Cogs of Zistor – at least as they stand today. He has turned from the cult and immersed himself in his own faction, the Cabal of Night's Eyes, in an attempt to put the nastiness of Zistorwal's society behind him and focus on the Great Machine.

As one of the most respected Zistorites within the city and a longstanding member of the Council of Flesh and Metal, Malcrex attracts a great deal more attention than he desires. Due to his perceived piety and hatred of the Zistorwallian political hierarchy, sorcerers in other factions have attempted assassinations in the past, hoping that with his death the Cabal of Night's Eyes would disband and the responsibilities held by these 'stuck-up' sorcerers would open up to cultists in other factions. Most of the city's sorcerers, even those that dislike him, recognise that Malcrex and his Cabal fulfil a great many vital roles with their duties. For this reason, he is not targeted by anyone with any real power and is assured a permanent position on the Council of Flesh and Metal.

Most often, when members of other factions meet with Malcrex it is because they seek his counsel. When these sorcerers come to him and seek his wisdom, he will listen and offer advice if the requests are polite enough. However, he never allows himself (or any of his cultists) to be drawn into the political warfare within the city, and in the past he has taken great pains to extricate any of his followers that are caught in the treacherous web of social influence.

His nature – approachable yet guarded – has made him a popular and respected figure in Zistorwal. Shingallion seeks to win Malcrex over to the Once-Men, pouring honey in the Cabal leader's ear time and again. Triumvirate regards Dark-Eye as the finest of all the Council's members and greatly admires him, though the Ascension leader pleads repeatedly for a unification of the Night's Eyes and his own faction, despite their fundamental differences in outlook and responsibility. Brundul Fulmar of the Teeth of the Saw-Blade loathes Malcrex as a coward ignorant of the truth, while Delgod Goldgrip of the Legion of Purification is the only other councillor to hold a genuine friendship with Dark-Eye. Despite the wildly divergent internal and external outlooks of both factions, Delgod (or his agents) comes to Malcrex often for advice and counsel. Similarly, Malcrex turns to Delgod for assistance with nagging political problems that will not go away by being ignored, or when he requires special materials from outside the city.

Malcrex Dark-Eye cares nothing for social rank. The position of any sorcerer within the Cogs of Zistor is irrelevant to him and he addresses everyone by first name, never their title. This annoys Shingallion immensely, despite the First Councillor's inhumanity and depleted personality.

When one of his own faction's sorcerers are in trouble, Malcrex does all he is realistically able to assist them; at the very least it will be a word of advice or an idea of where to seek a complete solution to the problem. As leader of several thousand sorcerers and head of a faction that has enough business keeping the Great Machine maintained without politics or adventuring being involved, he has neither the time nor the inclination to do anyone else's work for them. When he renders assistance, it is measured and useful – it is never his intention to mollicoddle his followers.

Teeth of the Saw-Blade

'Look outs. Ide the walls, brothers. We f. Ace an enemy of stag. Gering magnifude. But they can be beafen. They should be. Beafen. I counsel re. Sisfance, not cowardice. This is not about what we can endure, but about what our p. Ride should endure, brothers. We have the cap. Acify to lift this siege. We should do so and n. Of allow the world to fh. Ink we are weak.'

— Commander Brundul Fulmar, Machine Lord of the Council of Flesh and Metal

The Teeth of the Saw-Blade are a militant faction, though without the broad purpose of the Legion of Purification. Rather, the focus of this sub-cult revolves entirely around lifting the siege around Zistorwal and winning the Iron Wars before they can escalate further and potentially threaten then Great Machine. They are led by Brundul Fulmar, a Zistorite God Learner with some unique mechamagical implants that have greatly reduced his ability to speak coherently.

The driving ideology behind the Teeth of the Saw-Blade is that the Iron Wars are a grave insult to the Cogs of Zistor and the conflict must be ended as soon as possible. The world must be forced into a state of Solace whether the blind and stubborn races of Glorantha would have it or not, and while native resistance in the Jrustelan War is to be expected, the siege of the Machine City is an abomination that should never have been allowed to begin.

Part of this outlook is pride. The Zistorite movement is founded on principles of changing the world for the better through concepts no other soul in the world has been inventive enough to realise. To be attacked on account of their genius is a concept that galls most residents of the Machine City. They see the resistance of the other nations and races as either envy or a misguided attempt at stopping the inevitable. Yet pride is not the only aspect to the Teeth of the Saw-Blade's plans. Many Zistorites do not see their victory as assured. These souls often find their way into this faction, and demand that action be taken to win the Iron Wars before something unknowable goes wrong.

Even a small victory for the enemy could see the Great Machine harmed and its calculations thrown off course. Better to end any threats now, while they are still small and predictable enough to be destroyable without expending much of Zistorwal's resources.

This attitude is often seen by others as defeatist or cowardly rather than cautious. It makes the Teeth of the Saw-Blade weak politically, largely made up of younger Zistorites who are only now coming into their powers and older cultists who never gained much influence anyway. Their viewpoint is shouted down and derided as the position of those who fear things which will never threaten the city, and are accused of jumping at shadows as well as not having the proper faith in the Great Machine.

With little hold on political scene, the members of this faction work away from the high and mighty members of Zistorite's social hierarchy. Many toil alone, though it is not uncommon to see groups of these sorcerers allied to pool resources. Each of these God Learners is dedicated to ending the Siege of the Machine City and scoring victories in the Iron Wars, by any means possible. For many, this means leaving Zistorwal and seeking other allies and plotting out other methods of attack. It is hard to strike back from behind Zistorwal's walls, after all.

The Teeth of the Saw-Blade are scattered and operate independently far beyond even most loosely-organised sub-cults. Few orders ever come down from faction members who rank higher in the Cogs of Zistor. Few reports make their way up to the notable names of the cult. Membership in the faction is more of a statement of intent than alliance within a cohesive network. Sorcerers work in their own ways to lift the siege and harm the enemies of the Machine City. The appeal for free-thinking and independent sorcerers is obvious. These magicians obey no orders. They answer to no one.

This is also the faction's greatest weakness. With no coordinated political output, the faction's agenda goes ignored by the larger Zistorite community. All of the progress made by the teeth of the Saw-Blade comes down to the efforts in individuals out in the field, or the arguments raised by charismatic speakers at debate gatherings inside the city.



Despite their focus on lifting the Machine City siege these Zistorites often travel with other God Learners and mercenaries employed by the Alliance. Most are doing so in the hopes of making contacts and alliances of their own, that they can then use to aid the besieged Zistorwal. Few of the faction remain away from Zistorwal for overly long, however. If they remain away from the city for extended periods of time, it is usually in the hope of engaging and taking out some notable enemy who directly contributes to the Iron Wars.

The symbol of the faction is a black circular saw-blade with a white mechanical hand in the centre.

Allegiance Requirements: Sponsorship from an existing faction member; interview with Brundul Fulmar or one of his lieutenants.

Faction Mechamagic: Bale Ducts

Brundul Fulmar

The Machine Lord is tall and skinny – almost unhealthily slender. His legs are backward-jointed mechamagical constructs with splayed, wickedly clawed talon-feet, much like a bird of prey. These augmentations hiss as Brundul moves, with the muscle-pistons clanking and the pressurised gases

inside them expelling and refilling at regular intervals. The only other outward modification to his body is the replacement of his shoulders, throat and lower jaw with mechamagical restructuring. Most notable of this is the thin cables connecting his jaw-line to several glass vials of bubbling red liquid slightly darker than blood, each of which are attached to his metal neck and throat. When Brundul speaks, his voice is oddly halting, with pauses in the wrong places, as the modifications to this throat interfere with the transmission of his speech from his human lungs to his mechamagical lips. ‘Welcome to my Sanctum, my brothers. If I may be of service to you, I shall render what aid I can.’

Brundul Fulmar is a sadist. While people who derive pleasure from cruelty exist in every culture, few have the resources open to them that Fulmar does. He has reshaped his body into a form fit only to kill, at the cost of comfort, grace and even interaction with his fellows. His legs are incredibly powerful, capable of unleashing vicious kicks with the three eighteen-inch bronze dagger-bladed talons he has for toes. The vials of fluid connected to his replaced saliva ducts are filled with boiling of hot poison made from oil of the Great Machine’s cogs mystically blended with the blood of mostali. It burns like acid when he spits the venom and though it loses its acidic potency almost instantly, upon contact with any living being, it transfers through the bloodstream like lethal poison. This mechanism has robbed him of the ability to converse with any grace, which would be no small sacrifice for a man as eloquent and handsome as Brundul once was.

Yet such sacrifices mean nothing to him. His ability to cause pain is so improved that it overrides any regrets he has for living in such an awkward (and at times painful) body.

‘I have heard of this being. There is something so sinister, so unhealthy, in reshaping one’s physical form to do nothing but inflict pain. I have asked our besieging forces to recover Fulmar’s body for me if they are able. I would study this insanity for myself.’

— Delecti the Inquirer

He was not always this way. Brundul's first mechamagics were of the standard variety, requiring none of the years of painstaking design and weeks of surgery that his new body parts needed. It was only when he first began to augment his body that his mind started to turn. He mourned much of his lost humanity, such as the ability to make love or even feel the sun on his flesh.

Over a five-year period, his bitterness deepened to the point where he only found pleasure in ruining the bodies of others, just as he had ruined himself. He meticulously crafted his body to represent what was occurring within his mind, finally emerging from the bloodstained surgery chamber inside his home, with a body designed purely to inflict pain. In the ten years since his 'rebirth', Brundul has spent his time experimenting on captured mostali and stealing their secret lore both through mortal allies, magically-compelled servants and various other sorcerous means. He is guilty of that which the other Zistorites vehemently deny, for he openly seeks mostali lore in the hopes of further developing his own work. To this end, he pays members of his faction handsomely if they bring mostali to his laboratory, not least because he requires fresh blood to keep his poison tanks filled, as the mystical poison breaks down after a few days.

Brundul founded the newest faction in Zistorwal: the Teeth of the Saw-Blade. His sub-cult sees little political influence, though he himself was selected for the Council of Flesh and Metal. What most members of the city are all too aware of is that the other Machine Lords have a healthy respect of Fulmar's skills but worry about the man's sanity and stability. Despite his sadistic streak – which is another well-publicised fact in the city – many younger Zistorites have flocked to his faction in the hopes of striking back against the forces that siege their beloved holy city. Brundul personally speaks with each member at least once after they declare themselves members, taking measure of their abilities and personality in an otherwise informal interview, usually conducted in his laboratory. He also keeps himself open to meetings with other members if they seek to speak with him, even at short notice.

Something most of his faction members notice in these meetings is that Brundul counsels them to leave the city if they are displeased with progress within it. He often cites they should *'trust in the Great Machine*



to function while you are away, and instead carry the fight into the lands of the enemy. Strike innocent families while guilty warriors are trapped here.' Fulmar has publicly made it clear on many occasions, even in meetings of the Council of Flesh and Metal, that he believes the Zistorites should spread torment through the nations who have contributed troops to the siege, in the hopes mass murder of civilians will demand the warriors are recalled to protect their people. Obviously, this is a popular idea among the Teeth of the Saw-Blade as well.

Faction Allegiance

Allegiance within the Prime factions or one of their lesser splinter groups is not simply a social and ideological matter. Membership in a faction is necessary to be recognised as a contributing citizen of the city. It allows the cult's hierarchy to take note of the sorcerer, which in turn means the Zistorite is assigned duties, taught new magic by his masters, given access to the faction sanctum and generally fills his role as one of the Cogs of Zistor.

Living Rights

It is impossible to own property in Zistorwal without being a member of one of the factions. All non-Zistorite citizens claiming their own homes or managing their own businesses (taverns, stores and inns, for example)

lease the property from the Council of Flesh and Metal for nominal fees, with all documents of such transactions stored in the city's archives. Legally, Zistorites could simply reclaim all the leased property within their holy city and exile those who do business or live there, but no matter how bad the propaganda gets outside the walls, the Council of Flesh and Metal is not a malice-driven dictatorship. Most Zistorites welcome the presence of outsiders and have no desire to make their lives hard, so long as their presence remains benign.

All Zistorites within the factions are granted sustenance and accommodation free of charge within Zistorwal. The quarters are usually a modest room in the faction's main sanctum or a tenement nearby owned by the hierarchs of the sub-cult in question. The sorcerers are granted a small sustenance wage each month to claim supplies from stores, inns, local traders or the faction's own sponsored taverns. For sorcerers with no ready source of income this living arrangement is adequate enough. In return for these stipends, a character must dedicate at least half of every year to staying within the Machine City's walls, serving the Great Machine in whatever capacity envisioned by the faction leaders. Most Zistorites are left to their own studies, of course. The parent Cogs of Zistor cult is so splintered that independence of members is the natural state of things.

Most Zistorites prefer to use their faction sanctums' resources when they wish but also live elsewhere in the city, operating out of their own funds. That requires money.

A Decent Wage

Life in Zistorwal as a member of the Cogs of Zistor is clearly divergent from the lives of most of Glorantha's human inhabitants but perhaps not as much as might initially seem. Residents here work for their cult, just as any cultist does – and while the Zistorites might boast a larger number of 100% dedicated 'day in and day out' workers than most cult religions, many of the Machine City sorcerers prefer to treat their cult duties as exactly that: a duty. They leave Zistorwal for many months of the year, returning to fulfil their obligations and play their role in the bringing about of the Great Machine (as well as to learn new magic from their cult leaders) but spend much of their free time away from the city pursuing matters that interest them.

Yes, the factions appear demanding in their quest to organise and motivate thousands of sorcerers into a relatively coherent workforce, but it is convenience and security as well as duty that keeps so many Zistorites within Zistorwal for such extended durations. Those with the urge to wander the world are free to indulge it, and most do just that. The primary reason for doing so might be a sense of adventure and worldly curiosity, but at close second is the pursuit of new lore and additional avenues of profit.

Most of the richest Zistorites, those who claim their own factories and estates, have outside interests that keep money flowing towards them, such as mercantile investments in Middle Sea Empire trader guilds or lesser sorcerers employed, well-paid and uniquely-trained in exchange for recovering great riches and magical lore for their wealthy patron.

Adventuring in Glorantha, whether as a wanderer or a mercenary, is a decent way for any soul who is handy with a sword or a few spells to make a decent wage. Since many Zistorites would prefer wealth of their own rather than subsisting on the uninspired lifestyle offered by the factions, these sorcerers make their way in the world, usually taking what knowledge they learn and what wealth they have accrued back to the Clanking City. There they use their new lore in their own work or sell it on to those who pay for such things, and spend their wealth on increasing their standard of living; perhaps purchasing land or factories from the Council of Flesh and Metal.



Creating a Faction

Games Masters and players might wish to design their own factions for use in the chaotic tides of Zistorwal's political seas. There is certainly precedent for doing so; a host of lesser sub-cults exist, with fewer members but not always totally without influence, and each with its own ideology and agenda.

Ideology

The Cogs of Zistor have a very specific goal in mind with the reconstruction and purification of the world. Any sects that are formed inside Zistorwal will need to reflect that, or risk censure – perhaps even destruction – by the Council of Flesh and Metal. Characters might offer up a new way of doing things, or an ideology based around making some aspect of the city work more efficiently.

Leadership

Founding the faction is really no more difficult than thinking of a new slant on the main cult and spreading the word around the city. It is an informal process. Someone will have to be the faction's leader, though. Maybe it takes the form of a council or a democratic syndicate, but the buck stops somewhere; someone will need to be the nominal head of the sub-cult, whether they are a charismatic 'face' to give a good impression or a scholarly tutor-figure. Ultimately, one person gets to be the one who everyone remembers.

In most cases, leadership of a faction comes with a serious amount of work. Certainly some will be casual affairs; the Teeth of the Saw-Blade, for example. Generally speaking though, there will be meetings to hold, debates to chair, new recruits to consider, political wars to fight, new spells to develop, deeds to do, spies to ferret out, opponents to outthink and assassins to evade.

Allies

The faction's allies may be initially drawn from any mentors or friends in other factions who help the characters establish their sub-cult. Most faction leaders are not opposed to ancillary sub-cults attached to them, birthed by former members who took the core of the faction's teachings in a slightly new direction. Even if the characters are founding a cult without any outside help at all, the chance still exists to befriend one of the larger cults or one of the Five Factions, in order to achieve a measure of protection and prestige through allegiance.

You can take your cult in whatever direction you choose, of course. Just note that if you go it alone, you might get grudging respect for your efforts, but you will have a rougher ride against some stiff competition.

Enemies

The enemies that threaten the Zistorites are legion. The EWF, the uz, the mostali and even agencies within the God Learner Alliance see the Cogs of Zistor as unnerving at best and a deadly threat at worst, and most of these forces tend to assume the worst. Any sub-cult of the Cogs of Zistor will need to take that account: enemies are everywhere, and not just outside the city.

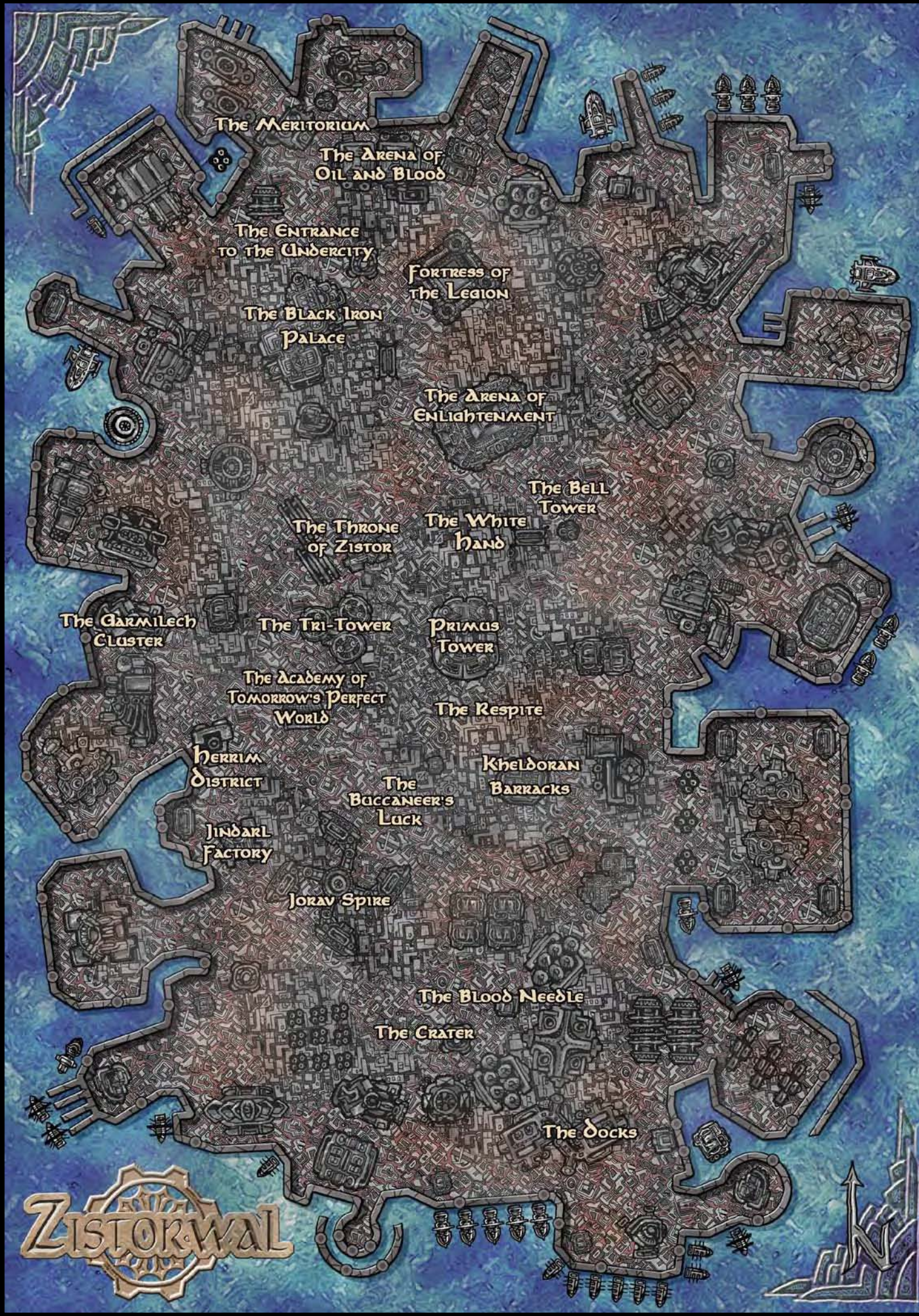
Rival cults will take up a prominent place in the characters' hierarchy of foes. Political favour is more valuable than gold in Zistorwal, for those who win the attention of the high and mighty also get the chance to affect the decisions that control the Great Machine and the policy of a city deadlocked in a terrible siege. In other cities the residents might be content to let Fate decide the future and to trust their leaders. The Clanking City suffers under no such nonchalance or offered trust. Everyone here has ideas for what can be improved and everyone wants their voices heard above the throng because they believe they have something valuable to say. Here in Zistorwal, prestige is power as surely as sorcery.

Bonuses

As for the game mechanics bonuses, they should be relatively minor. The main rewards for Zistorites are gleaned through the Cogs of Zistor cult, as detailed in *Glorantha: the Second Age* and *Cults of Glorantha: Volume II*. It is well within the bounds of a cult's influence to dream up a few new spells, though, or to create a unique mechamagical implant or Legendary Ability that suits the cult's ethos and the development of its members.

The key is to create something with flavour. The factions do not exist to provide masses of additional mechanics for character sheets – there are arguably enough rules benefits in the parent cult. What factions do is colour a character's political dealings, generating allies, enemies and story hooks depending on their outlook and their hopes for the great city.

map of the machine city



THE MACHINE CITY

'What the mostali, the aldryami, the uz and the human cultures see when they look at the Machine City is not simple God Learner hubris screaming out of control. Their war cries as they lay siege to Zistorwal betray just how fearful they are. I speak now of Chaos. The pagan besiegers believe the Devil is at the metaphorical heart of the Zistorites' World Machine. As for our Empire, we see the armies rising against the Clanking City and see only opportunity to bloody the Irustelans one more time. Chaos? In the name of the Dragon Yef To Be, these pagans have an endless capacity for paranoia.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

A TOUR of the City

As related by Vladi the Lizard, agent of the Inquirer

My Lord Delecti,

The initial infiltration of the Machine City was laughably easy, as you had promised. It seems I was worried over nothing. Admittedly I encountered no shortage of trouble after my initial entrance as I weaved my way through the dark and chaotic streets here, but I will relate such tales in the appropriate sections of his report.

Zistorwal could hold several hundred thousand citizens, though it is home to a small percentage of that, made up of visitors, soldiers and political allies from the God Learner Alliance, and members of the ever-growing Cogs of Zistor cult. In some regions, this huge city was simply deserted – street after street of automated factories or abandoned buildings. Many of the 'factories' themselves are surface-based engine rooms for parts of the Great Machine, whining and crying out as they do their inexplicable calculating duties.

But I am getting ahead of myself. I hope my reconnaissance venture can be considered the success that I believe it to be. I shall begin this tale-telling at the very beginning: my arrival.

CENTRAL ZISTORWAL

The centre of the city is a hive of activity, though is still the least populous area of Zistorwal. Here the grandest buildings cluster around a park of monumental proportions. Although security is all too prominent around the estates of the local nobles here, I saw this area of Zistorwal as being largely open to the public. Although no region within the besieged walls could truly be considered welcoming to outsiders, the city's centre is certainly the least foreboding.

The city covers the entire of Locsil, though the locals here have the rather amusing habit of naming the island Zistorela. I saw plaques of brass set into the sides of buildings marking the dates that each foundation stone was laid 'in the soil of holy Zistorela'. Interestingly, the city centre is located in the exact middle of Locsil, which can only be intentional. Clearly the planning involved in the construction of Zistorwal was epic in every sense of the word. For all Zistorwal's ugliness, the precision of the place's creation is utterly staggering. Systematic devolution and expansion is evident; regions are abandoned or regenerated as other areas are created to do the work more efficiently. This happens on a city-wide scale.

I arrived in the Clanking City at the very centre of the island, bound as I was by arriving via a legally-purchased teleportation orb. From the assembly area of the Zistorite embassy in Frowela (which more resembled a junk-trader's market than anything else) I was transported to Primus Tower in the Machine City.

Primus Tower

'Here marks the first touch of God Learner ascendancy over our holy Zistorela. This is the first tower, Primus Tower, the spire that preceded the glory that was to come. You are now within the walls of our sacred city. Welcome.'

I found myself in a large room of dark stone. These words of hubristic welcome were cast into a giant bronze plaque some 15 feet in length, bolted above a plain iron door. No windows admitted any light, though a lighting orb cast weak yellow radiance where it was mounted in a sconce by the door. These light-globes are common in the Clanking City, another fruit of their mass-production installations. This one, the first I saw, was flickering. Broken, apparently.

I left the room and entered a colossal chamber with hundreds of similar iron doors set into the walls. This was Hall of Arrivals III – one of seven similar chambers in the base section of Primus Tower. The floor was mosaic patterned, showing the white hand of the Flesh-Machine God.

Attendants and guards busied themselves or stood to attention, while bionic beggars scampered around accosting those who emerged from the adjoining arrival rooms, pestering them and offering their services as guides, or simply begging for money. The fellow I refused had a mechamagical eye made from what looked like brass, caked in mouldy oil-patches, and had a foul-coloured fluid running down his face like a long tear streak. I believe he either wanted money to repair his malfunctioning implant or to leave his destitute fate in the city. Either way, I was not going to help this deluded God Learner scum. I left through a huge set of double doors and found myself in a courtyard leading into the city. As I walked down the small hill upon which the spire sat, I turned back to look at Primus Tower.

The majority of this immense stone and bronze tower is uninhabited. Instead it stands in the centre of the city as an icon and a pylon, attracting lightning strikes and crackling with ceaseless magical energy during day and night. The magical engines within the tower above the ground level whine and grind and shriek as they process the magical energies required to act as a beacon for all incoming teleportation. It was almost like some kind of perverted lighthouse, drawing all visitors into the heart of the city.

As I watched, I witnessed one of the frequent ‘expulsions’ that the 1,000-metre pylon-tower performs at irregular intervals. With a hair-raising build-up of energy, coruscating violet lightning ran

up the side of the tower and discharged at the spire’s point in an explosion of red-purple energy that echoed across the city.

An imperious-looking Zistorite with machine arms noted my awed interest in the tower and this phenomenon. ‘It powers the energy shield around the city,’ he told me with a smug expression. The beggar I had refused still dogged my heels, and shook his head once the other sorcerer had moved on. ‘Zistor is angry,’ he said, gesturing at the pylon.

In the moments after that ear-splitting, skin-prickling electrical discharge, I did not know which man I believed.

‘The shield of Zistorwal is the invisible kinetic force that blankets Locsil Isle and prevents any aerial assault from laying the city to waste. This is the perfect defence when your greatest enemy can call upon dragons and wyvern-riders as sky-cavalry. The shield is the key, though. Bring it down, and we bring down the city.’

— Delecti the Inquirer

The Respite

Around the base of Primus Tower, stretching out for kilometres in each direction is the ‘park’ called the Respite. It is not a place of grass and trees as one might expect from the ‘park’ description, but is still the closest that the Zistorites have come to creating such a place.

The Respite is several square kilometres of single-storey buildings, most of which are barracks-like accommodations for visitors to the city or the homes of Zistorite sorcerers. It is illegal to perform any mechamagical surgery or even to keep a laboratory within the Respite, which I discovered from the announcement notices that listed name of those sorcerers who had been executed recently for violating this decree.

It seems this curious tradition arises from proximity to the Primus Tower. Although minor spell-casting is permitted, dedicated labs or great sorcerous

undertakings are frowned upon within the Respite in case they interfere with the function of the central spire. In the absence of industry, the city levels out into a sea of low, grim-looking buildings used almost entirely for habitation.

The habitations set aside for visitors are clearly marked because it is Zistorite tradition to wall these buildings with a ring of tall trees. Even the trees are not untouched by Zistorite meddling, however. When I approached a cluster of the trees, ringing a large tavern called the White Hand, an automated creature – apparently a very primitive type of Enslaved, or at least a stripped-down version – warned me away from disrupting the magical light emitters. Sure enough, at the base of each tree was a bronze box clicking softly and projecting the illusion of a tree above. It was a pathetic gesture of welcoming outsiders, though I was amazed the Zistorites had even bothered. I later learned that the Councillor Triumvirate had paid for the small projector machines, thousands of them throughout the Respite, in order to ease the discomfort of visitors.

The buildings that offer accommodation and food within the Respite are almost all uniformly dreary, businesslike places. They resemble military barracks more than anything else, with communal dorms and canteens. Actual taverns and inns are a rarity in Zistorwal and are never seen outside the Respite. They are places for visitors, not residents, and only rarely did I see an augmented Zistorite within these public houses for any reason other than business.

Accommodation and food can be purchased in the Respite for meagre amounts of coin. In the rare taverns here, which are clearly renovations of buildings that no longer see industrial use as the city expands, the rates for accommodation and entertainment are somewhat steeper.

The White Hand

Constructed in a warehouse that was abandoned once the fledgling industries began to spread out from the centre of the city, the White Hand is a welcoming enough tavern owned by a Frowal-born innkeeper who actually married a Zistorite noblewoman.

The huge inn is always busy, serving as a popular gathering point and meeting place for visitors to the city. In previous years, the serving staff in this immense

tavern wore elaborate costumes and make-up to appear as mechamagically-enhanced Zistorites, though the Council of Flesh and Metal apparently deemed this was blasphemous and ordered the practice ceased.

A long bar runs the length of the converted warehouse, staffed by up to 15 servers at a time. The floor is done in the same mosaic tile pattern often found in Zistorite administration or holy buildings, featuring the white hand of Zistor. However, here the floor also has a great many crimson rugs for added comfort, and the furniture is all wooden rather than the cold metal found in most other buildings.

The first thing I noticed about the clientele was the diversity among them. Rich, poor, merchants, mercenaries; all rub shoulders in the White Hand. I suspected it was not simply a friendly gathering place but also a locale for hiring mercenaries, cutting deals with other merchants, and contracting killers. I can tell you, lord, that from the conversations I was involved in while there that my initial suspicions were exactly on the money.

The prices of imported ales and wines, as well as nightly accommodation, are all steep, up to double what one would pay for average-to-good accommodation in Frowal. Needless to say, I rationed my coin and moved on after I had seen enough.

The Buccaneer's Luck

In the southern end of the Respite is a tavern with a notable history. It was founded by a sailor who captained a pirate vessel without the benefit of either skill or luck. After his vessel crashed into the towering sea walls of the Machine City, he was rescued by soldiers on the walls and managed to save enough of his ill-gotten loot to purchase real estate in the Respite. The Buccaneer's Luck was born.

From what I saw here, the place resembled any other Kethaelan freebooter tavern: dirty, packed with violent souls and serving awful fare. Cheap, though.

Kheldoran Barracks

'Know, citizens of the Middle Sea Empire, that here is stationed the garrison of the 22nd Legion.'

These words are etched and painted gold on the marble doorframe of a large barracks building that dwarfs all

other ex-warehouse habitations in the Respite. Here a regiment of elite imperial guards answering to Emperor Ilotos of the Middle Sea Empire are garrisoned within the walls of the Alliance's most independent colony.

Zistorwal has no militia or city watch in the sense of any other city. The peace is kept in the Respite by the Jrustelan soldiers of the 22nd Legion, who carry spears and swords, with breastplates and red-crested helms of bronze. The captains of this unusually well-trained guard are equipped with Zistorite weapons of Prime and Meridian grade, perhaps because they have the money to afford such grandeur, or perhaps as a gesture of goodwill from the Council of Flesh and Metal.

It was clear to me that the peace kept by these soldiers is one that does not extend past the Respite. Their authority vanishes outside this boundary. Common sense (and the confirmed information of my own agents here) makes it clear that the presence of the 22nd Legion is a warning of sorts to the leaders of Zistorwal: a form reminder that the Machine City is still part of the God Learner Alliance and its independence only stretches so far.



Approximately 1,500 soldiers are garrisoned here and in adjoining barracks, led by one captain for each 100 warriors. My lord, these men are demoralised, that much is clear. They are not the iron-fisted reminder of the Middle Sea Empire that they perhaps once were. Now they are merely a regiment of men stationed in a remote part of their empire, many leagues from their families and all evidence of their true culture. Outside the walls, a siege is mounting – a seaborne siege that these warriors have no capacity to counter. They are effectively restricted, even neutered in the ways they may act.

I tried to bribe several patrol teams at various regions of the Respite. Almost all were receptive to offering their negative opinions of the 'this doomed city' and the 'inhumans that run it', in exchange for a handful of coins. Fewer cared for my carefully-seeded notions of rebellion under certain conditions, but it was not something that repelled all of the soldiers I spoke with. When we break the city's walls and our forces flood in, there is a good chance that liberal bribery will have these alienated warriors abscond from the defence of the Clanking City, though it would be far too much to suggest they rebel against their precious God Learner Alliance.

Scouts patrol the top of the barracks and watch over the streets below. Dozens of them. To gain entry I had to be a little less obvious than simply going in through a window and looking around. After garrotting a legionnaire on patrol and stealing his uniform, I managed to get past the team of guards on the eastern door (one of four grand doors) with a simple nodded greeting. They barely paid me any attention, which speaks volumes about the security here.

The Bell Tower

Located a couple of blocks to the east of the White Hand tavern is the blackened, charred remains of a bell-tower. This building takes the form of an odd-looking tower some 50 feet in height, bedecked in green-patina bells and platforms where ringers once stood to pull the cords and set the great bronze bells chiming.

A plaque proclaims that this strange structure was once used to declare the beginning of morning work when the city was under construction, though it now lies silent and going to rot. When I questioned one of

my agents about this, he insisted that the Bell Tower was actually used in part of a HeroQuesting ritual to try and invent deeds that Zistor has done in the past. The sorcerers behind this obscenity were apparently censured and exiled from the Machine City by near-unanimous decision of the Council of Flesh and Metal. I have heard that since the sorcerers' exile 30 years ago, the Zistorites of the Legion of Purification's Honoured Inquisitive have taken out many contracts on their lives, in the hopes of preventing these renegades from any similar deviancy in the future.

I suspect that, somehow, the Zistorite exiles have managed to create this Bell Tower as an artificial gate into the Hero Realm, though I was unable to confirm their Compromise-breaking idiocy for obvious reasons. Whatever they were doing here and whatever they needed this tower for, they paid a heavy cost for their plots and the Council of Flesh and Metal seem reluctant to pull down the remnants of the exiles' work.

It is not an artificial HeroQuesting Gate. While my former brethren have the ability to make such ill-fated entryways into other realities, this is something quite different. What it appears to be, my cunning little agent, is something that the exiles connected to the Great Machine under the city for unknowable purposes. Whatever its function once was, the Council of Flesh and Metal must suspect that tearing it down would harm the Zazistor engine in some way. Intriguing. It makes me wonder just what destroying this structure would achieve. What exactly is it connected to underneath? Why does it remain? What will happen if one rings the bells?

— Delecti the Inquirer

The Arena of Enlightenment

North of the Respite and out of the 'visitor district' of the city, a great arena stands ringed by adjoining buildings linked by walkway tunnels set dozens of feet above the ground. It conveyed the sense of a great fat spider made of dark metal and stone, with a hundred stubby legs scattered in all directions. This is the Arena of Enlightenment. The adjoining buildings are the Halls of Debate.

The arena is a stadium where no sports and no gladiatorial contests ever take place. Instead the God Learners of Zistorwal gather in their thousands, to watch selected scholars debating. I could not believe what I was witnessing when I entered. After making my way to my seat, I was one of several thousand people – mostly all of the Enhanced caste – bearing witness to an argument between two robed men in the middle of the arena. A fist-sized ruby sat on a pedestal between the two seated men, mystically conveying their words around the stadium with only a minimum of distortion from echoes. At various points in the debate, which became incredibly heated, various sections of the audience would cheer, jeer or applaud. It baffled me, I admit.

The argument itself focussed on something I am not sure I will be able to accurately relate. One scholar seemed to put forward the notion that runic integration was an unnatural and imperfect reaction to the mortal form coming into contact with the elements of creation. His opponent argued the opposite, saying that integration was not only a natural reaction, it also showed that mortals would not need to change significantly when the Great Purification came.

I left after two hours of baffling cross-examination and research evidence presented and extensively read out loud. I asked someone in the White Hand exactly what value the God Learners saw in the Arena of Enlightenment. 'Great debates take place there,' he informed me. 'It is where the true decisions of the city are made.'

I saw the inside of only three of the so-called Halls of Debate which attached onto the side of the great arena. They were all multi-storied buildings with uniform rooms, filled with long tables and chairs. The Halls of Debate fulfil several purposes. Firstly, it is considered neutral ground for debating, where political enemies can meet without treading on each others' estates if they fear to do so. Secondly, it sees a brisk trade from visiting Frowallian merchants seeking to trade with Zistorites here and import goods. Thirdly, the Academy of Tomorrow's Perfect World regularly books many of the rooms for lectures in order to instruct its students.

The Throne of Zistor

A throne of stone and polished bronze many storeys in height sits to the west of the Respite. It is situated

on a gentle rising hill in a district of minor factories churning out Prime grade weapons, commanding a view over much of the city and facing Primus Tower. This is the gargantuan throne of Zistor, the Flesh-Machine God, the automaton that roams this city and the principal focus for the invading armies' hatred.

The god was not here. Clusters of robed Zistorites prayed or chanted to the throne, some of them pinning parchments with benedictions or blessings written upon them to the base of the great throne. A choir of children – Fleshbound slaves, most likely – sang the praises of the Zistorites' god while led by a heavily-augmented old man conducting their efforts. This immense machine-throne was connected to unknown devices and engines beneath the surface of the city, as what seemed like thousands of copper wires, brass tubes and bronze ladders sprouted from the sides and back of the huge seat and bored down into the white-veined onyx plinth the throne stood upon.

My flesh crawled at the sight and the tangible, almost electric feeling of such reverence in the air. I left quickly, my lord. I did not look back.

The Tri-Tower

Not far south from the Throne is the first of Zistorwal's truly impressive architectural wonders: the Tri-Tower, also known as the Three Spires. This is one of the Clanking City's tallest buildings, with the effect made even more impressive by the low-roofed factories all around, making the mundane but vital nuts, bolts, cogs, gears and pistons for countless machines within Zistorwal. The noise in this part of Central Zistorwal is immense, though nothing compared to the almost deafening roar of the massively-industrialised sectors.

These factories and the Tri-Tower itself are owned by the faction known as Ascension. The factories are divided up among the members, while the Three Spires is the home and sanctum of the unnatural creature called Triumvirate, of which I had heard worrying tales from my own contacts here in the city.

The Tri-Tower begins as a single structure at its base, formed of the same dark stone and black metal that makes up much of this hideous, ugly city. Halfway up its immense height, it splits into three separate towers, each connected by enclosed walkways between the upper levels.

The Spine

The main tower that forms the base column before the three spires split is locally called the Spine. It is here that Triumvirate keeps accommodation open for members of its faction, as well as a small contingent of guards drawn from a collection of loyal, highly-paid mercenaries, apprentices who learn at their horrific master's six feet and, if the rumours are to be believed, a small number of Prime weapon-equipped Venator-class Enslaved. I did not see these last guardians as I entered, however.

The huge doors leading into the Spine are kept open at all times. Any who enter need only speak with one of the attendants or apprentices in the complex and ask to speak with Triumvirate, for the Ascension leader seems to enjoy personally meeting visitors if their business could be of use to him or the city. Posing as a wealthy merchant seeking to learn more of Triumvirate before I dealt with him, I asked a mercenary soldier for a tour of this apparently public building and my request was granted. The soldier summoned a low-ranking sorcerer and I was taken up to the first spire.

Spire One

Spire One is where Triumvirate maintains an extensive library of tomes, scrolls and texts. These are available for his faction members to borrow at their leisure, provided they leave their name in the archives to list which works they have borrowed.

The spire itself is a wonder of architecture. The single room is circular, stretching up hundreds of feet to the tower-top, with the walls edged by bookcases and platform landings, and a wide, elaborate spiral staircase leading from platform to platform. I have never seen its like.

I asked my guide one of the few questions I would pose before I murdered him, and enquired about what would happen if someone failed to return one of Triumvirate's expansive literary collection. 'They always find their way back, one way or another,' he replied. I could not say for sure if that was a threat.

Spire Two

Spire Two is where most of the work in the Tri-Tower is actually done. The tower is a succession of circular laboratories, one on each floor, and used for mechamagical surgery, combat-magic training and

lectures given by Triumvirate or his faction lieutenants. As we walked around, I noticed my guide was keeping me from seeing too much in the way of any real activity; he veered away from the labs currently in use. I did manage to see two sorcerers taking a wheeled trolley with a sheet-covered body into one of the large labs, however.

The thick bronze doors leading to Spire Three from the first two spires are sealed by magical wards. To open, they require a visitor to be invited by Triumvirate personally. Nothing else will unseal the doors, which apparently respond directly to his will. I asked my guide if he could open the doors for me and introduce me to Triumvirate; he replied that the master was engaged in Council business elsewhere in the city for the next two days.

Perfect.

Spire Three

After I killed my guide and tasted his blood so my disguise spell would work, I expended magical energy adopting his physical form. I hid the body in one of the unused labs close to the top of Spire Two, concealing it inside a walk-in machine that appeared to scan the skeletons of those who entered it, examining them for disease or deformity. Without the time to study its function in detail, I made my way to one of the sealed doors leading to Spire Three.

Battering at the door made no significant impact beyond denting it, and no fire magic seemed capable of melting the metal. After several minutes I was forced to physically prise the door open by channelling almost all of my magical reserves into granting me draconic strength. With the bronze door sundered, I used my runes (and the last of my magical power) to set an illusion of an untouched, closed door in case anyone saw my handiwork.

Spire Three is filled with the personal rooms of Triumvirate, and they display an alarming personality indeed. One room was filled with wrecked furniture and smashed glass, with three bodies – all mechemagically augmented – hanging from the ceiling on meat hooks. Another room was marble-floored with obsidian walls, with gold-leaf lettering from ceiling to floor, listing the names of thousand upon thousands of what I assumed to be residents of Zistorwal. The room at the very top

of Spire Three was devoid of any furniture and with walls of bare stone, with a wide window that looked out upon the city.

'This is unreliable information, my dear agent. I cannot be sure when I say this, but it seems likely there was some degree of deception at work here. To believe you were capable of breaching this 'Triumvirate's' magical wards is barely conceivable. I suspect that your unsubtle attempt at breaking into its sanctum was noticed by someone in power, perhaps even the faction leader itself, and you saw that which your mind was mystically compelled to see.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

The Academy of Tomorrow's Perfect World

I left before my presence or my murderous deed could be discovered, heading back into the wide streets of this lightly industrial part of the city. A succession of glass-domed buildings is set to the south-west of the Respite and the Tri-Tower, with a small population of scholars and younger sorcerers wending their way around the grounds of these odd domes. This is the Academy of Tomorrow's Perfect World, which is part-university, part-sorcerous academy, and part-recruitment ground for the Five Factions, each of which has several tutors assigned to lecturing the voluntary students here.

From what I gathered via my network of agents and from the babbling of my guide before I ended his life, Ascension funds the lion's share of the Academy's resources and interests. It is apparently seen as a unifying gesture to the other factions, taking in their members' children and teaching them the ways of the Cogs of Zistor from a young age.

Despite the fact that what is essentially a training college for deluded Zistorites would be difficult to infiltrate and unquestionably dull to investigate, I was about to do just that. I swear I was. As I made my way to the open doors of the largest glass dome building, the ground began to shake. I turned in the street, almost losing my balance. The sky grew dark as an immense shape blocked the sun.

The God, Zistor

Even wreathed in their false faith, the Zistorites have created marvels.

The god was here. Zistor, dozens and dozens of feet tall, dwarfing the buildings around him, strode down the avenue. Zistorites bowed their heads as he passed. I saw visitors, lacking mechatmagical implants as I myself did, react with much more awe than the sorcerers who were familiar with the sight of their walking deity.

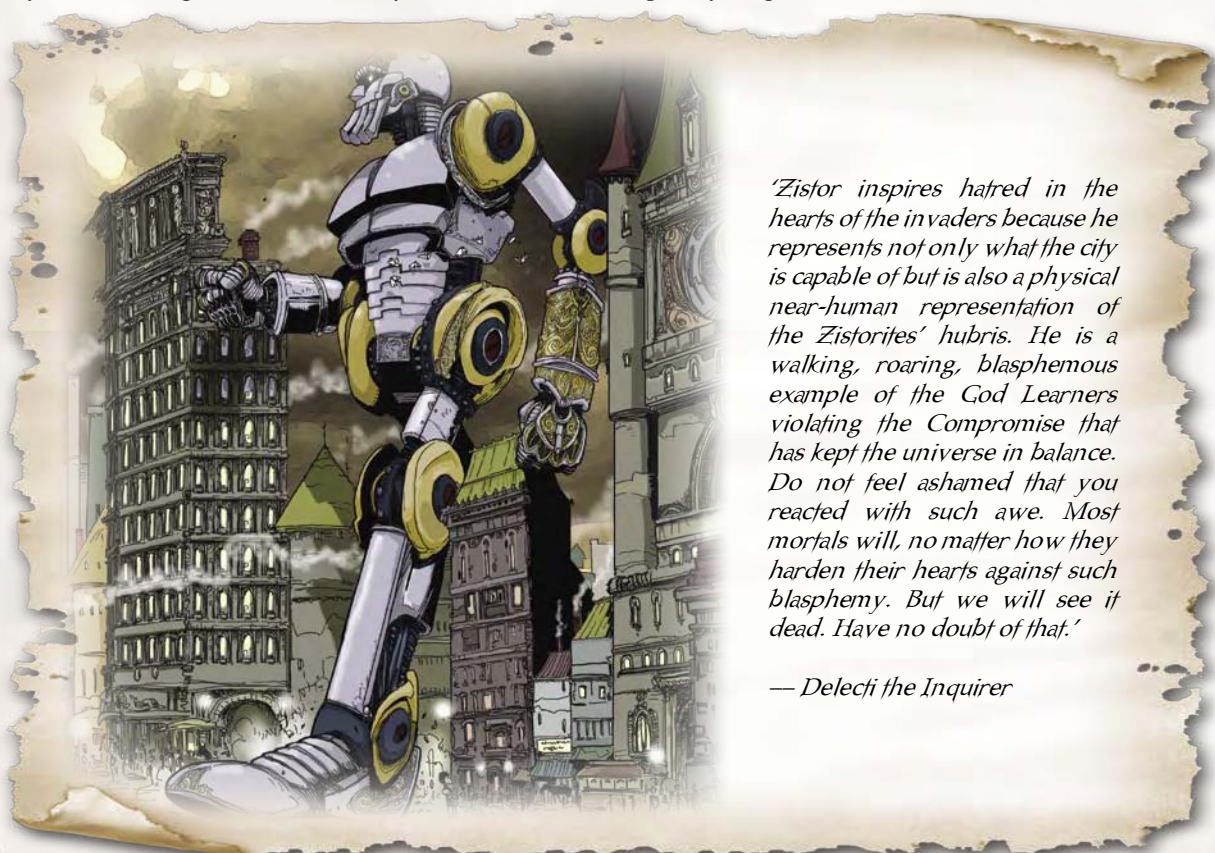
It was a man, a giant of a man, created of bronze, stone, iron and bone. Steam hissed from its piston joints and gears inside its chassis of metal flesh ground and whirred as the god moved with a dread and colossal grace. I heard someone whispering 'the god is here, the god has come,' and it took me several moments to realise it was my own voice uttering those words.

The city belongs to this god. He strides through it, an avatar of all Zistorwal stands for. High above him, wyverns and dragons shriek in the sky, unable to attack

but crying out their hate at the walking blasphemy. It was odd to see the forces of our own glorious empire and our holiest reptilian allies unable to inflict harm on this God Learner foe. For a moment, a heartbeat only, my faith in the Great Dragon To Come faltered. To see dragons so helpless was... haunting.

The god walked on. I did not see him again for many days, and each time he was either immobile in his throne, seemingly communing with the Great Machine in the undercity, or staring out over the high walls and watching the seaborne siege failing to harm his people and his realm. Zistor is a powerful icon. I never saw the great 'dances' that the Flesh-Machine God is purported to perform on rare occasions, lord, that you tell me are his way of praising the Zazistor machine under the earth. What I saw was a deity that existed purely because the Zistorites had the power to make it so, and they wanted the world to know.

I cannot imagine the magical or physical force necessary to destroy this being. Short of being torn apart by dragons, it will walk the world forever.



'Zistor inspires hatred in the hearts of the invaders because he represents not only what the city is capable of but is also a physical near-human representation of the Zistorites' hubris. He is a walking, roaring, blasphemous example of the God Learners violating the Compromise that has kept the universe in balance. Do not feel ashamed that you reacted with such awe. Most mortals will, no matter how they harden their hearts against such blasphemy. But we will see if dead. Have no doubt of that.'

— Delecti the Inquirer



The Populous North

I made my way to the north of the city, where the towering spires are most numerous and the factories are increasingly larger and louder. It is here that the biggest, grandest strongholds of the Zistorite hierarchs pierce the sky like metal blades. Largest of these strongholds is the Black Iron Palace, the residence of Shingallion, First Councillor of the Machine City. It was here that I was first drawn.

The Black Iron Palace

A wide avenue flanked by smoke-belching factories leads up to a sprawling palace of dark metal and black-painted stone. The ground shakes softly in this district as the engines and machines in the subterranean levels of Shingallion's sanctum resonate with powerful intensity. Whatever the machines of Shingallion's Once-Men are doing, it is noisy work.

As with Triumvirate's presence in the Three Spires, Shingallion's home is open to the members of his faction for their own work, serving as the base of operations for the group of politicians, scholars, surgeons and sorcerers. The palace itself is vast,

featuring many low, black buildings connected by suspended walkways and several towers, each topped by a glass dome that stands above the clouds.

The expansive courtyard around the Black Iron Palace is an ugly and eerie affair. Grey paving stones, each marked with benedictions to Zistor and stylised renditions of the many poetic mantras used by the Zistorites as they work. It is almost as if someone has written the contents of a holy book on the stone ground around the palace.

The Central Building

I entered with no thoughts of deception at first. This was my first encounter with authentic and fully-armed Enslaved. Five of these daunting beings, Venators, stood at the towering entryway, still as statues. They were led by a sword-bearing God Learner wearing white plate armour, who demanded my name and my business in grave tones. I was the only one to receive this greeting, despite several others (all bearing mechemagics) entering and leaving the building as I approached. I turned back after making my excuses and vowed to slip in unnoticed later. The security here was intense, to say the least. My

initial suspicions, which were later confirmed, were that Fleshbound were not allowed within the Black Iron Palace at all.

The following night I returned after many hours of rest, and entered unseen through one of the many ground-level windows in the central building. I was protected with magic of my own to defeat any wards or alarms that might sound as I slipped around the palace. This appeared to work well for some time.

The central building is a nexus of administration and habitation for the Once-Men. Here the faction holds debates in modest council chambers, keeps staggeringly huge archives in hallway-libraries that seem to note every living being in the city, and teams of scribes (appearing to be low-ranking Zistorites) busy themselves making endless reports of the city's residents and the locations of their domiciles, the deeds of the Zistorite hierarchy, the production runs of various faction-owned factories and dizzying analyses that appeared to be mathematical codes pertaining to the functionality of the Great Machine – or at least aspects of it. This was like the logistical department of some immense and unashamed spy network. It was not difficult to remain unseen here, for I was hiding in plain sight, using an illusion to pose as an augmented sorcerer. The many Zistorites here, all busy with their own business, assumed I was likewise engaged and did not trouble me.

The East Wing

The eastern buildings of the palace were where things began to take a turn for the worse, my lord. A succession of locked doors would not yield to brute force or subtle magic and I detected mystic wards around many of the sealed portals. The rooms that I could access in this area were either bloodstained surgery rooms undergoing cleaning, or bronze-walled 'chapel' rooms where it seemed the Zistorites would spend long lengths of time in secluded prayer and, judging by the sounds and messy results afterward, self-flagellation and even torture. More than once I saw Venator Enslaved or a couple of servants hauling bleeding, beaten Zistorites from these 'reflection rooms' into a surgery theatre for repair, healing or even further 'dissection'.

I did not know what to make of this behaviour.

'They hate themselves. They hate the imperfection of their flesh and they seek to scourge themselves of all flaws. This would seem to be the pinnacle of Once-Men fanaticism. From what I gather, these flagellants are in the minority of their faction, and it is not even clear if their 'penance' earns Shingallion's favour. For all we know the Mech Lord might be impressed at their fervency or utterly nonplussed because he lacks the empathy to even care.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

The West Wing

The three western buildings are each topped by slender, sky-reaching towers, lending the palace a distinctly off-balance appearance. The towers serve as observatories, with their domed turrets looking out over the God Forgot archipelago and the sea around Locsil Isle.

The western buildings are largely set aside for habitation, though Shingallion tolerates no Fleshbound within his estate, even high-ranking visitors. I find that a strange prejudice given that he is purported to have such little human emotion remaining within him. I had expected to find the First Councillor's chambers in this area of the Black Iron Palace but was disappointed. They, like much of the true structure, are set underground.

The Cellars

Perhaps dungeon-factory is a more accurate term. At several points in the village-sized basement – accessed through heavily-guarded stairs from both the east and west wings – my ears bled at the relentless hammering noise of the infernal engines. Box-like machines the size of huts and houses clank and clank and clank, spitting out parchments, grinding out weapons marked with Shingallion's personal grey hand symbol imprinted on the blades, and any number of other more mundane operations taking place.

I saw things I have no wish to ever see again. Limbless torsos of drooling, vegetative people, almost entirely sheathed in mechamagics, connected to production machinery with cables. In some cases it seemed these

physically and mentally crippled souls were controlling the output of the machines through the connecting wires. Others seemed no more than fleshly resources, with their own blood being fed into the engines through pipes and serving as some grim component in whatever machine-magic the engines were doing.

I realised as I moved around these large and utterly disorientating chambers that I was seeing the first evidence I had yet witnessed of the true Zistor: Zazistor, the Great Machine. This was a shallow slice of the body of the real god of the city. This was Shingallion's personal contribution to Zazistor's mechanical form.

I was not alone in my disgust. God Learners came and went while I hid down there, none of them seeming to enjoy what they saw. One of the Zistorites, obviously a young apprentice, scowled at a row of the corpse-bound machines and asked his mentor why Shingallion had constructed such engines. The master sorcerer hushed his ward and said that such things were not to be discussed where the ears had walls.

I was lost down there for some time. I passed several Enslaved of the Benedictor class, though they stood inert and paid me no heed. The chambers seemed chaotically organised, no doubt part of some grand architectural plan with significances I could not fathom. In one of the subterranean halls I finally found what I took to be Shingallion's own sanctum. It was an open room resembling a factory and a surgery theatre all in one, with ear-splitting machinery banging from all angles and a workshop-laboratory set out in meticulous neatness with every kind of medical and engineering tool imaginable all laid out on several long tables. My breath caught when I discovered to my utter horror that I was not alone. Shingallion was here.

Yet he did not move. The mechamagical form of the First Councillor appeared at rest on one of the surgery tables, connected to a bank of machinery that whirred and clicked as if filled with slashing fans and clockwork gears. As I neared the prone arch-sorcerer, his ruby-lens eyes began to glow. I fled.

I fled the huge cellars and fled the Black Iron Palace. I hid within a factory nearby; one that made shaped pieces of metal for other machines, and I slept by shielding myself from the din with magical silence. I readied my spells for a fight if I was discovered but

eventually became convinced I had not been seen during my infiltration. After three days of living off the rats that populated the automated factory, I left my haven and moved east through the city.

I have to know why Shingallion was connected to that machinery. Incidentally, this agent was the closest I have come to finding out. Seven others have not reported back after declaring their intent to enter the Black Iron Palace. The most recent one – what remained of her – was apparently staked out on the walls of Zistorwal for Varankol and his army to see.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

Entrance to the Undercity

After my encounters in the Black Iron Palace I was on guard. I reluctantly passed the great entrance to the undercity, knowing that I would have to investigate it at some point but still haunted by what I had seen in the bowels of Shingallion's lair.

Shaped as a massive well of sorts, this metal-ringed entrance to the subterranean city was the largest of many similar portals spread across Zistorwal. This entrance, largely considered to be *the* entrance by most Zistorites, was a staircase some 50 feet wide leading down into the loud, clanking blackness of the undercity. Traffic came in droves both ways, sorcerers going down into the depths, sorcerers coming back out, blinking at the light of day that managed to penetrate the haze of smoke in the sky, belched out by the factories.

Venator Enslaved and breastplate-armoured guards wearing the symbol of the Teeth of the Saw-Blade patrolled the area, evidently seeking any signs of discord. For a silver piece, I learned later from a beggar that the Five Factions take turns in deploying soldiers at the mouth of the main undercity entrance. A matter of tradition, apparently; I never saw them accost anyone entering or emerging, no matter what the travellers' appearances.

Ahead of me, only a few hundred feet from the gaping circular mouth into the innards of the city, a gigantic castle of black stone and silver trim reared up into the sky as if glaring down at those who emerged from the undercity.

Fortress of the Legion

The Fortress of the Legion of Purification is the most defensible building in all of Zistorwal. It resembles a four-towered castle complete with battlements, archer-slits in the walls, a drawbridge of heavy browned-iron and three portcullises, each meticulously painted with thousands of tiny Zistorite holy symbols. These metal barriers vibrate day and night, charged with some kind of lightning magic powered from rumbling machines in the stone walls. I saw a rat electrocuted with a bolt of blue energy when it sought to scurry under the metal gates. It must have touched the gate as it slipped through.

The stone walls are decorated with murals made from etched bronze, depicting vista scenes of the city or

images of the walking god, Zistor. Throughout all hours of day and night, the three portcullises rattle and clank as they lift slowly for each visitor and drop suddenly behind them. These barriers are never left raised; this too is a matter of tradition rather than prudence.

Gaining entry to the castle is not difficult. Gate guards here have the authority to admit anyone they choose and the knowledge to instruct them where to find what they seek. As long as someone has plausible business or is looking for someone specifically by name, they will be admitted into the faction stronghold. I said no more than that I wished an audience with the Honoured Inquisitive and was admitted immediately.

COURTYARD

The courtyard of the Legion fortress resembles a battlefield before the battle has begun. An expansive plain of grey stone is large enough for up to 500 men to train with weapons, and several veterans – mercenaries hired by the faction leaders specifically to train their members – pace the field and give instruction when



necessary. It would seem such benefits come with membership. I also witnessed a crowd of men and women gathered around two duelling warriors. Apparently bets on bladework competitions are common here as well.

Several buildings nestled against the tall walls, all of which were only of minimal interest: indoor training rooms, a main hall to receive visitors (with a seat each for the Honoured Inquisitive situated on a raised dais) and canteens. It is clear that the Legion of Purification has much of its operational facilities and member residences scattered across the city in private dwellings, rather than clustered in the fortress. The most interesting parts of this inner-city castle are located in the four towers.

FIRST TOWER

The first tower is the private sanctum of Ceddith Laven, Sixth of the Six, and a member of the Honoured Inquisitive. Since the disappearance and suspected murder of Ceddith three months ago, her tower stands empty and magically sealed. I attempted to gain access to the spire several times, through both magical and mundane means. Each time the warded portals resisted, even on my attempt to use a 'Port Orb to gain access.

Ceddith Laven was a respected HeroQuester and was known to possess many great items of legendary power. It galls me that I was unable to steal any of them while I was in the city, for rumour has it that many are in her tower now, locked up behind those spell-sealed doors.

Second Tower

This is the laboratory of the Second of the Six, Delgod Goldgrip. When he is not at his demesne elsewhere in the north of the city, he receives visitors and conducts his experiments here. This tower was filled with his apprentices and lackeys. I found nothing of interest beyond mechatmagical equipment, a small library and a theatre for surgery that reeked of chemical cleansers. His circular audience chamber in the top of the tower has a single glass wall around the entire room. He received a great many visitors while I was in this area of the city: ragged men with the look of mercenaries about them, dignitaries that appeared to be wearing the latest fashions in Frowal, Zistorite sorcerers

and in one instance, a beggar carrying a broken mechatmagical dog of some kind, seemingly a small Warhound Enslaved.

I saw Delgod several times during my stay in Zistorwal, standing at this huge window and looking down at the main entrance to the undercity only a few hundred feet away from his sanctum. From my vantage point on the street I could not see if he looked troubled through his continued staring, though I knew it was him by the reflection of gold from his hand.

Third Tower

This spire was once the sanctum of Lord Uruthan, First of the Six and nominal head of the Honoured Inquisitive. It is now used mainly as opulent habitation for visiting guests of status and wealth, after a magical mishap several years ago destroyed Uruthan's laboratory at the top of the metal tower. Lord Uruthan now resides in a small but ornate building of stone with brass gargoyles leering down onto the street, not far from the fortress.

Fourth Tower

This is the sanctum of Mara Fyralan, the Fourth of the Six. She has her tower sealed off from public entrance and guarded by two black-painted Venator Enslaved that pulled weapons when I came within ten feet of the tower entrance. I was told by one of the mercenaries in the courtyard that Mistress Mara was recovering from extensive mechatmagical surgery to repair damage done to her body in a recent endeavour to assist the Middle Sea Empire in battle against the 'lizard-kissers', to use his invective. All the man could tell me about the Fourth of the Six was that she was a kindly woman who often offered work to the beggars of the Machine City's slums. The significance of that statement was lost on me until I visited the western slums later that week.

The Arena of Oil and Blood

At first I took the stadium rising before me to be another Arena of Enlightenment. The structure was architecturally identical to the first, and similar cheering rose from within its walls. Here, close to the factories, the once white stone of the grand stadium was blackened with soot and smoke. In hundreds of man-sized niches in the ornate architecture, bronze statues depicted warriors and fighters of all

cultures and types. I saw imperial dragonspeakers in bulky bone armour, nomads of the steppes, hunters of the Orlanthi...

The crowds around this stadium, which was marked by a huge silver plaque as the Arena of Blood and Oil, were equal in size to those that gathered at the Arena of Enlightenment. I paid a handful of silver pieces and entered, weaving through the crowds and heading to the seats to discover if my suspicions were correct.

They were. This was a gladiatorial arena. The Zistorites pit their slaves and prisoners of foreign wars bought from Frowal merchants and skin-dealers, against their own warriors. I did not stay long, my lord. I watched as the citizens put bets large and small on the lives and skills of those fighting on the bloodstained grey stone floor of the arena. How many souls have ended their lives and bled out onto those stones? If one judges by the red marks, it would seem *thousands*.

The first contest I witnessed was of a group of mostali (caught attempting to infiltrate the city) forced to face off against a pack of Warhounds. It was over in under a minute and had the crowd baying for more. A group of sun-darkened warriors, perhaps of the Pamalt jungles, died under the whirling blades of a heavily-augmented Zistorite warrior. In the final contest I witnessed, a Venator-class Enslaved strangled a bullish Zistorite criminal who had been convicted of rape. He died unarmed, gasping for breath and unable to wrestle with the automaton tasked with delivering God Learner justice.

With a foul taste on my tongue, I left once the man fell dead.

The Meritorium

Beyond the Legion fortress and the Arena of Blood and Oil were more factories, churning out weapons, materials, engine parts... anything you can imagine. The Legion owned these factories, sharing this section of the city with a few factories claimed by members of the Once-Men. I spent an hour marvelling inside a humble building owned by an ageing member of the Legion who sought to use the energy of the sun heating up roof-mirrors to power machines that could turn animal blood into synthetic oil for use in the Great Machine underground. He confessed to me (after seeing my interest) that he was ready to go

back to using coal to light the fires of the tiny factory, since the 'solar power' from Ehilm's face offered him nothing as yet.

The next building of note among the endless northern factories and refineries was something called the Meritorium. It was a library, a historical archive, with the hubristic conceit that no history book or parchment here revealed anything further back than the last few centuries. It was almost as if history began with the formation of the Zistorite movement.

Beyond that limitation, the Meritorium was a vast resource filled with lore stored by a great many Zistorite scholars. In here were the many long-winded generic texts pertaining to the Cogs of Zistor, the copies of famous books or essential tomes that most sorcerers and scholars needed for their research. It was a communal library, unguarded and apparently unmonitored.

In another section I found scrolls listing the deeds of hundreds of resident sorcerers here in the city, citing the known spells they had cast for the good of Zistorwal, inventions they had produced, decrees they had made, and so on down to the tiniest publicly available detail. The name made sense now: *Meritorium*. This was where slaves and servants toiled to catalogue all the deeds of their 'worthy' masters, and where low-ranking Zistorites came to research the public deeds of their betters. The logistics involved in this enterprise staggered me. So did the vanity.

After leaving the Meritorium, I began to notice in abundance the thousands of parchment decrees pinned to walls, announcing the various minor and inconceivable actions that many sorcerers had undertaken recently on behalf of the Great Machine. Most cited what I saw as trivialities, such as one Nharl Romick supervising the reconstruction of an 'anima conductor' in sector 80G-XT-G.

Quite why the people of Zistorwal needed such deeds accomplished is beyond me, my lord.

The Second Entrance

Not far south of the Meritorium is another guarded entrance to the undercity, also larger than average but dwarfed by the main entrance by the Legion

fortress. This one saw less traffic and each time I was present I witnessed filthy, exhausted workers without mechatmagical implants emerging in small groups.

This entrance leads directly to a part of the undercity where the engines are manned by Fleshbound crews watched by Enhanced overseers. These are not simply Fleshbound visitors to the city; they are slaves taken by Zistorite adventurers of the Once-Men and with their personalities suppressed through magic to prevent rebellion. Just over ten years ago, a leader arose among these slaves, by the name of Axal the Unruly, coming to unite almost a hundred Fleshbound prisoner-workers when the spells leeching their personalities wore off for unknown reasons. Despite several factions petitioning that this was evidence that Once-Men slavery was unreliable and inhumane, Shingallion ordered the rebellious slaves crucified for three days and their dead or near-dead bodies broken down and used as raw material for some grim aspect of the Great Machine.

As for Axal's fate, that depends on who one believes. I spoke with a slum-dweller who insisted that Axal escaped justice and fled to the western slums to hide his identity. This is apparently a popular view even among

the Enhanced of the city's western region. According to the archives I examined in the Meritorium, a slave by the name of Axal Jeddion was executed approximately 20 years ago, by a most 'unique' method. After a week of prayer and blessings sung in his name, the Zistor construct relented to Shingallion's request that the god actually *eat* the criminal as an example and a warning to those who would incite future uprisings.

At this second entrance, one man stole my attention completely. We live in an age where grim portents hint at a darkness in the future, and while Zistorwal is a paradise for the Zistorites and their project for perfection, I found it a hellish example of just what may go wrong with the world unless the God Learners are stopped. Clearly, someone agreed with me. This was the beggar and street-living doomsayer called Smiling Hector.

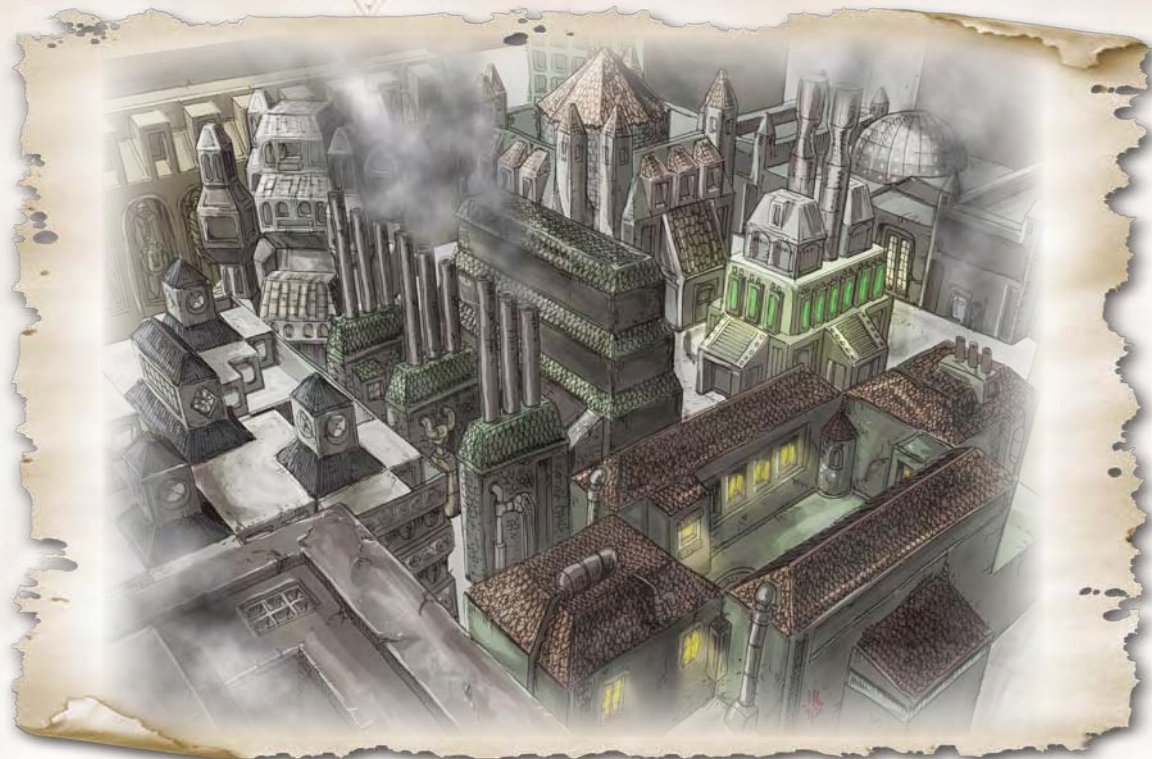
A figure, wrapped in a ragged brown cloak and with hissing, piston-based mechatmagical legs limped toward me through the crowd. His legs did not seem to function correctly and he walked as if injured. 'The end is coming!' he cried. 'You see it! You know the truth! Zistorwal is damned, doomed to explode and send gears flying for kilometres across the sea!' On and on he raved. His mechatmagical eye was ruined by dirt and ill-care, and the blue lens kept scratching and softly squealing in its socket as the man tried to focus his eyes on my face.

I left before his rants attracted any unwanted attention from the surrounding factories or any guards down the stone steps I had not noticed. I would later ask a member of the Legion of Purification about the mad beggar I had met at one of the northern entrances to the undercity. 'That was Smiling Hector,' he told me. 'He's something of an icon to the slum-dwellers. Night and day, you'll find him there, raving about how we're all going to die.'

'There exists the very real possibility that this 'Smiling Hector' could be recruited as an agent or at least a contact for future sabotage of the Machine City. I will look into this.'

— Delecti the Inquirer





The Abandoned West

I would never have even conceived that Zistorwal would have beggars, homeless residents, destitute ex-workers, or any urban detritus that gathers in normal human cities. My illusion of every inch of this city being part of one perfectly-organised machine was ruined now. The truth was much uglier.

Like any city Zistorwal expanded over time; sections fell into disuse or disrepair, people found themselves performing unnecessary labour and were removed from their posts by their betters and the needs of the city itself altered as time passed. Where once the western section of the city was heavily industrialised with the myriad factories and calculation engines vital to the Great Machine's work, now it is half-abandoned, populated by the human wreckage that slips through the cracks of Zistorwallian society. Most of the Great Machine's integral systems are in the undercity. Much of the heaviest industry operations are conducted in the north and south of the city, divided up by the factions that split the Cogs of Zistor. The west, now commonly referred to as the Slum Sector, is a shadow of what the city was like before the Five Factions fractured Zistorwal's unity.

It is often said that every soul in the Clanking City has a purpose to serve. This is not always true, for some have lost their purpose. Perhaps they lost faith in the great project, or had their allotted place in the Zistorite movement taken from them by machines that do their jobs more efficiently than they ever could. Perhaps political rivals defeated them so soundly that their only solace was to retreat into the dark places of the city and lick their wounds. There are almost as many reasons for living in the Slum Sector as there are people that live there.

The cynic in me sees such urban and social decay as yet another wound in the Zistorite plan. I am not alone in that view. I have spoken to mostali and uz that insist this is another sign of Chaos pervading the Clanking City's very foundations. While I doubt demonic influence plays any part here, it is a compelling point of view.

SURVIVAL IN URBAN DECAY

It has taken decades for this level of decay to set in. Now perhaps a sixth of Zistorwal's surface mass can be considered 'badlands' where the Five Factions have little power and maintain only a minute presence.

What few factories still function here are either of no importance to the city or are heavily defended by private owners to prevent vandalism or factionless Zistorites using the place as a base or a resource.

The slums have their own factions, of a kind. People band together in gangs to watch out for each other and illegal syndicates rise up, though their authority is unrecognised by the Council of Flesh and Metal. It is legal precedent that the Slum Sector still belongs to the Five Factions, though few members have any claims to the land or broken-down industrial operations there anymore. It is not a region that the Zistorites believe needs to be regenerated. It is simply an echo of the past. The city itself has moved on – or more accurately *down* since that is where the majority of the Zazistor machine is now based. Redundancy is the core of this industrial decay.

However, it is naïve to assume that the rundown parts of the western quarter are the sites of endless gang warfare and moral corruption. The Zistorites here are much like any other, though they are in a curious kind of social stasis. They rarely advance in the Cogs of Zistor and break themselves down into sub-factions that adhere to Zistorite philosophies, though often with views and ideologies which diverge from the traditional outlook of the parent cult.

The Forgotten Few

The principal power in the west of the city is the Forgotten Few, made up of perhaps nine in every ten residents. Depending on whom one asks, these souls are either the ‘sixth of the Five Factions’ or deluded upstarts desperately seeking political power from their position in the city’s gutters. From my outsider’s point of view, both descriptions seem true.

The Forgotten Few is a faction made of those Zistorites that live or work in the industrial wreckage of the slums and still believe they can contribute to the Great Project. They are the workers in the petty factories that remain open; the politicians and nobles with claims to useless industries in the west; and the Zistorites who have found themselves unable to work with their peers in the prosperous parts of the city for reasons of their own. Any slum-dweller that still believes in the holy Zistorite cause rather than abandoning their faith generally identifies with the Forgotten Few. This means that far from the criminal stereotype, most

residents in the west of the city are simply isolated from the Five Factions by misfortunes of geography. They had the bad luck to be part of factories and projects that were rendered irrelevant to the Great Machine or the interests of powerful political leaders. No small amount of such projects will have been shut down as moves in the political wars between the Five Factions and the dozens of lesser sub-factions in the social hierarchy.

The Forgotten Few lack much in the way of formal organisation, with regional directors laying claim to authority in their own tiny industrial princedoms. I heard talk of an ex-Legionnaire by the name of Keel Ninell who was a regional director because of his legal claims (backed up with mercenary militia) over several relatively prosperous factories and a street of desirable warehouses. At the other end of the spectrum is the example of Otto Ganth, a disgraced mechamagical surgeon (censured by Shingallion for revealing faction secrets) who has regional director authority in the Forgotten Few only because so many Zistorites in the slums owe him favours and money for the operations he has performed for them. Of such souls is the leadership of the Forgotten Few made.

It is the intention of this faction to restore the western slums to equal footing within the city’s other quarters, or at least get some of its members back into respected positions within the city. The regional directors of the Forgotten Few are entitled to attend meetings, debates and gatherings of the faction hierarchs, which many do out of desperation or false haughtiness. Most of leaders among the Five Factions find the Forgotten Few to be completely ignorable, pitiable or useful as hirelings that cannot be traced.

Separate from the Forgotten Few are the gangs and minor syndicates made up of criminals on the lam, exiles, traitors and heretics. These make claims of territory and spend their time amassing what petty power they can cling to without either the Forgotten Few or the Five Factions crushing them for causing trouble.

There is no definite edge where the industry of the north and south stops and the decay of the west sets in; instead it is a gradual transition of less valuable properties and less vital projects, until one encounters

as many abandoned buildings as inhabited ones. As I wandered through the slums, a particular kind of structure began to crop up regularly. These are what the locals refer to as ‘factory-fortresses’: buildings where gangs of beggars and criminals no longer part of the Zistorite movement but unable to leave the city establish bases of operations from which to defend themselves against others of their kind. It is strange that Zistorwal – so unified from the outside – is a hive of internal conflict.

As you ordered, my lord, I proceeded to the network of still-functioning factories called the Garmilech Cluster. These are situated in the far west of the city, a stone’s throw from the monstrous city walls. Located as they are in a mostly-abandoned sector, they are the only group of buildings in the area generating the roaring, clanking sound of machinery, utterly shattering the surrounding silence.

The Garmilech Cluster

The five buildings that make up the block of factories are well-guarded by armed and armoured mercenaries as well as Zistorite soldiers bearing what appeared to be Prime weapons. As you supposed, this is a valuable enterprise owned by a Zistorite called the Lord of Rust, one of the regional directors of the Forgotten Few. His factories still supply weapons to the city’s main markets and the other factions and the Garmilech Cluster is the main location for his operations. Unlike many of the Forgotten Few, the lord of Rust – whose real name remains a mystery to everyone – has political power despite his humble location in the city. Through ingenuity and political savvy, he managed to keep his industrial interests actively contributing to the Great machine and the war effort, despite the collapse of many of his peers.

I had to kill four guards to get inside; that shows how heavy the security is here. The hired swords and loyal soldiers work well together, managing regular patrols and are efficient sentries, with some crossbow-armed spotters even placed on the rooftops of adjacent abandoned warehouses. It took all of my skill to enter unseen.

The operation within is much like any other weapon factory, with low-ranking Zistorites overseeing slaves or servants that run both clockwork and

steam-powered production machinery. I saw racks of identical swords and spears, enough to equip a village militia. This was the day’s work, apparently. I counted at least two dozen weapons, though there may have been more stored elsewhere.

I was tasked with visual identification of the Lord of Rust. I obtained it, my lord, yet I cannot confirm your suppositions that this man was once the Machine Lord Symial Herugata, Shingallion’s predecessor. The Lord of Rust has undergone such extensive mechamagics that he is clearly a Transcendent, in body if not in prestige. What I saw in his inner sanctum, which was little more than an administration room with an adjacent bedroom, was a being more machine than human. In truth he resembled Shingallion enough to make me uncomfortable. He was labouring over files and reports being written on parchment by a machine in the corner of his room. I left before I could be discovered.

It is clear to me that the Garmilech Cluster is among the most valuable territory in the west of Zistorwal. I discovered later from the Loquacious Brotherhood that Garmilech has been the site of many attacks in the past, suffering assaults from gangs and rival syndicates that wish to take hold of the Lord of Rust’s facilities, perhaps to secure their position in the slums, perhaps in order to make a formal bid for factionhood and respectability in the eyes of the other Zistorites. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Lord of Rust maintains the Garmilech Cluster and several other well-defended factory sites in the slums with an iron grip. But for their location, these factories are the equal of any other Prime- and Meridian-grade weapons factories.

Herrim District

The Herrim district is several streets to the south of Garmilech, forming a small community of buildings around a central ruined structure that was once the previous throne of the Zistor automaton. This circular district is the most populated part of the western city, home to many of its residents. Visitors will find half a dozen tall tenement buildings, a tavern and the guild houses for Zistorwal’s artisans: metal-crafters and blacksmiths, whose guilds were never moved from this part of the city due to perceived redundancy by a vote that divided the Council of Flesh and Metal.

The tavern here is the Last Light, a multi-story building converted from an abandoned factory, and is considered neutral ground, a haven for those who come to the dreary western parts of the city. Violence is forbidden here – a law enforced by the landlord Barcal and his four jury-rigged Warhounds. The tenements are also ex-factories, renovated for habitation. Approximately 400 people live in this district, half of whom still work in the north and south of the city, half of whom work in the west. All in all, the Herrim district is something of a village within the city. The region itself was named for the now-dead owner of the factories: Herrim Novguard. He was killed decades ago in a battle against our own glorious empire, my lord. The people moved here once it became apparent his political enemies had no interest in his assets.

In the Last Light, I met an ambitious woman by the name of Jatila. She was a noted fence in the area, able to manipulate an exhaustive web of contacts in order to illegally acquire or sell on any factory-produced weapon or item, no matter the cost or prohibitions against it. Though I cannot be certain, she had the air of a noblewoman about her, perhaps a bored daughter of a powerful family, now in disguise and amusing herself by slumming. Her own tale, backed up by others in the tavern, was that she simply had so many contacts within the city because she hired out as a killer and a thief for mid- to high-ranking members of the Five Factions.

Either way, she charges fair prices for the items she acquires. Though it pained me to use a sword of metal, my klanth was back in my hideout in Frowal and I needed a reliable blade. I paid her what I would have paid for a Meridian-grade sword through official channels, and within six hours she returned with my order. It was most efficient.

It was with reluctance that I left this haven of civility in the grim western part of the city. I did not, however, regret leaving behind the ale they drank there. It was an almost-poisonous beverage using minute quantities of oil from the Great Machine in the brewing. A holy drink, apparently.

Jindarl Factory

Several blocks south-east of Herrim is a Zistorwallian cautionary tale. The west of the city has several factories that have decayed since they were abandoned.

Toxic Fumes

Games Master Note: The presence of these vented gases is common enough in Zistorwal that many citizens carry breath masks with them, while those who have mechamagical lungs need not worry overmuch anyway. Games Masters wishing to include such gases in their games should bear in mind that the potency of these mists will not be too high; they are the remnants of industrial acid-cleansers and similar processes, which can be lethal if a character is not careful but are highly unlikely to slay entire streets full of people.

The average Potency of a poisonous gas such as the one vented by the Jindarl Factory every 1D4 hours would be 40–60. The effects would be no more than nausea in cases of weak gases or dangerous internal injuries (1D6 damage to the Chest hit location) in the case of the nastiest ones. The mists will disperse after a short time, perhaps no more than 1D10 minutes.

Once all the salvageable or desirable machinery is removed and taken away, what is left can sometimes become dangerous as it degrades and goes without maintenance. The Jindarl factory is one such example, where automated processes still linked to the Great Machine vent out toxic gasses at irregular intervals.

The factory itself is a single-storey building of dark stone, as uniform and drab as anything in this accursed city. Three chimneys thrust from the top of the factory, stunted and short, and it is from these that the poisonous gas is leaked forth every few hours. This is despite the fact that nothing in the Jindarl factory, which once made a synthesised acid for use in cleaning corrosion from the Great Machine, is actually of any further use. Yet the automated processes remain and in absence of any acid being produced, clockwork piston-based venting system releases its built-up pressure every few hours. A grey haze mists the streets for several minutes after each release. This fog is toxic, so anyone in the region must wear a protective mask or possess mechamagical lungs capable of filtering out the poison.

Although its function is redundant and a mere after-effect of the days the Jindarl factory contributed to the Great Machine, the building is near an entrance down into the undercity, where the distant clank-clank-clank of Zazistor's machinery echoes in the darkness.

Few people use this entrance, since the Jindarl factory makes coming here dangerous and most slum-dwellers have no business in the undercity anyway.

Jorav Spire

The noble Jorav bloodline has produced two generations of high-achieving Zistorite geniuses, and its dozens of members are equally divided between the Once-Men, Ascension and the Legion of Purification. Yet their family home and the attached factories are all found in the middle of the western quarter of the city, only a short distance east from the Jindarl building. The Jorav Spire is the tallest structure in the Slum Sector, towering over three huge, wide factories responsible for manufacturing integral mechanical parts like gears, cogs and joints for many machines across the city.

Their tower is well-guarded, as are their factories and surrounding warehouses. Mercenaries and sorcerer-soldiers work in close-knit, organised patrols. Most residents of west Zistorwal are content to leave the Joravs well alone, however. It is one thing to carve out a territory at the expense of other slum-dwellers. It is quite another to pit oneself against a Five faction family that stay in their ancestral home because of eccentricity and staunch traditionalism.

The reasons I were given were really no more complicated than that. This family, with its dozens of politically-favoured scions, remains in the west because it is the land originally granted to them when the city was first founded. I still suspect a deeper and more sinister reason for such stubbornness. My instincts tell me that the Joravs are hiding something.

I originally suspected it was a secret tied to their presence in the undercity, though the parts of the Great Machine still managed by the bloodline are sealed off underground and the security consists of a small legion of Warhound packs led by Zistorite sorcerers. So for now the mystery remains, though there is at least the suggestion that something untoward has happened under the earth and the Joravs are adamant

about covering it up. If they have somehow fouled up a part of the Great Machine and need the time to fix it, that would certainly be a disaster of the right magnitude to warrant sealing off an entire section of the underground.

Guild House of the Loquacious Brotherhood

'We have a saying in the guild. 'Knowledge is power and information is currency.' In this city, you can buy power if you have enough of the right information.'

— Masrimir Lackhand, member of the Loquacious Brotherhood

As I travelled east, moving more into the south-west and then the south of the city, the number of active, manned factories increased dramatically. Not far from the southern edge of the Respite, I found the Guild House of the **Loquacious Brotherhood**. The building appears as a tumbledown tenement and is not marked in any way. I later learned that the 'guild' change their base of operations every few months anyway.

I knew what I was looking at because I had picked up another guide. This time, when I was approached and offered guidance, I accepted. Masrimir, a ragged beggar with a mechamagical hand that twitched with spasms, earned a great deal of coin from me as I questioned him repeatedly. His references to the Loquacious Brotherhood especially interested me, doubly so when he confessed he was a member of this street-level guild who spent their time gathering rumours, gossip and secrets pertaining to the high and mighty of the city.

For all his revelations, Masrimir is a typical guild member in that he is still loyal to Zistorwal and would tell no great or terrible truths to an outsider. However, I learned that the Loquacious Brotherhood, by luck, skill and dedication, lurk around ignored and unseen in the city, even occasionally infiltrating the Five Factions and kept buildings in order to gather information. Information is currency to them: traded, bought and sold. The number of Zistorites that make

covert overtures to the Brotherhood in order to obtain the secrets of their enemies is apparently staggering. In this city, I find that immensely easy to believe.

Information is priced, whether bought or sold by the Brotherhood, according to its import. This can range from a few silver pieces to a handful of runes and small fortune in magic items, if the information is vital and accurate enough to warrant such high prices. The Loquacious Brotherhood consider themselves a fully-fledged faction in their own right, though they are more of a dirty little open secret in the eyes of the 'true' factions. The beggars are loyal to the Cogs of Zistor, through and through, it seems. Masrimir's eyes glazed over when he spoke of the Great Machine and the destiny of the Zistorites. From what contact I had with other guild members later in my time here, I gather his viewpoint is a pious exaggeration of the general loyalty evinced by the Loquacious Brotherhood.

To join the guild, it seems one must be inducted into it by three existing members, serving a trial period of several months before the new candidate is introduced to his true superiors. It is possible to remain allied with one of the Five Factions and still work with the Loquacious Brotherhood, though such deceptions are often uncovered by the factions – at least I am told they have been in the past. Masrimir told me as he showed me around the 'public' level of the guild house, of the execution of a Once-Man who shared an allegiance with the Brotherhood. In a move of unsurprising God Learner hypocrisy, the factions publicly frown on such dual-allegiance, yet still go to the beggars for information in secret.

In the guild house I visited, I saw rooms set aside for habitation and magical research, as well as an operating theatre with crude implements that explained the state of disrepair most of the beggars' mechemagics were in. When I asked Masrimir why they did not use their many favours owed to have their bodies repaired, he admitted that many guild members do just that, but most members lack the funds or the influence, what with the 50% kickbacks of all profits that go to guild leaders. He would admit nothing about the guild leadership, however, beyond their necessary fees.

I am not proud of what I did, my lord, but I incapacitated Masrimir after we left the guild house and spent

several days torturing him for more information. I finally let him die, his mechemagical body parts clicking and whirring as they powered down along with his heartbeat, after 71 bloodstained hours. Part of the training in the Loquacious Brotherhood involves resistance to torture and interrogation, however my training is quite beyond the standard and I eventually extracted from him what I wanted to know.

The Loquacious Brotherhood answers to nine separate leaders, each based in a different building in the slums and commanding teams of several dozen beggars. Traditionally, the senior three of the nine are always gathered at the main guild house, working together to oversee the main business of the guild. However, all are in constant contact. These nine beggar-masters choose their own successors. Any attempts at breaking these lines of succession through a coup or rebellion are punished by death.

I will relate the two most intriguing and valuable rumours here for you, lord. Firstly, Masrimir spoke of a tri-person, either created in the image of Triumvirate or somehow being the Ascension leader itself – which has been seen walking the back alleys and rooftops of the Slum Sector, using powerful magic to always evade pursuit and confrontations. None of the beggars have any leads and they are keeping the information to themselves until they have clearer details they can sell on to the factions.

The second concerns a heretical sect calling itself the **Swordbrethren of Zistor**. These fanatics operate out of a hidden base in the Slum Sector, venturing into both the main city and the undercity, seeking out Enslaved and destroying them. It is the belief of these heretics that the Enslaved are a flaw in the Zistorite plan for worldly perfection, and are blasphemies against Zistor, being false icons made in a flawed and lesser version of his image.

The Five Factions are growing increasingly concerned with the Swordbrethren, who clearly have the weapon expertise and sorcerous power to overcome Venators and Warhounds in battle. It is said that the Once-Men are especially concerned, since the fanatics have left small carved symbols on the walls of several Transcendent-caste Zistorite homes in recent months. These threats are in the shape of a sword piercing a skull, etched hurriedly into the stone or metal of a building. If

suspicions are correct, the Swordbrethren are readying to target heavily-augmented Zistorites who take their mechamagical implantation too far, seemingly aping the Flesh-Machine God.

'Oh, what allies those herefics would make if they could just be deceived as to our true plans for their blasphemous city. A little honey in the right ears and we have ourselves augmented sorcerers desperate to kill their own kind. I am tempted to send another agent with order to offer these murderers anything they desire in exchange for them stepping up their campaign of hate.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

The Industrial South and East

I was now south of the Respite and entering into the most heavily-industrialised area of the city. The assault on my senses was the most incredible, the most dizzying yet.

I saw Zistorite holy men wandering the narrow roads between the shrieking, banging, dark-walled factories, chanting sacred blessings and uttering calculations that I could not comprehend. I saw wagons laden with identical swords, spears, axes and bows, trundling to warehouses to be stored for the inevitable fall of the walls to our empire's siege. I saw squat single-story factories and colossal spires alike, all shouting in the same mechanical clanking roar and vomiting thick black smoke upward, turning the bright sky black as night. I could no longer see our wyvern-riders above. I could no longer see anything but a dark shroud. It was painfully oppressive, almost as if I were buried alive.

The south side of Zistorwal is barely any more populated than the abandoned slums of the west. While the Five Factions maintain the majority of their industry here, most of the structures are surface-based parts of the Zazistor machine: factories filled with machines of

bronze and iron and stone, growling and howling as they perform their allotted duties. The southern district is roughly divided into three parts, comprising the Aurous, Atramentous and Tenebrous areas.

The Three Sectors

The **Aurous sector** due south of the Respite is where the industrial region of the city remains generally populated. It is here that the Five Factions maintain the majority of their manned weapons factories, with each building bearing the symbol of the faction or the family that owns it. Soldiers and Enslaved led by sorcerers work in small patrols here, frequent but each keeping to their masters' set schedules, since sabotage and property damage is frequent between rivals within the Five Factions.

The factories here appear to be mainly concerned with manufacturing weapons and armour of all types. Those I entered all appeared distinctly similar, with a skeleton crew of workers working the machines and constructing various swords, spears, shields, axes, helms and mail armours. Most bore only a minor enchantment, many even temporary in nature, or were Prime-class items. Several larger and better-guarded installations were where other small teams of craftsmen and labourers slowly fed raw components into the clanking machinery to create higher-grade items.

A large portion of the wealth of the Cogs of Zistor is tied up in the Aurous sector, which comprises of perhaps a hundred buildings in total, most part-owned by various cabals of sorcerers. It is clear that despite the city's reputation as a foundry for endless streams of blasphemous weapons, the creation of such items is far from the main focus of the city's hierarchs and the industry here. This is reflected in the Aurous part of Zistorwal, which is by far the smallest of the areas in the industrial southern quarter.

The factories of the sprawling **Tenebrous sector** are automated extensions of the Great Machine. As I walked the narrow, dark streets I was almost overwhelmed by the roar of the temple-like structures emitting their unending howl. Day and night, these buildings – which are really only walls to protect great clockwork machines from the elements – create a vast wave of harsh sound.



the machine city

When our soldiers stand on the other God Forgot islands and hear the distant bangs and crashes of the Clanking City, when they stand on the decks of our warships and listen to the sound of a thousand hammers against stone and steel, they are hearing the immense organised chaos of the Tenebrous district.

Since the Five Factions (or rather, the Cogs of Zistor) claim mutual ownership of these factories as part of the cult's grand plan, little vandalism or sabotage seems to occur here, so I saw scarcely any guards. The occasional fanatic wanders the dark and narrow streets, howling the praises of holy Zistor or exclaiming streams of numbers whose significance evaded my understanding. I avoided them and remained unseen. Within the pillared and blocky structures that make up the sector, the machinery grinds on: every machine I witnessed was a hulking mess of bronze, coloured iron, wood, stone, lead, gears, pistons and joints. Each one had deep cable-roots decorated in crudely-drawn benedictions to Zistor, which stretched down underground into the true heart of the city – the Machine. I knew the time to investigate this sinister marvel was fast approaching.

The **Atramentous sector** is set in the south-east of the city and is significantly more populated than either Aurous or Tenebrous sectors, though I would guess that it operates with a rather insignificant population total of no more than a thousand or so. It is here that the pieces of the Zistorites' great war-machines are shaped and constructed in colossal warehouse-factories owned by the Cogs of Zistor as a whole.

Co-operation between the Five Factions and their lesser cousins is uneasily mandated by the Council of Flesh and Metal – one of the few matters the hierarchs of Zistorwal truly seem to outwardly agree on. Small teams of Zistorites made up of various factional allegiances oversee the efforts of servants and the mostly-automated machines themselves in creating the component pieces of the gigantic war machines that threaten any rival armies seeking to sack the Machine City.

Wide avenues lead from these huge warehouses to the city's eastern area, where the sky docks are located. There is perhaps only one further building worthy of note here: the unique demesne of Brundul Fulmar.



The Crater

Of particular note here is the odd locale called the Crater, centred in the heart of the Aurous district and surrounded by factories. This arena-sized hole in the bare earth is literally filled with spare parts, junked machinery and discarded metal. This is the junkyard of the city, where anyone may come and take whatever material they see fit. Small groups of Zistorites or their servants can often be seen picking through the immense mess here, seeking useful or repairable items and mechanisms.

Even a casual rummage through the detritus here revealed a great deal of potential. Among the wreckage was the burned husk of a sword-manufacturing engine that had clearly been destroyed by fire; a batch of evidently flawed Prime-grade weapons with the same hairline faults along each of their blades; and the bronze-covered head of a Warhound going green with age and disuse.

I swear by the Dragon Yet To Be that I saw what appeared to be a clicking, clockwork rat as well, scurrying through the piles of wreckage. It was the one and only time I saw such a creature, and I do not know if it was some kind of perversion born of Zistorwal's unnaturalness affecting the landscape, or the pet of a sorcerer who perhaps sought to track my movements with his odd little familiar. If it was the former, it is a dark portent of what this hellish city could do to the world if the Zistorites' plan comes to fruition.

The Blood Needle

This tower appears as a blocky spire of red stone, serving as the fortress-home of Brundul Fulmar. Unlike the other faction leaders, he does not appear to conduct a great deal of business in his sanctum, instead meeting his cohorts in various other locations of the city. As I looked at this hundred-foot sandstone monstrosity, I knew breaking into it would be no easy feat; it had been made clear to me through my enquiries that this particular abode was magically warded against intrusion.

There is some activity around the base of this stunted little tower, however. Once or twice a day, a visitor will arrive or leave through the great double doors at the tower's base, all appearing to be sorcerers of Fulmar's Teeth of the Saw-Blade faction. Using my own magic,

I gained invisible entrance when the automated gear-driven doors opened and admitted a portly Zistorite. What I saw inside was...perplexing.

The ground floor of the tower is the *only* floor of the tower. A large library-laboratory, thick with the scents of blood and parchment, is the single room in this demesne. The walls reach up a hundred feet to a distant ceiling, spotted with large stained-glass windows letting in what little light bleeds through the smoke-cloud cover. It was like a bizarre church-turned-operating theatre.

The woman I followed inside moved to one of the walls of books (filled with histories and studies of Gloranthan cultures, I noted) and perused seemingly at her leisure. I moved unseen and unheard, seeking

Fulmar in the immense and largely silent room, but found no other being – living or otherwise. I suspect there is a passage down into the undercity, though I was unable to locate it.

I was inside for seven hours. When the door opened to let the woman out once her studies and note-takings were completed, I left with her. The doors, I noticed, responded to the Zistorite placing her hand on the wood and speaking her name. It seems entrance to Fulmar's tower depends entirely on those he allows inside.

The Docks

I left the oppressive skyline of the leering factories behind me as I ventured into the east of the city. Here the natural hills of Locsil island have been coated in smooth stone as the buildings become scarcer, and the construction yards and docks of the city begin. Here is where the great warmachines of Zistorwal – the main fighters in the Iron Wars – are constructed, maintained, docked and launched. As far as Zistorwal's surface area goes, this is the prime target for our armies to strike and the most likely area for sabotage. Unfortunately, despite the petty nature of Zistorite one-upmanship in their politics, the united Council of Flesh and Metal has decreed that no inter-cult strife may occur around any business pertaining to the dockyards. While this is practically unenforceable, the fact that the Cogs of Zistor are so dedicated to their overall cause means that little or no internal conflict occurs here.

The field-sized **construction yards** here are set aside from the industrial and habitation areas of the city, levelled out and punctuated by stunted buildings, skeletal platforms and sorcery-controlled cranes each several storeys high. As I walked through and around the several acres of land set aside for the construction of the Iron Wars machines, I noticed patrols of God Learner soldiers paying watchers and visitors additional attention but I was not approached – largely because I did not behave suspiciously.

Sabotaging one of the machines during construction will be no easy feat. Security is not over-present here but it still functions with regular patrols, many of which are headed up by Zistorite sorcerers of some rank casting their scrutiny over the building yards like foremen as well as security leaders.

It seems that only one or two of the giant machines are ever assembled here at any one time, both due to space constraints (the size of the machines themselves) and the complexity of the war machines requiring so many Zistorites' full attentions. The prayer scrolls and schematics pinned to the sides of buildings and cranes here told me that the current bronze leviathan being created was Harthalen the Eviscerating Titan, and the artistic impressions of the hulk's final appearance resembled something akin to a giant scorpion. In the yard itself, all there was to see was the central frame that would soon see the giant legs attached, yet it was clear this monstrous creation would be colossal.

Even with righteousness and the reptilian perfection of dragons on our side, I fear for the casualties we will sustain when the siege commences fully, my lord.

Past the construction yards, the completed war machines that are not currently out rampaging through the God Forgot archipelago wait silently in grim, towering majesty. More acres of land have been paved and flattened, allowing enough space for perhaps up to 30 of these great machines to rest. I saw four, resembling skeletal, metal-armoured beasts of incomprehensible forms. I simply have no words to describe them, for nothing I have ever seen compares to their nature at all.

This area is known as the **Sky Docks**, largely because the propeller-powered airships and zeppelins that the Clanking City builds in the construction yards are brought here for docking and mooring between flights. Tall spiral staircases on wheeled platforms are brought up, dragged by slaves, to allow passengers and crew to embark on the low-floating 'docked' vessels.

Past the sky docks, the sloping ground takes one to the **Sea Docks**, where the walls of the city extend out into the sea off the east coast of Locsil. This was once a hive of activity much like any docks in a regular city, it seems, focussed on trade and with rows of warehouses and even the occasional tavern. Since the siege now prevents traders and the Zistorites' fellow God Learners from arriving via sailing vessels, the docks are mostly silent, with several vessels of various sizes bobbing unmanned in the harbour.

Incredibly, a large section of the eastern city wall is *submersible*. I could plainly see the giant gear-

workings, joints, tracks and pulleys that allow a sizeable portion of the eastern sea wall to lower into the water and provide an access route for ships into and out of the city. With the siege strangling any activity in the Sea Docks, the wall remains raised as a defiant message to our invading forces. As they are now, the docks are a remnant of the city's growth and previous interaction in the world, stark evidence to the insular decline of the city today.

Leaving the silent and unusable docks behind me, I turned to the north once again, seeking out the main entrance into the undercity. It was time to seek out blasphemy's heart.

The Undercity

Beneath the towers of the northern district, I made my way down into the locally-termed 'second city' beneath Zistorwal. I blended in with a group of God Learner visitors, passing the guards stationed at the mouth of the descent with no more than a nod in their direction. Perhaps they thought me a slave. Perhaps they just did not care. Whatever the truth of the matter, I was under the city now.



The Tunnels

The first sights that greeted me were tunnels: straight, lit by globes of light bound to the walls every 20 or 30 feet, and stretching out in a complex, near-unmappable web-way. I was soon disorientated as I wandered, for the tunnels bear a uniform similarity and the metallic banging and clanking is relentless down there. The slaves are evidently forced to memorise the routes to their specific duties or are otherwise led by Zistorites with experience in the under-levels. The Zistorites themselves operate down in the undercity by use of tracer gems, else they are forced to memorise their routes as well. The narrow tunnels themselves are of exact measurements – or close enough to make no difference to the naked eye – and reach 12 feet in height, six feet in width.

My trek through the undercity was punctuated by periodically coming across other walkers. These ranged from teams of stern-looking and clearly engrossed Zistorites, slave teams moving to their designated locations, to zealot-eyed priests covering the walls with painted numbers and scriptures; murmuring praise to Zazistor or crying out and weeping as they traversed 'the veins of the perfect god'. I know I was supposed to be proceeding with stealth, but I was so unnerved by one of the Zistorite sorcerer-priests that I slew him before moving on. I fed the body into a grinding gear-filled machine in a random cavern.

Many of the tunnels sloped down, down and down further. This is a key point. Something became clear to me as I wandered under the Clanking City, my lord. The tunnels linking the scattered rooms of the Zazistor machine are too extensive to be contained entirely underneath Zistorwal. I spent almost three weeks in the undercity and if my bearings were correct, at several points of my movement, I was no longer beneath the city, I was beneath the sea and even the other closest God Forgot islands in the archipelago. I did not, however, at any point find any entrances or exists to the undercity situated outside of Zistorwal's walls.

The Chambers

The principal chambers in the undercity are those filled with the so-called mind-engines of the Zazistor machine. These beat an irregular, unending heartbeat as each machine performs its ceaseless calculations. They are all connected via wires, cables and pipes

running down the corridors, linking each room and each machine. It is almost literally the brain of a god, with the deity working through the requirements to perfect every single shred of matter, magic and spirituality in existence.

Prayer scrolls and parchments listing praises and benedictions are nailed to the machines, making each pounding engine into a shrine of sorts. Musky-smelling incense burns in many of these chambers, showing where slaves dedicated to the task have wandered recently. It seems that some beings spend their entire lives under the earth in this manner, living only to light the prayer incense for these rattling, clanking machines. Such slavery is an abomination.

I confess that I lost count of the number of chambers I entered during my weeks underground. Even with mind-reinforcing magic, I found the disorientation almost maddening. I saw thousands of chambers, my lord, certainly, perhaps tens of thousands.

On many occasions, I walked into a chamber which appeared to me no different from any other, yet the Zistorites present – no doubt members of the subterranean Cabal of Night's Eyes – took umbrage and sought to slay me with their swords and spells. Many times I went unnoticed or ignored, and the majority of the time the Zistorites underground paid me no more heed than if I were a slave about my business. Yet in some of the chambers, I was pursued and forced to either kill my attackers or flee for my life. In a few of the areas where I earned this reaction, it was obvious from damaged machines that I was intruding upon critical repairs. However, most of the time when the Zistorites turned on me, I saw nothing untoward or out of place in the rooms at all; their malice remained a mystery.

The chambers increased in size and the air increased in temperature and humidity as I ventured lower and lower into the flesh of the world.

Night's Eyes Compounds

Almost the entire faction led by Malcrex Dark-Eye dwells underground, close to the beating mechemagical 'heart' of the city. Habitation areas are usually within a few hours' distance of a stairway to the surface or a ladder to a higher level. The living areas themselves

are sealed chambers leading off from the established network of tunnels and machinery, and each is protected from casual entry by marked doors.

I gained access to dozens of these abodes during my subterranean tenure, often stealing food or 'Port Orbs when I found either. Most of these chambers appeared much like the dwellings one would expect of sorcerer-scholars and magical engineers: books, schematics, prayer scrolls, spell tomes, wardrobes of oiled clothing. I found nothing I did not expect to find.

That is, until I reached Black Rock.

Black Rock

There is a settlement some distance below the surface city, going by the quaint little name of Black Rock. I sought to pinpoint the exact depth of this under-village, but was unable to get my bearings accurately enough. Suffice to say it was at least several hundred metres down, for I only discovered it in my second week.

Black Rock is set in a vast man-carved chamber, illuminated dimly by the same white globes of light spread throughout the underground complex, which are manufactured in factories on the surface. The cavern is large enough to contain several squat dark-stoned tenement buildings and a central tower formed from a bronze-coated natural column which thins in the middle as it reaches from stone ceiling to rock floor. The tower is the demesne of Malcrex Dark-Eye, the leader of the Cabal of Night's Eyes.

Gaining entrance was easy, for it was assumed I was a slave going about my master's business while in Black Rock. Security in any official form is non-existent this far down in the depths, while many slaves work alongside their sorcerer overseers, dwelling in the tenements in similar austere but clean conditions to their masters.

Inside Dark-Eye's tower I found a well-appointed laboratory and surgical theatre equipped for multiple patients and crewed by a full-time staff of surgeons and Benedictor Enslaved. There was also a library, a tower-top conference room with a glass window that overlooked the strange little settlement, and rooms for up to 20 other residents, most of which were taken by Night's Eyes sorcerers.

THE CORRIDORS OF HOLY CALCULATION

Black Rock was a wonder, certainly, but it held nothing of relevance to my mission. By this stage, I felt as if I were approaching the end of my journey and the sensation to see it to its conclusion was strong. I headed through an increasingly complex series of tunnels, realising as I went that unlike the straight tunnels close to the surface, these were more cramped and were twisting and winding back on themselves in some unknowable pattern of incomprehensible significance.

I had entered what I had previously overheard referred to as the Corridors of Holy Calculation. Black Rock marks the point in the undercity where the beginnings of the Great Machine's core are found. I wandered through tunnels choking with incense smoke and making hideously loud clattering rattles as thousands upon thousands of automated prayer wheels clicked out their numerical praises, all as a part of the Perfection Calculation.

My mind strained to take in what I was experiencing. I know I wandered half-mad down there for a time, though it may be a few hours or a few days – I know not which. I was beyond simply lost at this point. I was wandering confused and ignorant through the thought processes of a man-made god.

Mortals are not made to comprehend such blasphemy.

'The prayer wheels, you damned fool. They are surely among the most vital and holy components in the calculation. Just breaking one of them would likely set the Great Machine back by hours. If you had smashed hundreds – thousands – of them, you would have delayed the Zistorites' hubristic plan for decades...'

— *Delecti the Inquirer*

CAVERN OF ONE MILLION GEARS

The alien, mechamagical wonders were not finished. I emerged from the Corridors of Holy Calculation into a large chamber that at first I believed to be entirely coated in bronze. This was, and was not, correct. The walls, the ceiling, the floor itself – every surface was covered in gears of bronze, each of a different size to those next to it and each whirring and clanking at different speeds. Those on the ground were protected by a raised floor of glass to prevent travellers from treading on the mechanisms.

Each of the gears appeared to bear an inscription acid-etched onto their circular surfaces, though most were spinning too fast to decipher. On the slower-turning ones, the letters were clear: *'The Seventh Cavern of One Million Gears'*. The sound was immense, as if all the world's birds were shrieking at once. I felt hot blood running down my neck from my ears, but was too enraptured to attend to my wounds.

This was Zazistor's heart, I knew. At least, it was a large part of it. There were at least six more chambers like this one, and I knew that it was these spinning gears that powered all of the blasphemous wonders in the city above. Underneath the shrieking whirring and grinding of gears, I heard a dull pounding that delicately shook the ground.

I pressed on. At one point, I entered the Second Cavern of One Million Gears. By now the pounding and ground-trembles were becoming more intense. I walked on, only vaguely conceiving at the time how perhaps destroying these gears would potentially bring down the kinetic shield generated by the Primus Tower. My thoughts were elsewhere and I travelled on, spending hours walking closer and closer to the source of the tremors.

I remember an opening at the end of a tunnel. The opening spread out, showing a vista view of unending blackness and bright bronze so vast I could not see it all. And it kept growing, expanding, taking up more of my vision as I emerged further from the tunnel.

I remember hearing a sound, like the enraged, roared grief of a hundred gods.

I remember nothing after that.

Heart of the Machine

I was down in the undercity for another five days, none of which I am able to recall even with the most powerful Dragon Magic or your own God Learner Sorcery, my lord. I know only that I opened my eyes in the daylight, looking up at the crackling Primus Tower as I lay on the grass of the Respite. I had lost my sword, my cloak, my left eye and three fingers on my right hand. The injuries were not inflicted by a weapon, for the wounds were unclean and messy, not neat like a blade's cut. If I had to guess, I would say my eye was pulled out and my fingers bitten off, though I can not say who or what inflicted such hurt upon me. When I awoke I still clutched my notes with my good hand but possessed nothing more than those scribbled documents and a burned-out 'Port Orb. Whatever happened in those lost five days will almost certainly remain lost.

The only consolation I may offer, lord Delecti, are the parchments of scrawled notes I evidently made while down there. I am ashamed to admit most of what I recovered is babbled poetry about being in the presence of a god and how I realised that I was myself just a part of the Great Machine. Perhaps these shards of documents will offer some insight that as yet evades me.

'And now, at the last, you have failed me. The parchments you submitted read like the ravings of a deranged mostali – all about 'stealing the truth' and the 'pain behind the perfection'. I do not blame you for the failure, since you did well to survive with your sanity only marginally damaged rather than ravaged completely.

But it is still failure we deal with here and I demand that you make amends. I am assigning you to the Frowal wing of my spy network, Vladi. Consider it a demotion, since you are well aware how difficult it can be to make any real progress in the courts there.

One aspect to your scrawls interests me, though. Are you aware that you wrote CHAOS IS HERE eight hundred and eleven times in your notes? Intriguing.'

— Delecti the Inquirer



WONDERS OF ZISTORWAL

*'With hands that reshape Nature,
With designs that find fault with gods,
We offer up this flesh.'*

*Render the impure pure,
Render the flawed flawless,
Render the imperfect perfect.'*

— *Seventy-Second Mantra
of the Cogs of Zistor*

The Clanking City is a place where magical and mechanical wonders are born. The inventions of the sorcerers here strike fear and instil wonder into the people of Glorantha. For some these unique mechamagical creations represent the pinnacle of God Learner ingenuity. For others they represent the hidden influence of Chaos, infesting the heart of Zistorite culture.

Mechamagical Implants

Magic of Glorantha has the rules for mechamagical organs and limbs, allowing God Learners to restructure their bodies along more 'perfect' lines, replacing mortal flesh with mechamagical augmentations. This chapter adds many new possibilities for mechamagical modification, as well as offering new rules and clarifications on how these incredible devices function.

SURGEONEERS

Zistorite God Learners capable of performing mechamagical surgery are called either surgeons or a surgeonicians. It is an informal title and unrelated to caste or faction, though it can come with some additional prestige in certain circles. After all, certainly not all members of the Cogs of Zistor are capable of performing these incredibly difficult procedures.

To qualify as a surgeon, a character must have a Healing and Mechanism skill of over 100%, as well as all five Sorcery skills detailed in the *RuneQuest Companion* at 50% or above. By that stage in a character's development, they are ready to apply what they have learned and seen to practical use if they choose. They will still need the cost of each mechamagical implant in order to acquire the materials and schemata from the archives of the city.

A fully-functioning surgeonician laboratory costs 10,000 SP, and is essential for any mechamagical work at all. Obviously, Player Characters might find themselves in situations where they are able to use their mentors' or allies' labs for their work.

Non-Zistorite Characters

Magic of Glorantha states that to acquire mechamagics, a character must be a member of the Cogs of Zistor, usually of Initiate rank or higher. So is it possible for non-Zistorites to possess this restricted technology? The answer is both yes and no.

Acquiring mechamagics costs a great deal of coin and necessitates a character undergoing the intensive surgery required for the augmentations to be implanted into or onto the body. The costs listed both in this book and in *Magic of Glorantha* are the price Zistorites must pay for the materials and the skilled surgeons who will do the work. Despite the seemingly high cost of mechamagical technology, it is a cheap process considering the toil involved in bonding magical-bionics to the human body. Much of this discounted cost comes from the fact that the cultists perform the procedures on other members of their order. Mechamagics are cheap for Zistorites because it is Zistorite technology, never to be shared with the outside world.

Well, *almost* never.

God Learner characters – Justelans or recognised citizens of the Middle Sea Empire – may have access to mechemagics if they desire and if they manage to convince a Zistorite to perform the surgery. Zistorites from various factions wander the world and are found anywhere from adventuring groups to the halls of high society, much like any God Learner. So while meeting them might not be a problem, the facilities to perform mechemagical surgery are extremely rare outside the blood-soaked labs of Zistorwal.

Despite the difficulties and the traumatic surgery involved, Zistorite mechemagics are seeing a wave of popularity throughout God Learner society. They are only available to the well-connected and the extremely wealthy, but the Middle Sea Empire has plenty of souls that fall into those categories. It is considered the height of fashion in some regions of the empire to possess mechemagic augments, as a sign of vast wealth and social influence. They are still rare enough to be noteworthy on non-Zistorite sorcerers and nobles, attracting attention in the courts and debating parlours of the kingdom.



What usually happens is a God Learner sorcerer or Middle Sea imperial noble travels to Zistorwal to have the surgery done, recovers in the Clanking City and returns home afterwards. Clearly, for some of the Zistorites who have eyes for making coin on the side, this is an immensely profitable line of work.

Non-Zistorite characters can have the standard mechemagics detailed in *Magic of Glorantha*, though the surgery costs an additional 1,000 silver pieces for every augmentation. Characters without God Learner Sorcery must also permanently sacrifice 1 POW for the operation to succeed, which represents the machinery powering itself initially with the recipient's body energies rather than feeding from any innate sorcerous power as would otherwise happen with a Zistorite.

Characters who are neither God Learner sorcerers nor citizens of the Middle Sea Empire may not have mechemagics, unless they do a stellar job of manipulating a Zistorite into taking them back to the Machine City and performing the surgery either through deception or under duress. The likelihood of either chance happening is so implausible as to be impossible.

Non-Zistorites may *not* use the mechemagics detailed in this chapter unless otherwise noted in the text. These are the unique, purely Zistorite augmentations that are rarely seen outside the walls of Zistorwal, and are often cult secrets that the Five Factions of the Cogs of Zistor keep from each other, let alone the rest of the world.

Non-Humans

Mechemagical technology ultimately gives lie to the mostali claims that all of God Learner Zistorism is based on their stolen secrets. No mechemagical biotechnology ever functions on non-humans, be they aldryami, mostali, uz, broo or any of Glorantha's myriad races. Even in crazed experimental delusions it is unlikely any Zistorite would expend the monumental resources for mechemagical surgery on an inhuman hostage or a willing non-human, and due to the magical metaphysics of Glorantha, any such attempts to graft mechemagics onto non-humans fails.

Player Characters resolute on pursuing this course of action should probably note that not only will

the surgery fail, but after the failure, the non-human will actually have an inert organ or limb where once there was healthy flesh. Any reattaching of limbs or re-implanting of organs might need to be performed immediately. Anyone trying to get up off the table without a beating heart or a working brain is going to be quite dead indeed.

Post-Operation

After any mechamagical operation, a certain amount of recovery time is vital. The augmented area, whether it is an eye socket or a new limb, will need to be rested for some time, during which the body will adapt to this new modification and the augment itself will begin to function properly, aligning to the host's physiology. The recovering character is frail during this time as his body energies work to bond with the new sorcerous bio-implant. This period is relatively short for replaced limbs. In the case of organs, the duration of a necessary recovery period can be significantly longer.

This translates into game mechanics easily enough. Each operation comes with a recovery period of 'downtime'. During this time span, a character who has undergone mechamagical surgery must never reach either the Exhausted or Debilitated levels of fatigue. These rules are detailed on pages 86 and 87 of *RuneQuest*.

Magic of Glorantha Mechamagics

Mechamagical Arm	1D8 days
Mechamagical Eye	1D12 days
Mechamagical Hand	1D4 days
Mechamagical Jaw	1D10 days
Mechamagical Leg	1D10 days
Mechamagical Heart	2D20 days
Mechamagical Lungs	2D12 days
Mechamagical Skull	2D8 days

The Clanking City Mechamagics

Mechamagical Digestion	2D12 days
Bale Ducts	1D8 days
Limb Reinforcement	1D2 hours
Mechamagical Knee	1D4 days
Mechamagical Elbow	1D2 days
Knuckle-Knives	1D6 hours
Poison Claws	1D2 hours
Viridian Vambrace	1D4 hours
Machine Tongue	1D6 days

If the characters fail to adhere to this restriction, their mechamagical implant fails. The stress they have placed on their healing bodies disrupts the alignment process and corrupts the flow of energies between host and augmentation. In the case of an organ, this probably results in a painful death that lasts several moments. In the case of a limb, the hit location is treated as destroyed and must be replaced with new mechamagics, left as immovable dead weight or removed in order for the character to be left with a stump.

The following recovery times stack, so if a character had two arms and leg replaced, he would require 1D8+1D8+1D10 days to be healthy again.

ARMOUR

As stated in *Magic of Glorantha*, no armour may be worn over mechamagical limbs or skulls, though this only applies to the arm, leg and head hit locations. The common reason given is one of tradition and respect for the Zistorite ideology: to cover one's already-armoured augmentations puts faith in lesser protections rather than trusting to Zistorite ingenuity and craft. This is not the entire truth, however.

Any material heavier than a traditional robe will interfere with the function of mechamagics, as armour will not be moulded to fit the bulky replaced limbs and the additional pressure and presence of metal can cause mechamagics to work erratically. The Zistorites are still unsure why but it is attributed to the fact that many items of Zistorite make simply do not function reliably under all conditions. The Zistorites themselves see this is a minute flaw in their otherwise perfect schemata, though the other races see such failures as indicative of a greater doom to come if the machine-sorcerers are not stopped.

Metal armour – especially iron – has been known to make limbs spasm uncontrollably and helmets worn over mechamagical skulls have caused electrical discharges within the head of the sorcerer: discharges which have been fatal. For these reasons, Zistorites are barred from wearing armour over mechamagics, and few would ever willingly take the risk anyway.

Finishing Touches

No two augmentations are exactly alike. While standard schematics exist as base designs for the

Zistorites to use in each operation, every surgeon uses a combination of different metals and materials, and each implant is created with a different structure that feels right (specifically, the most perfect) to the surgeon doing the operation. Most Zistorites adapt the standard design not only out of personal taste but also in the pursuit of crafting something artistic and attractive as well as efficient.

The most popular decoration on mechamagical augmentations is to acid-etch runic symbols and lettering onto the metal surfaces, usually in praise to Zazistor or the lost Core Rune. These benedictions are never placed on mechamagics given to non-Zistorites, though. They are a cult tradition that is not shared frivolously.

Zistorites commonly imprint their mechamagics with the symbol of their chosen faction and, if noble-born, the name of their bloodline. Vainer sorcerers have been known to etch lists of their deeds into the metallic surfaces of their replacement limbs, though this is usually seen as an imitation of the Dragonspeakers' propensity to etch their own deeds onto their armour of dragon-bone.

New Mechamagics

The following section details the unique mechamagics available to the Zistorites and those developed and used primarily by the Five Factions. These augmentations obey the rules for Armoured, Electrical Susceptibility, Healing, Inhibited Spellcasting and Obvious, as detailed on page 53 of *Magic of Glorantha*.

The Five Factions each have a preferred mechamagic listed in The Zistorites chapter. These augmentations can be purchased at half-price for members of the respective sub-cults.

Mechamagical Digestion

This is among the most complicated of the sorcerous implants known to the Zistorites and is as rare as mechamagical hearts and lungs. The Once-Men and their Transcendent leaders designed this implant to allow the sorcerers of the Clanking City to effectively survive without needing to eat as humans do. It is considered an incredibly pious gesture to undergo this augmentative surgery, much like having mechamagical

jaws, since it brings the sorcerer one step further from his imperfect human nature.

With mechamagical digestion, a character can survive on any material matter and draw enough energy from it that he will remain healthy and hale. The magical engineering in his stomach reduces all matter into energy through a complex system of small gears, mystical siphons and minute chambers within the stomach where the material is pulverised and transmuted into energy used by the body. As mechamagics go, it is also a quiet process, with a series of dull, muted clanks emanating from the body of the sorcerer several times a day. Each instance lasts only a few seconds and occurs roughly every hour, but the sound produced is minimal due to being muted by the reinforced stomach lining.

Characters with this implant double the normal amount of time they are able to resist starvation (see page 87 of *RuneQuest*). Additionally, they need only a handful of matter each day to survive, be it pond water, some pebbles or a cupped handful of ice. The only thing mechamagical digestion is not capable of processing is iron, due to the magic-inhibiting properties of the metal.

Zistorites with the mechamagical digestion implant gain a +20% bonus to all Influence tests with other members of the Cogs of Zistor.

Cost: 2,000 SP

Magic Point Loss: -1

Stealth Penalty: -5%

Machine Tongue

This implant is a small nodule the size of a thumbnail, implanted on the roof of the sorcerer's mouth. When the sorcerer applies pressure to the tiny machine with his tongue, it emits a series of magic-based ultrasonic signals that are inaudible to normal humans and members of other races. Only other characters with machine tongues implanted will be able to hear these signals, which resonate into the minds of implanted sorcerers as a mechanical, toneless voice – as if the signal sender were speaking directly to them.

Machine tongues can be tuned to various frequencies so as to prevent eavesdropping, though to date they are limited to auditory range. If a character could hear

another character naturally, then he is in range to use a machine tongue. This means their use over distances is limited, but for secret or silent conversations they are unrivalled in effectiveness.

Characters using a machine tongue may not speak normally at the same time, since their tongue is pressed into the nodule and they are 'thinking' words to someone else instead. However, God Learners can use their machine tongues instead of speaking or chanting when casting spells, which can come as a fatal surprise for unprepared enemies.

Machine tongues seem simple enough at first glance, but the nodule itself is actually part of a larger piece of equipment. Two finger-length metal spines extend from the machine past the sinuses and into the brain, which is what allows this mechanical-telepathic communication without further use of Sorcery. This is the reason these implants seem expensive for their limited use and why they come with a lengthy recovery time for so small an augmentation.

Cost: 1000 SP

Magic Point Loss: -1

Stealth Penalty: N/A

Limbo Reinforcement

This bulky augmentation comes from the modification of existing mechemagical arms and legs, sheathing them in thick armour plating. These plates of bronze and iron are layered and jointed, making them about as flexible as a suit of plate armour, but they are still much heavier than normal mechemagical limbs.

Characters with this modification have both of their arms and both of their legs reinforced by jointed bronze plated resembling thick, hand-sized scales. This offers the finest quality armour with several minor drawbacks.

The character's Arm and Leg hit locations gain an AP of 7 and the character's SIZ increases by a further +1 (over the initial SIZ increases from mechemagical arms and legs).

The ENC of these reinforcements is equal to ENC 1 for each arm and ENC 2 on each leg, giving the character a total ENC rating of 6. They also force a Skill Penalty of -25%.

Cost: 500 SP (Both arms and both legs)

Magic Point Loss: -1

Stealth Penalty: -10%

Mechemagical Knee

In instances where a Zistorite does not want his entire leg replaced but still wishes to receive augmentation (such as in the case of injury) pistons and cables that mimic movement are used to replace the pieces of flesh, bone and cartilage that make up the human knee. The kneecap is replaced with a shielding dome of bronze which protects the mechemagics beneath.

Unlike mechemagical legs, these operations are relatively rare and are not always performed on both legs. It is far more common for a sorcerer to have a single mechemagical knee joint than both, whereas most leg replacements involve both limbs being replaced.

Each mechemagical knee increases the character's CON by +1, though these effects do not stack with the bonus from later receiving full mechemagical leg replacement.

Cost: 1,500 SP

Magic Point Loss: -1

Stealth Penalty: -5%

Mechemagical Elbow

Another uncommon augmentation is the replacement of elbow joints with mechemagics, using a combination of cogs, pistons and wires that simulate human movement and slightly enhance the sorcerer's strength. The joint is as strong and reliable as those of full mechemagical arms and among Zistorites who worry about their own humanity, it is becoming increasingly common to replace an elbow and a hand rather than undergo total replacement of the arm.

Each mechemagical elbow increases the character's STR by +1, though these effects do not stack with the bonus from later receiving mechemagical arm replacement.

Cost: 1,500 SP

Magic Point Loss: -1

Stealth Penalty: -5%

Knuckle-Knives

Characters with mechemagical arms may also have weapons installed within the forearm, which spring out through the bronze knucklebones when used in battle. The most common operation in this vein features four slender 5- to 10-inch retractable blades housed in the forearms, which extend from slits in each reinforced bronze knuckle when the hand is made into a fist. These weapons are called 'knuckle-knives' by many God Learners, and when extended, these blades prevent any movement of the fingers. They count as daggers for all purposes except damage, dealing a base damage of 1D6+1 instead of 1D4+1.

Cost: 1,500 SP if installed with a mechemagical arm or 3,000 SP if installed into an existing mechemagical arm at a later date.

Magic Point Loss: N/A

Stealth Penalty: N/A

Poison Claws

It is becoming increasingly common for the most machine-enhanced Zistorites to alter mechemagical hand implants to be tipped with retractable fingernail claws – used primarily as a weapon of last resort – which deal 1D2 damage in close combat and use a character's Brawl skill rather than a Weapon skill. Most God Learners install tiny sockets for vials of alchemical poisons in their mechanical fingers, delivering paralyzing venom with each cut they inflict on a foe. For Zistorites with this enhancement, use the following statistics to represent the generic paralyzing poison:

Type: Smeared

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 80

Full Effect: Applies –8 penalty to victim's DEX

Duration: 2D10 minutes

Runic Sockets

A recent modification to mechemagical limbs (and the occasional skull) is the addition of runic sockets. Shaped sockets are prepared in the metal of the augmentation, usable for affixing runes which the character has attuned.

The principal benefit of runic sockets is that the character does not need to be holding the runes in his hand when he uses them to cast Rune Magic spells. This is a useful function, certainly, though it is actually more common for Zistorite God Learners to install runes into their mechemagical limbs for decoration. Displaying runes in this manner is a reflection of the magician's accrued power and can also look openly intimidating as well as impressive.

Any runes affixed within a rune socket have their runic symbol glowing the entire time they are attuned and implanted within the body. This adds to the impressive effect, though it also means that any Stealth checks made in conditions darker than total illumination are at –15% per runic socket.

A mechemagical arm or skull can have two sockets and a leg can sustain three. Each socket must be installed during the initial implant, and adds 200 SP to the cost of the augmentation. Unlike all other costs, this is not increased for non-Zistorites.



Poison claws can be easily installed after the initial surgery if the character desires, since the degree of alteration is minor compared to something like knuckle-knives.

Cost: An additional 1,000 SP to the price of a mechemagical hand or arm

Magic Point Loss: N/A

Stealth Penalty: N/A

Bale Ducts

These devices are the invention of Brundul Fulmar, the faction leader of the Teeth of the Saw-Blade. They take the form of several vials of fluid – ritually consecrated poison – attached to the sorcerer’s neck and each with a tube leading directly into his mechemagical jaw. The intent of a bale duct implant is brutally simple: they are designed purely to allow the sorcerer to salivate, spit or vomit a corrosive poison at will.

Bale ducts can also be set to emit a cloud of poisonous gas when the sorcerer exhales. Though the corrosive strength of the acidic fluid is largely dispersed via this ‘death breath’ assault, the toxic effects remain. This attack functions as a Poison Gas attack listed in the Suffocation rules on page 90 of *RuneQuest*. This cloud covers a three metre by three metre area and dissipates after 1D4+1 minutes.

Characters must have mechemagical jaws to possess this augmentation. Furthermore, after the operation is complete, there is a 10% chance that the additional equipment and pumping mechanics will interfere with the character’s speech mechemagics. In that case, the character suffers a –10% penalty on all Influence rolls where he speaks during the scene and should roleplay the difficulties of speech with erratic mechemagical augments, such as the curious pauses in Brundel Fulmar’s own dialogue.

The venom stored by bale ducts provides enough for 15 uses before more of the fluid must be concocted. Only this ritually-consecrated poison can be used – all other fluids jam the mechanism and retard the flow of sorcerous energies between host and implant, potentially damaging the augmentation. To create bale fluid, a character needs one litre of mostali blood, a sample of oil from the Zazistor machine in the under-city, and the spell Bale Venom as detailed later in this chapter.

Type: Smeared

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 65

Full Effect: Deals 1D6 acid damage on 1 hit location for the first Combat Action; then a single point of damage to each hit location thereafter

Duration: 1D10 minutes

Bale ducts can be easily installed after the mechemagical jaw is first implanted, since the alterations are almost entirely external.

Cost: An additional 1,000 SP to the price of a mechemagical jaw

Magic Point Loss: N/A

Stealth Penalty: –10%

Viridian Vambrace

This unusual augmentation is most often seen among the members of Ascension. The details of its construction are a secret kept within the faction, though obviously information leaks will always occur from time to time. To possess a viridian vambrace a character must have a mechemagical arm. A viridian vambrace can be installed after the initial implant, rather than requiring implantation during the actual arm surgery. However, it is still preferable to have both augmentations affixed at once.

The implant itself takes the form of additional plating around the forearm of either arm, or indeed both if the sorcerer wishes to have two of these augmentations. A long, thin tube runs along the back of the forearm, with copper and bronze wires coiling around the metal bones of the arm. The device is made bulkier by additional armour plating traditionally painted blue-green and covered in runic lettering honouring the Great Machine. The tube is a power conductor that is capable of leeching energy from the body and transmuting it into magical force on the bearer’s mental command. With a moment’s willpower, the sorcerer may physically siphon his own life force and injure his body in order to magnify his magical energies. It is a painful sacrifice, but one that many sorcerers are willing to make given the benefits of doing so.

Sorcerers with a viridian vambrace (which, confusingly, are not always viridian in colour) gain an AP 7 on whichever arm supports the augmentation.

They also suffer a -10% penalty on all combat rolls to use that arm due to the increased weight, so most Zistorites will only have a single implant mounted on their left arm, keeping their right (and main) arm free of the burden.

During a single Combat Action, a character can elect to use his Viridian Vambrace to pull energy from his body and unleash it through his biomechanical implant as pure sorcerous power. By sacrificing 1 hit point from a randomly determined hit location, the sorcerer can add +20% to any Sorcery Manipulation rolls. The Zistorite may elect to siphon as many hit points as he wishes in any given Combat Action and the bonuses are cumulative, though each hit points lost must be determined from a random hit location.

For example: Cryjan wishes to throw a barrage of various missiles of magical force at his opponent. To boost the combined spells and ensure they deliver punishing damage, he sacrifices 5 HP, which are dealt to the Head, Right Arm, Right Arm, Right Leg and Left Leg hit locations. Now he adds +40% to his Manipulation: Magnitude roll, +40% to his Manipulation: Combine roll and +20% to Manipulation: Range. He will probably need to recover after mystically punishing his body so violently, however.

Mechamagical Eyes

Mechamagical eyes are dealt with in *Magic of Glorantha* with the basic Zistorite augmentations. This section expands on the functions of these common and versatile implants, providing examples of the different rules that apply when different materials are used in the augmentation's construction.

The lenses of each mechemagical eye are crafted from glass and finely-shaped precious stones. To date, no sorcerer has successfully managed to mount an integrated rune into a mechemagical eye, though this could be because the process of refining the gems that eventually make the lenses destroys the stones' original forms.

The base cost for mechemagical eyes is 2,000 SP. The costs listed here are on top of the base cost for the surgery and the materials, and reflect the capabilities of the eye once the implant has been fitted with the specific lenses.



This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the possible lens types. Glorantha is a world saturated with magic, and while the Zistorites are not perfectly clear on why fragments of precious stones alter their magical vision in these ways, they are dedicated to finding new materials to use in order to judge the effects. Games Masters should feel free to come up with other potential gemstones or materials that could be used in a mechemagical eye, perhaps giving other unique traits or spell effects (within reason).

All of the following advantages are in addition to the base benefits of mechemagical eyes as detailed in *Magic of Glorantha*. Characters must take a single lens type, either in a single eye augmentation or in both eyes. It is impossible to mix different lens types, such as an obsidian left eye and a ruby right. For reasons the Zistorites are still researching, such placement misaligns a sorcerer's vision and renders him near-blind, as well as creating severe headaches and bleeding from the ears and nose.

Sapphire

Fragments of sapphire will create a sea-blue tint in the sorcerer's eye lenses, subtly altering his perception of the world around him, making his vision keen at perceiving details after nightfall. Characters with a single sapphire eye lens receive the Night Sight trait as detailed on page 106 of *RuneQuest*. Characters with two sapphire

eye lenses receive +10% on all Perception checks made in Partial Darkness conditions. This lens type costs 400 SP each.

Obsidian

Lenses crafted from obsidian render the sorcerer's eyes completely black and dims his visual perceptions somewhat. In direct sunlight, he suffers -10% to all vision-based Perception tests. However, he gains the Dark Sight trait as listed on page 106 of *RuneQuest* and an additional +20% bonus on vision-based perception rolls when not in direct sunlight) at night, indoors, and so on.). Obsidian lenses cost 1000 SP each.

Crystal

These are the default lenses implanted within mechemagical eyes unless the sorcerer pays for additional modification. They give the character a slight advantage over natural eyesight when detecting movement in their surroundings, and also have the ability to perceive living beings through insubstantial impediments such as smoke or fog. Any character with a crystal lens as an augmentation never suffers reduced visibility from smoke, mist or fog. The cost of these lenses is included in the base price of the initial surgery.

Ruby

These crimson lenses lend a malevolent redness to the character's gaze, and are among the most common gems found in mechemagical eyes. They add a reddish sheen to any sorcerer's vision, though this is not colourful enough to retard his sight at all. The principal benefit of ruby lens eyes is that each one confers a further +15% bonus to all visual Perception rolls. These implants cost 750 SP each.

Diamond

The most valuable (and arguably the most useful) lenses are those fashioned from diamond. This material integrated within a mechemagical eye allows the sorcerer to perceive life itself, sensing the ebb and flow of natural energies within any living being. Characters with one of these augmentations gains the trait Life Sense as detailed on page 106 of *RuneQuest*, with the notable exception that the sorcerer may make the Perception test after just looking at the target, not touching it. Characters with two of these implants gain Night Sight in addition to the singular bonus, as a

result of his incredibly enhanced visual clarity. These implants cost 1,500 SP each.

Emerald

These lenses are the deep green of a summer forest, and provide what is probably the most unique visual benefit of any mechemagical eye augmentation. Though they do not increase the Perception bonuses that come with standard mechemagical eyes, they grant an additional side-effect. Emerald lenses render the bearer mystically immune to any magic spell that would affect the Zistorite's vision, such as magical smoke or fog, or a spell that induces blindness. These implants cost 350 each, though they are only effective if both eyes are replaced.

The Enslaved

The Zistorites create slaves from organic and machine elements in a bizarre approximation of making life. Ironically, due to the prejudices within Zistorwal and the cult that founded the majestic Clanking City, the so-called Enslaved are actually treated with a greater degree of respect than those who come to the city with no mechemagical augmentation – the Fleshbound.

Part of this odd respect for an inhuman and expendable slave caste comes from practicality. Creating an Enslaved is a difficult and trying process involving both great skill and significant expense. Casually ordering such a commodity to perform menial tasks or to undertake dangerous assignments is something that few sorcerers are likely to do. Ultra-wealthy Zistorites with a lot of time on their hands (or with a staff that can make Enslaved for their master) are another matter entirely, but generally speaking these machine-beings are regarded as precious possessions and valuable assistants.

The second consideration is one of piety. All of the Enslaved are considered lesser reflections of Zistor's divine form. While sorcerers will believe and perceive this with varying degrees of seriousness and faith, few will actively disrespect and destroy a minor idol of their own god. It is blasphemy even to the most impious and self-obsessed Zistorite – after all, they are in the cult because they believe in what they are doing. While some religious movements might be infiltrated by faithless opportunity-seekers, the Cogs of Zistor are

probably not one of them given the level of education and expertise one needs to possess.

The three main types of Enslaved are **Warhounds**, **Venators** and **Benedictors**. Each fulfils a specific function in Zistorite society, used by sorcerers according to their needs.

Warhound

The Warhound-class Enslaved resembles a wolf in size and shape, though it is made from natural animal bones reconstructed into a skeleton and sheathed in a mechamagical body, with machinery-based muscles and artificial organs. Its legs whirr and click with the sounds of gears and clockwork automation, and its bronze jaws open and close slowly as if the beast hungers to make a kill.

A Warhound is the cheapest and most basic type of Enslaved. While they are respected more than the Fleshbound, they are still at the bottom of their caste and are considered expendable where other Enslaved are not. Warhounds are created by blending the flesh of a wolf or dog with mechamagical augmentations, creating a canine machine capable of doing little more than defending its master with vicious abilities.

Although they are limited in breadth of their operational capacity, they are ruthlessly efficient at what they are designed to do. A Warhound will attack whoever (or whatever) its master orders it to attack, without fear of being outnumbered or outclassed, and with no regard for its own personal well-being. These biomechanical beasts fight with a combination of brute force, their heavy weight, razor-sharp claws and their bladed jaws which possess a terrible strength. They can also be ordered – if given specific time span and distance parameters – to patrol any area the sorcerer desires, with additional orders to attack anyone the canine construct does not recognise. Unfortunately, Warhounds cannot think any more imaginatively than these basic processes; characters may not describe someone and expect the beast to remember the target in the future, for example.

Warhounds operate on one of two modes: Kill and Patrol/Guard, with each mode triggered by the sorcerer speaking the mode-word to the construct.

Kill mode is obvious enough. The Warhound attacks whoever the sorcerer indicates ('Kill: the tallest/the one with blond hair/the one who smells of the forest'). The target cannot be described in terms any longer than a single sentence or the Warhound will become confused and its weak memory will make it behave erratically, attacking whoever its primitive brains *thinks* it should be attacking. This is almost always the closest 'enemy' to its master, which may very well be an ally.

Kill mode is actually the default mode of operation for Warhounds. They are automatically assumed to be in Kill mode, always awaiting the command to attack. A Warhound in this mode turns its head this way and that, like a recording camera, monitoring all living beings nearby with its red-lens eyes.

Patrol/Guard mode is used by sorcerers who wish to assign their Warhounds to guard duty or home defence. The command is 'Guard: (desired location)' or 'Patrol: (desired number of square metres)'. The commands must be relatively specific, though the Warhound will keep at its duty until ordered to stop or destroyed. Instances have occurred in the past where sorcerers have set their Warhounds to guard homes at night and died of natural causes – the guarding constructs have had to be destroyed before the bodies could be recovered.

A Warhound must be communicated with via a machine tongue, for they have no capacity to understand human speech. The only exception to this is the 'ally' command, which is a word the creator sets simply by ordering the beast to remember it. This one word command can be shouted by allies who find themselves attacked by the creature, allowing its simplistic mind to recognise a friend of its master if it is in patrol/guard mode and has previously not encountered them.

Almost all Warhounds are created equal, based on the original schema designed by Kara Farseer, an elderly member of the Honoured Inquisitive within the Legion of Purification. The following mechanics represent the common Warhound constructs seen in Zistorwal and accompanying Zistorite sorcerers as they venture out across Glorantha.

To create a Warhound, a character must fulfil the requirements to be a surgeon, and have access to

the dead body of a dog or wolf and 3,000 SP worth of materials. The process takes approximately one month of daily effort.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR 20
CON 20
SIZ 10
INT 3
POW 8
DEX 15
CHA 3

Warhound Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Right Hind Leg	5/6
3-4	Left Hind Leg	5/6
5-7	Hindquarters	6/7
8-10	Forequarters	7/7
11-13	Right Front Leg	6/6
14-16	Left Front Leg	6/6
17-20	Head	7/7

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage / AP
Bite	70%	1D10+1D2 / 4
Claw	30%	1D6+1D2 / 4

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +9

Movement: 5m

Traits: Formidable Natural Weapons, Life Sense, Night Sight

Skills: Athletics 100%, Dodge 80%, Perception 100%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 70%

Armour: Bronze and brass exoskeleton (variable AP, no Skill Penalty)

Venator

The Venator is a man-sized construct formed from the metal-coated bones of a human, sheathed in mechemagical muscles and with gears for joints. They walk with unearthly grace, each movement accompanied by the hum of servos and the rattling clicks of mechemagical organ processes. Pistons mounted in each limb allow for great physical strength, creating occasional jets of heated steam from

the shoulder blades, jaws, knees and elbows when the creature exerts itself.

The Venator-grade Enslaved are the evolution of the initial Warhound constructs. Much more intelligent than its canine predecessor and with increased physical power, the Venator represents the pinnacle of the hunter-killer design seen in the factories of Zistorwal.

They are traditionally made from the skeletons of murderers, though in recent years as the capacity to create them has spread throughout Zistorwal, few sorcerers adhere to this old and rather limiting tradition. The skeletal structure of the subject is coated in metal plating (usually bronze) and the mechemagical muscles and organs are painstakingly built around it, before being permanently sealed in heavy iron armour.



Since there is no difficulty in attuning mechatronics to biological tissue, the organs are a great deal simpler than those found in human sorcerers. Still, a Venator is an incredibly complicated machine, so it is fortunate for those sorcerers that own them that these beings are built to withstand a great deal of punishment and battle damage.

In a rather grim tradition, Venators are commonly named after the bones of whomever 'contributed' to the first stage of the construction. Although there is no discernible reason for the organic component to be necessary in the creation of Venator-grade Enslaved, every attempt to forge one of these constructs without human bones as the foundation of the body has resulted in complete failure. Shingallion commands over a hundred of these creations, each made with the bodies of apprentices that have failed him or would-be murderers that failed to see him dead. He calls this household guard of his 'the Soulless Brotherhood', and occasionally sends one of his prized mechanical warriors to accompany his Once-Men followers on their adventures.

As far as intelligence and memory go, a Venator is as intelligent as an average human, though it only has limited capacity for learning. It can understand any instructions a normal human could and is also able to recall every single living being it has met and attach a name to each person – if its master asks it to remember each of them upon each meeting. They are also able to recall any place they have visited, though this recollection of geography only applies within the boundaries of Zistorwal. It is believed that this represents some magical symbiosis between the Enslaved and Zazistor, and to date, no Zistorite has managed to create an Enslaved that can keep its full memory when away from the city.

A Venator has no ability for deduction, improvisation or critical thinking, however. If tasked to kill someone without a specific location to go to, it will hunt them down in the places it has seen them before, and if such a tactic fails it will continue to repeat the procedure until ordered to return. If given a specific location, it will head there at best speed and kill the target without subtlety. The enemy could be asleep or in the middle of a dinner party and the construct's behaviour would be exactly the same: enter the room, kill the target and kill anyone who seeks to impede its progress.

To create a Venator, a character must fulfil the requirements to be a surgeon, and have access to a dead body as well as 5,000 SP worth of materials. The process takes approximately two months of daily effort.

The following statistics are based on the standard Venators seen in the city and used in Shingallion's own household guard.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR 25
CON 18
SIZ 16
INT 5
POW 10
DEX 13
CHA 4

Venator Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–3	Right Leg	7/7
4–6	Left Leg	7/7
7–9	Abdomen	8/8
10–12	Chest	8/8
13–15	Right Arm	6/6
16–18	Left Arm	6/6
19–20	Head	7/7

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage / AP
Sword	100%	1D8+1D8 / 4*
Unarmed	100%	1D3+1D8 / 4

*These statistics are for a normal, unenhanced war sword. Most Venators are equipped with Prime or Meridian blades.

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +9

Movement: 5m

Traits: Formidable Natural Weapons, Life Sense, Night Sight

Skills: Athletics 100%, Dodge 80%, Perception 100%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 70%

Armour: Bronze and brass exoskeleton (variable AP, no Skill Penalty)

Benedictor

Though made in the same manner as the Venator, the Benedictor is coated in thin armour and the movement of its joints is controlled precisely by gas pumps and vials of pressurised fluids as well as piston-muscles. These constructs move with measured, gentle motions and feature fine-fingered hands of silver-coated finger bones, rather than the iron gauntlets of the Venator hunters.

The pinnacle of God Learner mechemagics and artificial life is not the great war machines of the Iron Wars or the expert killer Venator-grade Enslaved. Instead, it is the silent and slow constructs called Benedictors. These are constructs designed purely for mechemagical surgery and engineering; essentially, they are automaton laboratory assistants.

Despite their limited application, these Enslaved have memories capable of storing endless reams of biological, physiological and engineering lore. They are equipped with voice emitters that allow them to relay information to their masters, usually in response to a direct question or to make a comment and a suggestion if they witness an incorrect procedure taking place within a mechemagical operation. A Zistorite with one (or a team) of Benedictors working alongside him within his laboratory is going to be provided with near-faultless assistance in his mechemagical endeavours, and can even order his Enslaved to repair his own mechemagics if they are damaged.

Although they are able to do repair and maintenance work unguided, Benedictors are not designed to perform complete mechemagical replacement surgery alone. Though they have the knowledge of how to do so, the reality of an automaton performing such a delicate procedure without human guidance means that mechemagics fitted by a Benedictor have a 75% chance of failing completely during the recovery time. In times of desperation, some sorcerers have ordered their Enslaved to do the work, if absolutely necessary, but it is seen as a last and final resort at best. The reason for this high chance of failure is put down to some kind of undiscovered flaw in the bio-magical process that arises from inhuman, unliving beings performing the procedure on living bodies. Likewise, Benedictors cannot create other types of Enslaved; all previous

attempts have resulted in failure – and in several notable cases, the insanity and mental breakdown of the Benedictors that made the attempts.

Benedictors are not created for combat and have no battle prowess. If attacked they will seek to flee, though no Benedictor will willingly leave its laboratory unless directly ordered to do so by its master. These intelligent automatons have an eerie connection to the labs in which they work, and many suffer cognitive instabilities if they are forced to leave for more than a few minutes. Benedictors will refuse any order to harm another living being, even if they are being attacked at the time.

To create a Benedictor, a character must fulfil the requirements to be a surgeon, and have access to a dead body as well as 7,000 SP worth of materials. The process takes approximately four months of daily effort.

Games Masters should note that not only is the automaton capable of using its skills to repair (heal) a character's mechemagical implants, any surgery with a Benedictor assistant can use the construct's statistics for whatever rolls the master wishes, including the rules for Assistance on page 22 of *RuneQuest*.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR 10
CON 18
SIZ 15
INT 20
POW 14
DEX 10
CHA 5

Benedictor Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–3	Right Leg	1/7
4–6	Left Leg	1/7
7–9	Abdomen	1/8
10–12	Chest	1/8
13–15	Right Arm	0/6
16–18	Left Arm	0/6
19–20	Head	1/7

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage / AP
Tools*	20%	1D4+1 / 4

*A Benedictor in an operating theatre will have access to boning saws, scalpels and other cutting tools approximately the equivalent of daggers in combat.

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +9

Movement: 4m

Traits: Life Sense

Skills: Athletics 20%, Dodge 20%,
First Aid 100%, Healing 150%,
Perception 100%, Persistence 100%,
Resilience 30%

Armour: Light bronze plating
(1 AP, no Skill Penalty)

BORN OF FACTORY and FORGE

'The greatest threat to the Compromise is not the sorcerers' idiotic quest to invent a new god. Glorantha has suffered through that before, and survived if sure enough. Mark my words, the Zistorites will end the world because their factories churn out the same production-run weapons for themselves and for the Middle Sea Empire. That abuse of magic, more staggering than anything else that I can imagine or countenance, is assuredly puffing intense pressure on the barriers of reality. Magic used for a million pedestrian, unnatural, pathetic ends... It strains the world's soul. Mark my words.'

— Delecti the Inquirer

The Paradox of Power

The weapons produced in the forge-factories of the Machine City are both wondrous and mundane at the same time, as well as being both incredibly potent

or utterly useless, depending on one's location. These paradoxes are not as difficult to understand as it might at first seem, though.

The fact that the Zistorites have mastered a system where their machines can develop weapons of identical craft, quality and magical power is nothing short of incredible. What the sorcerers of Zistorwal have managed to do is bring about a potential industrial revolution through sorcery-enhanced machinery. That is wondrous.

The flip side to the coin here is that they are rendering this wondrous process into something base and uninspired, annihilating any artistic craft and passion for their creations and simply churning out exact copies of weapons through automated means. That is mundane.

These weapons are powerful, however. In the hands of the Zistorites, they inflict terrible injuries on those they strike and have allowed the sorcerers of God Forgot to equip themselves with amazing weaponry without need of HeroQuesting for legendary items or paying fortunes to master craftsman. That makes these weapons potent.

Again, there is a flip side. For some reason still undiscovered by the God Learners, these weapons – like most of the creations of the Machine City – fail to function as they should once off the islands of God Forgot. They become simple weapons of competent quality and no magical power whatsoever. This makes them next to useless.

Using Zistorite Weaponry

These weapons are all created in the automated forge-factories of Zistorwal and are priced for residents of, and visitors to, the city. Who one buys these tools from depends on who owns the factory that sells them, and in most cases this will be one of the Five Factions.

If a character takes one of these weapons away from God Forgot, there is the distinct possibility that it will behave erratically and become unreliable as its enchantments wane and fail over time. To represent this, a character must make a roll once every 24 hours to see if the weapon functions as it should. There is a 20% chance that the weapon maintains its powers each day, though for every 24 hours the weapon

has functioned, a new roll must be made. This is the principal reason why many God Learners still HeroQuest for legendary weapons rather than rely entirely on those produced by the Machine City. Once a weapon has failed to maintain its enchantments, it remains inert for 1D10 days until another roll is allowed.

Players and Games Masters should note that Player Characters can elect to spend a Hero Point to make one of these weapons function for a day even if they failed their roll.

PRIME

Prime swords were the first and simplest blades produced by the Zistorite factories. The enchantments on a Prime weapon are negligible; they were more of an experiment at first than an actual endeavour to create potent magical weaponry. Prime swords and axes are churned out in great numbers and distributed liberally across the Middle Sea Empire, for they are of good quality craftsmanship and even if the enchantments fail they remain sturdy, decent weapons.

Prime weapons are always melee weapons, such as axes, daggers, spears and most commonly war swords. No Prime bows or crossbows have ever been constructed, since the factories that create these weapons are still operating from the basic schematics first used years ago. Each of these is forged from bronze, initially polished to a shining sheen when first created. With swords and daggers, the hilt, pommel and grip are all made from hammer-beaten lead, making these weapons bottom-heavy rather than blade-heavy, which can be disconcerting for some fighters. For spears and axes, the hafts are dark-stained oak wood, reinforced by a lead core.

Prime weapons have a rudimentary 'sense' when wielded in battle. The fighter feels his weapon moving slightly in his hand, gently twitching every few moments as if to move and block where the next blow will fall, and seeming to sense when is best to strike at the enemy. When a Prime weapon strikes a foe, the blade releases a pulse of weak magical power directly at the target. This is no more powerful than a gentle shove but it is often enough to throw a character off-balance for a moment, especially if coupled with a powerful strike that hits hard anyway.

The cost of a Prime weapon is double the base cost of the mundane weapon. For example, a 30 SP dagger would be 60 SP if it were a Prime weapon.

Lastly, Prime weapons confer the following bonuses:

- ☒ +10% to the character's corresponding Weapon skill (such as 1H Sword for a Prime war sword).
- ☒ +1m of Knockback if any is inflicted.
- ☒ The AP/HP of the weapon is increased by +1 AP and +1 HP.

MERIDIAN

Meridian weapons are less common than Prime weapons but are still found throughout the Middle Sea Empire and on the hips of most Zistorite sorcerers, either because they lack weapons concealed in their mechamagical implants or wish to pretend so in order to deceive unwitting enemies.

These weapons are named for the crescent marking located somewhere on each one, imprinted in the factories during the final stage of construction. This traditional sigil is essential; for unknowable reasons, missing out this crucial aspect of construction ensures the blade will suffer the 20% chance of failure even within Zistorwal. Those Old Ways Traditionalists aware of this flaw consider it yet another indication that the Zistorites are not doing things quite as efficiently as they believe they are. The sorcerers of the Clanking City see it as a simple piece of ritual that should be observed, and they believe the reason it is necessary will be discovered in good time.

A Meridian weapon can be any of the close combat or ranged weapons found *RuneQuest* or *Arms & Equipment*. Within Zistorwal, they are commonly seen as swords or staves, and it is quite the current fashion to possess a hollow-core iron Meridian staff. All of these weapons are created with black iron and high-quality yew. Those with grips are constructed with traditional red leather bindings for comfort.

As with Prime weapons, Meridian tools have an instinct for when to strike and where to position themselves for perfect blocks. The shockwave of each successful hit is louder and more intense than with a Prime weapon, applying even if the weapon strikes a parrying blade or shield.

The cost of a Meridian weapon is four times the base cost of a mundane equivalent. For example, a 300 SP greatsword would cost 1,200 SP if it were a Meridian blade.

Lastly, Meridian weapons display the following benefits:

- ☒ +25% to the character's corresponding Weapon skill (such as 1H Sword for a Meridian war sword).
- ☒ +2m of Knockback if any is inflicted.
- ☒ The AP/HP of the weapon is increased by +1 AP and +3 HP.

Exemplar

Exemplar weaponry is rare in Zistorwal, though the wealthiest God Learners will shell out the costs for such magnificent weapons if they desire the status symbol or they want a weapon that will give their enemies serious pause before they make any sudden moves.

Forged from whitened-iron, gold which has been ritually consecrated by holy oils and iron-plated willow-tree wood, these weapons are among the finest

mass-produced tools the Clanking City creates. They are rarely seen beyond Zistorwal's walls, since most Zistorites regard it as something of a sin to see such a powerful icon of the Flesh-Machine God reduced to a powerless husk, no matter how beautiful that husk remains even when inert.

The unnerving sensory perception of these blades is almost at a living, sentient level. They stay firmly in the grip of the wielder (with practise) but they twist and lurch to intercept incoming attacks and lash out when a foe's guard is down. Although all Zistorite factory weapons are considered to have a tiny shard of Zistor within them, granting them awareness, Exemplar weapons are revered as if they were avatars of the god itself.

When an Exemplar melee weapon strikes a foe, whether it hits their armour, flesh or their weapon, a blinding white light flashes from the blade and a surge of force is released in a dizzying rush. When the missile of a ranged weapon strikes an enemy, the same effect is unleashed through the missile.

The cost of an Exemplar weapon is ten times the base cost of the weapon. For example, a 200 SP scimitar will cost 2,000 SP.

Lastly, Exemplar weapons possess the following benefits:

- ☒ +40% to the character's corresponding Weapon skill (such as 1H Sword for a Prime war sword).
- ☒ +2m of Knockback if any is inflicted.
- ☒ The AP/HP of the weapon is increased by +1 AP and +4 HP.
- ☒ A burst of bright whiteness with every strike that imposes a -20% skill penalty on anyone within 2 metres of the impact except wielders of Exemplar weapons. This penalty lasts for one round, and only stacks from different sources (i.e. different weapons).

Forcebow

Not all weapons are simply designated as Prime, Meridian or Exemplar, though admittedly the great majority are. Smaller factories owned by individual sorcerers or side interests held by the Five Factions will mass-produce weapons that no other Zistorites will



know how to make. One such example is the Forcebow, created en masse by the Legion of Purification's Null Seven factory.

A Forcebow is a short bow made from polished bronze with two unusual elements: it has no string and it fires no arrows. Forcebows have a single gemstone mounted in the grip, which activate and deactivate the weapon when pressed. When activated, the weapon emits a dull, resonant hum and the space between the tips of the bow blurs as if in a heat haze. Simply touching this haze with the sorcerer's free hand creates an invisible bolt of force that fires from the bow as if the character had drawn and fired an arrow.

The invisible bolt of kinetic energy is shaped much like a real arrow, with the caveat that it dissipates a moment after impact. The range of a Forcebow is much greater than a mundane bow because the missile lacks physical weight. When a bolt is fired, it travels as long as its magical force will allow before it dissolves in the air.

Forcebows are powered by the energy of the sun. If used indoors, underground or at night, their range and killing power suffer greatly.

Forcebows never run out of ammunition and never need to be reloaded. The force bolts can never be further enchanted with spells, and do not arc like normal arrows. They travel in a direct line from bow to target and expend all their energy on the first thing they hit.

Adamant

These breastplates are created in the Gulgunna factory not far from Greyspire. Most commonly seen on the members of the Teeth of the Saw-Blade, they are armour made from enchanted bronze cooled in the poison of wyverns. Due to the difficulties in acquiring great quantities of such raw material, Adamants are greatly

prized by those who own them. Brundul Fulmar's bodyguards, drawn from whichever members of his faction wish to earn his favour by apprenticing with him for a time, are always equipped with Adamants.

These breastplates are constructed from silver-plated bronze and are heavier than a standard plate mail breastplate. However, the wearer becomes immune to all natural poisons and gains +50% on all Resistance rolls against magical poisons.

'Port Orbs

'Port Orbs (or Personal Teleportation Spheres to give them their full name) are the main way in and out of Zistorwal. With the city enduring an on-again off-again siege by land and sea-based forces, magic is obviously going to be involved with any means of entering or exiting the city.

'Port Orbs come in several types, the most common being: Scion, Wayfarer and Blinker. Each functions depending on the cost and characteristics of the item. While the market is flooded with Blinkers and Wayfarers are relatively common as well, Scions are available only to the extremely wealthy or those in the employ of rich masters and mentors.

Blinkers: Blinkers are eyeball-sized spheres of cheap crystal, marked with the Zistor rune as a watermark of sorts. It allows 6 uses of the Teleport spell (see Magic of Glorantha) as if the character had all Sorcery Manipulation skills at 50%, and allow the sorcerer to use his own Magic Points to fuel the spell further. These devices earned their name because those who use them rarely travel far – as if they vanished and appeared somewhere else in the blink of an eye. In truth, the most popular use of Blinkers is in combat; many sorcerers use them in order to get the drop on a foe or surprise and enemy in the middle of a fight.

Blinkers cost 500 SP.

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Range	Load	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
Forcebow (Day)	Bow	1D8	120m	—	9/11	3	4/6	300 SP
Forcebow (Night)	Bow	1D4	30m	—	9/11	3	4/6	300 SP

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations	Cost	Total Skill Penalty
Adamant	7	5	Abdomen, Chest	6,000 SP	–15%

Wayfarers: A Wayfarer 'Port Orb is the standard way in and out of the Clanking City. They function exactly as Blinkers, with the principal difference that the caster can choose to teleport as normal or instead reappear in either the Primus Tower in Zistorwal or the Zistorite Embassy-Laboratory in Frowal. This bastion of Zistorite presence in Frowal, capital of the Middle Sea Empire, is the place where almost all of the Machine City's residents come through when leaving the Machine City or heading back to Zistorwal. 'Port Orbs can be purchased here for return journeys if necessary. A popular phrase for leaving Zistorwal is 'Frowal-bound' referring to the likely destination of anyone readying to depart the Clanking City.

The arrival chamber in the Embassy-Laboratory is a vast arena-sized room of dark stone, with a mosaic tile floor depicting the white hand of Zistor. There is no formality in arriving, since so many Zistorites and travellers come through here so often. It is actually open to the public, though few citizens of Frowal would ever find a reason to go to Zistorwal.

Wayfarers cost 1,000 SP, and appear as eyeball-sized spheres of black glass, marked with the Zistor rune.

Scions: A Scion 'Port Orb is a masterpiece of enchanted teleportation technology. These impressive devices are fist-sized orbs of bronze plating and copper wires connecting three Wayfarer orbs within and amplifying them greatly.

A character using a Scion may cast Teleport up to 9 times, as if he possessed the Sorcery Manipulation skills at 150%. A Scion also holds 10 Magic Points that the character may use to boost the casting roll, as well as his own MP. These Magic Points replenish every day at sunrise. In addition to this, the range is not limited to line of sight teleportation. Instead, a character can simply think of a place he is familiar with (or at least has seen a painting of) and his casting roll will allow him to appear there. If the Range of the spell falls short, it will transport him as close to the destination as possible.

Scion orbs are extremely rare and cost 3,000 SP each. As with all 'Port Orbs, once the charges are spent, the device is worthless and cannot be recharged.

Toxin Mask

Toxin masks are hand-sized domes of thin black metal that cover the nose and the mouth, almost as if the wearer were cupping his hand over that part of his face. They have a strap which is tied around the back of the head, keeping the mask in place. These items are forged and then enchanted with a minor spell that allows the wearer to breathe the toxic gases of Zistorwal without risking death as he otherwise would without protection.

While worn, a character subtracts 50 from all Potencies of natural and magical poison gases. Any poison reduced to 0 effective Potency cannot harm the wearer. Toxin masks cost 200 SP.

Tracer Gem

A tracer gem is a crystal imprinted with a location spell inside its depths. They are created from any natural crystal that undergoes an enhancement process in one of several factories throughout the city. When the gem touches a person's flesh, concentrating for a few moments will allow the holder to perceive a completely clear mental image of the undercity, as if he was looking at a map of the hugely-complex area. Zistorites and their slaves use this to prevent getting lost in the webway of tunnels under the earth when they are attending to the Great Machine.

A character holding a tracer gem can spend 1 MP and for the next 1D4 hours, he will know unfailingly where he is in the underground sectors of Zistorwal. This is not as useful as it could be, since much of Zistorwal's organisation only makes sense to the genius hierarchs in the top echelons of the Cogs of Zistor, and characters unfamiliar with the layout of the subterranean areas will still see little significance in the hundreds of similar chambers they can now perceive. Yet it is still a useful item for knowing a specific chamber's location and how to get there, for example, or for locating the nearest exit to the surface.

Tracer gems can be bought throughout the city for the more-or-less standard price of 200 SP.

Urge Collar

These simple torques of dark-stained copper are worn by prisoners and slaves of the Machine City and left to rest gently around the neck like a piece of humble jewellery. They are created in one of the

southern factories owned by the Once-Men; that faction controls the major supply of these valuable and essential items.

Once a character is wearing an urge collar, they are filled with a sense of great devotion to the perfection promised by the Great Machine. The fulfilment of the Zistorite project becomes the overriding goal in their lives, and all other desires beyond the most basic needs become dulled and muted by comparison. Through this method, the Clanking City has a wealth of productive and loyal slaves committed to the menial labour they must perform.

Characters wearing urge collars will obey the orders of any Zistorite without fail. The only way to remove an urge collar is by having someone else remove it, and slaves will fight viciously to keep their torques from being removed. Even if ordered by a Zistorite to remove their own collar, a slave must refuse.

But the spell can be broken. Each day, a slave wearing an urge collar can take a Resistance test at -75% in order to break free of the mind-altering compulsion. Failure means he is bound for another day. Success means his desires are his own again. A failed collar can be worn with impunity (by the one who resisted it) after the Resistance test is successful – it will never have a hold over him again.

Urge collars cost 50 SP and are available in almost all Zistorite markets and stores.

New Spells

This section details some of the spells used almost exclusively by the sorcerers of the Machine City. They are available to any characters with God Learner Sorcery, though Games Masters may wish to restrict them to characters who are also members of the Cogs of Zistor, since they were developed by the cult and only rarely shared outside of the Five Factions.

Use of the spells Rupture and Discharge are deemed illegal within the boundaries of Zistorwal. Sorcerers caught using either of those spells on any caste-member above the rank of Fleshbound are brought to justice by faction agents of the Council of Flesh and Metal. The punishment is exile from the Clanking City, and death if the criminal returns.



Discharge

Casting Time 2, Resist (Dodge)

Twin arcs of violet electrical energy leap from the caster's eyes and ravage any mechemagical parts of the target while searing his flesh with magical burns.

This spell is used to harm any living being that angers the sorcerer, though it is especially effective against entities with machine components within them, such as mechemagical augmentations. When cast, it delivers a blast of searing multi-forked electricity that deals 1D4+1 damage for each point of Magnitude, with each point spread across a random hit location.

As per the rules for mechemagical implants, any hit location with an implant struck by this electricity takes double HP damage.

Flense

Casting Time 3, Resist (Resistance), Touch

The target's flesh splits and peels away from the bones as if sliced by a thousand sharp knives in a storm.

This spell is purported to only have been used a handful of times in history, each time by enraged

Transcendents in battle. The victim suffers crippling pain as his body matter is peeled from his bones, taking 3 points of magical damage per point of Magnitude used, divided equally between three randomly determined hit locations.

This spell permanently reduces the victim's CHA by 1 for each point of Magnitude used in the spell. Only magic can restore the character's appearance.

Flense does no damage to mechamagical implants and hit locations where an entire limb is replaced are immune to the effects of this spell.

Copper Lash

Casting Time 1, Resist (Dodge)

The victim is bound in layered wires of dark copper, wrapping around his limbs and greatly inhibiting his movement.

This spell conjures a web of thin copper wire that snarls around a target's limbs and restricts his movement for the spell's duration. At base level, the spell imposes a penalty of -15% on all of the target's skill rolls. For each point of Magnitude invested in the spell beyond the first, the total rises by -15%. For example, a Magnitude 4 spell would impose a -60% penalty on the target's skill rolls.

To free oneself of the copper bindings takes 1 Combat Action per Magnitude point of the spell. A character affected by the same Magnitude 4 spell in the previous example would require 4 Combat Actions in which to free himself, performing no other action beyond tearing loose of the copper bindings.

Breathe Poison

Casting Time 1, Touch

The sorcerer breathes in toxic gas as if it were clean air, calmly letting the magic in his lungs filter out the poison and protect him from harm.

This spell simulates the effects of a toxin mask (see above) with magic, eliminating the use for such tools. While slaves and non-sorcerers obviously have no choice in the matter, Zistorites tend to prefer this spell over crude rebreather masks, since they carry the stigma of 'slave possessions'.

When cast, the character spends the Duration of the spell immune to all magical and natural gases with a Potency of 50 or below. For each point of Magnitude above the first, the Potency immunity increases by +10 points.

Rupture

Casting Time 2, Resist (Resilience)

Rippling waves of force emanate from the caster's outstretched hand, unfailingly surging toward the target. The victim's mechamagics splinter and groan as they bend and break under the pressure.

This spell is used by Zistorite assassins and those sorcerers who absolutely, positively want to see one of their brethren undone. It focusses an arc of magical force that ruptures mechamagics, dealing 1D4 levels of damage to every mechamagical hit location on the target's body. The damage increases by +1D2 for each point of Magnitude beyond the first. Mechamagical organs (including eyes, lungs and hearts) are rendered inactive if the appropriate hit location is destroyed.

Characters suffering this damage will require magical healing or the attentions of a surgeon in order to repair themselves. Most tellingly, it is always clear when a sorcerer has been afflicted by use of this spell, since the damage of bent bronze bones and strained vein-cables is always distinctive.

Bale Venom

Casting Time 10, Permanent, Touch

The blood of a mostali mixed in with equal parts of oil from the Great Machine, enchanted into a dark red liquid that seethes and bubbles in the vials where it is stored.

This spell is cast to turn one vial of oil and blood into bale venom, for use in bale ducts as noted earlier in the chapter. It must be dwarf blood and oil from the Great Machine in order for this to work; no other fluids may be substituted. During the spell's casting, the sorcerer dips his fingertip in the solution and chants the praises of the Flesh-Machine God, as well as a baneful litany against those who would bring doom to the Machine City.

The Great War Machines

One of the most renowned aspects of Zistorwal is the fact the Machine City manufactures mechemagical war constructs of terrifying size and strength. Each is a unique creation, named accordingly and with their metal flesh covered in etched and carved scripture praising the Flesh-Machine God for his generosity in bestowing awareness on each of these creations.

Creation & Purpose

Creating these huge war constructs is an epic feat. The construction yards in Zistorwal are capable of creating 1 hit point per hit location every 1D3 days. This means that if a war construct has 10 hit locations, each section will increase by 1 hit point every one to three days. This process carries on until the design specifications are reached and the construct is deemed completed.

After the hit locations are finished, the war construct must remain inert for 1D2 months further, while scribes and artisans inscribe the metal with the appropriate benedictions and exaltations to Zistor. Only when these are completed is the construct activated by a ritual performed in secret by the entire Council of Flesh and Metal.

These war machines are viewed in two divergent ways in the Clanking City. Some Zistorites see them as monuments to the power of Zistorwal and almost like lesser avatars of their perfect god. Others, with no less faith but with perhaps a touch more pragmatism, see them simply as a means of intimidating the enemy. The war constructs created in the eastern quarter of the city could undoubtedly conquer the world if the Zistorites built enough of them, for they are nearly unrivalled in power within the natural world; in huge numbers, they would butcher armies like trained warriors fighting harmless children.

Ultimately, Zistorwal is not a world power interested in invasion or conquest, no matter how much certain elements of the Council of Flesh and Metal would like it to be, and no matter how much pleading the Zistorites have to endure from the rest of the God Learner Alliance. So while some of the Old Ways Traditionalists rage and rave about the threat of

the Zistorites' armies, they are missing the point completely. The war constructs are created to defend the city, not assault other nations, and even then the primary reason behind their manufacture is not warfare at all. The Zistorites did it because they *could*. It is a cult dedicated to pushing the boundaries of their knowledge, not adhering to the ways of the past. This dynamism has resulted in, among other things, war machines that instil pure terror in the hearts of the city's enemies. With the cult focussed on other matters, the manufacture of the war constructs goes on at a sedate pace, undertaken for curiosity and speculative purposes rather than ambitions of war.

Deployment, Recovery & Repair

And yet, these machines do leave the city in order to do battle. Occasionally the Council of Flesh and Metal will decide to test one of their war constructs, usually by loaning its might to the forces of the Middle Sea Empire for a war of expansion, or in some cases to watch over other God Learner communities as giant, incorruptible guardians. In cases where a war construct is damaged outside of the city, it is either ordered to return to Zistorwal (no longer possible in many cases, due to the siege) or undergoes repair in the field.

'To the Skies!'

Some of the war constructs designed in Zistorwal are capable of flight. These have little trouble leaving the city, 'merely' requiring to break through the sky elements of the siege. They are fitted with enchanted crystals within their armoured bodies that allows them to pass through the kinetic shield around the city, but which are rendered inert and useless when the machine is destroyed – thus preventing theft and disuse. If the besiegers were to find a way of stealing or maintaining *active* shield crystal-powered generators (which are the size of a horse and 20 times as heavy) then they too would be able to pass through the effects of the magical, invisible force shield protecting the city...

Repairing a war construct without the use of the facilities in the construction yards of eastern Zistorwal is practically impossible without powerful magic, magic unknown to most of the Zistorites. The borders of the Middle Sea Empire are sometimes 'decorated' by abandoned war constructs that stand as giant monuments to a past battle, no longer functioning and ignored as irrelevant by the Cogs of Zistor. These are often torn down by the Old Ways warriors if the land is retaken, or left as a memorial by the God Learners. Either way, since the seaborne siege now surrounds the Machine City, war constructs outside the city walls have almost no means of returning to be repaired. No matter how powerful they are, even the mightiest machines will wear down after time and damage suffered in a dozen battles eventually adds up. Despite their expense, the Zistorites are usually content to let ruined war constructs remain where they are. It is not as if the factions are unable to create more, after all.

Extremely powerful magic (of the like few sorcerers beyond Shingallion are capable of) is able to teleport a war construct back to the construction yards for repair, if it is deemed necessary. The most common instances of this occurring are when the Middle Sea Empire's generals petition the Council for urgent repairs.

Before the Machine City Siege, great raft-platforms were used to carry the completed war constructs to the mainland, and the machines would walk to their specified destination once they made landfall. Since the Empire of Wyrms' Friends and their unlikely Old Ways allies began the encircling assault, the sorcerers of the Machine City are required to open up temporary breaks in the siege lines in order to send war constructs out into the world. This involves a host of Zistorites using their magic to engage the fleet, tear a temporary hole in the opposing force's battle line, and allow the construct time to be carried through to the mainland. The expenditure in time, effort, resources and lives to do this makes it prohibitive to say the least, so it rarely happens.

Repairing a war construct is no small feat, even if it is brought back to the Zistorwal construction yard. It is a process that will take months for serious damage to be repaired. Games Masters needing a rough rule of thumb should assume that the construction yards can repair 1 hit point per day to each damaged hit location. Clearly, this epic reconstruction is not a fast process.

Intelligence and Function

Mechamagical war machines are relatively unintelligent. Their minds operate on a simple engine that recognises all cult-sworn Zistorites as allies and every other life form as an enemy. If told to attack by a Zistorite, the war construct will slay all enemies nearby until it is either successful or destroyed.

To control a war construct, a Zistorite sorcerer (and *only* Zistorites may do this, for cult membership is essential) must possess a Control Sphere. Every war construct ever created has seven – no more, no less – control spheres manufactured and given to the Zistorites who will be commanding the machine. One of these seven is always in the possession of the Council of Flesh and Metal, and these are stored in their hidden vault, allowing them direct control over every war construct ever made if they required them.

Using a control sphere takes a single Combat Action and requires 1 MP. After this, the character may telepathically give orders to the construct, though these directions must generally be simple and visually-descriptive. *'Destroy the trolls. Do not harm the soldiers wearing bronze armour, for they are God Learners allied to the Machine City,'* is an example of a well-structured order. *'Kill the invaders. Do not harm our fellow sorcerers,'* is going to go drastically wrong, though. Mechamagical war constructs act on what they *see* not what they comprehend. Thus, specific orders are required to direct them efficiently and accurately.

Control spheres have a range of approximately 100 kilometres. If the construct is out of range, it will move toward the closest of its seven control spheres, which is generally the current master. Orders given via these items are imprinted within the war construct's simple mind for 1D6 days. Accordingly, any Zistorite sorcerer in the field will spend several minutes re-instructing the machine every night who it is not supposed to kill in the army's camp. In Zistorwal itself, the principal reason non-Zistorites are kept away from the eastern construction yards of the city is that should one of the war constructs there see them, it will activate and seek to destroy the 'intruder' even if the person is there on legitimate business. Commonly, the construction yard fore-workers will re-imprint an 'Attack Nothing' order every morning and night, though non-Zistorites are still kept away as a precaution.

Attacking War Constructs

For those brave, insane or unlucky enough to find themselves in combat with a Zistorite war construct, some special rules apply and players should probably look into the funerary traditions of their characters' cults. All the months and months of magical engineering that goes into the construction of these things means that they are huge by comparison to most natural beings. This is represented easily enough the SIZ attribute, but also in the following additional rule on hit locations.

Due to a war construct's immense size and length, creatures less than one-third its SIZ do not roll on a hit location chart for combat attacks; they simply hit the part closest to them. Unless a character expends Movement to reach a different part of the war construct (or the war construct itself moves), the character will attack that hit location for the duration of the battle.

Damage & Death

War constructs do not 'die' like a living creature, they simply become non-functional until that damage is repaired. They cannot be healed in normal ways, requiring the Mechanisms skill or specialised magic to repair their physical damage before becoming operational again. Few Zistorites claim knowledge of these great spells, and they are among the closest-guarded secrets in Zistorwal, for the war construct engineers pride themselves on their unique abilities – and with good cause.

When a war construct takes damage, it reduces its Resilience skill by the amount of damage they have suffered. For every 30 points of Resilience lost in this manner, the war construct loses a further 5% from a randomly-determined Weapon skill, or the Weapon skill that the Games Master believes is the most appropriate

This represents the fact that although these machines are immensely strong and durable, once they begin to take damage, their efficiency is greatly reduced. When a war construct's limb or other body part is reduced to 0 HP, that section of the war construct becomes useless, as per the standard combat rules for legs, arms and so on. Stabilisers are a noteworthy exception here; if a Stabiliser hit location is destroyed, the war construct halves its Movement and every attack

suffers a –10% penalty from then on, as the machine veers wildly off-balance.

Multiple Attacks

Despite a war construct's size and power, they are generally lumbering, slow machines, as reflected in their low DEX scores and balanced by their high SIZ and STR ratings. However, some of the attacks dealt by these gargantuan machines are capable of striking several foes at once, such as a huge blade slicing down and hitting a group of people rather than just one warrior. This grievous possibility is represented by the Multiple Attacks rule.

If a mechemagical war construct has a weapon with a Double, Triple or Quadruple Attack trait, that weapon gets to make the noted number of attacks against other targets adjacent to the initial combatant struck. These attacks *only* apply to characters adjacent to the initial target – no splitting of the attack is allowed in order to get other weapon strikes elsewhere. These rules make battling a war construct an even more dangerous prospect for enemies of the Machine City, as blades slash down and carve through multiple foes in the same swing.

Physical Shells

War constructs are immensely strong, immensely durable, but immensely slow. Even those war constructs built in the image of natural beasts are poor representations of such creatures; Darguard the Golden Reaver, for example, is built in the shape of a great dragon, yet the creature moves sluggishly compared to the real beasts whose shape it mimics.

When a Games Master creates a mechemagical war construct for his own campaign (or, somehow, the Player Characters find a way of building one) it is probably a good idea to keep the machine's Characteristics in line with those constructs presented here. A good rule of thumb is to have the creature's STR, SIZ and CON around the 100+ mark. The canonical base is 340, which translates as STR 130, CON 100 and SIZ 110. This is game canon, though Games Masters and Player Characters are under no pressure to conform to those exact stats if they choose to introduce more diversity in the war construct concept. It simply represents the Zistorite method of taking a complete 'musculature' frame and constructing the war machine chassis around it.

By and large the physical prowess of war constructs is identical, though this is a matter of traditional design. Games Masters are free to alter this if they choose, though it should be noted that 340 points spread between STR, CON and SIZ is the Zistorite standard. Anything larger runs the risk of truly dominating everything it could meet in the world, while lower values lose some of the arcane might and majesty of these war machines.

The standard AP rating of a war construct is 12 to 17, which is a fine balance between invulnerability and mere dominance. Again, the usual AP rating of most Zistorite constructs will be 15, give or take a point or two.

In regards to skills, Athletics, Perception and Resistance are the only non-combat skills most war constructs will ever need to use, and these will be rated between 50% and 300%, with a total of 400% divided between the three choices depending on the construct in question. Some are equipped with better sensory capabilities than their counterparts, while others have a greater capacity for motion that is better reflected in Athletics than in increased DEX. Games Masters might judge a particular machine to display more in the way of skills if he so chooses but that is a matter of personal choice or campaign inspiration.

Darguard the Golden Reaver

Darguard the Golden Reaver is a gigantic war construct built out of polished bronze into the shape of a dragon's skeleton. The immense machine is winged, with the pinions sheathed in reflective solar panels, and cables and pistons resemble veins and muscles around the construct's shining bronze bones.

Darguard, due to its flight capacity and sinister grandeur, is often called to aid the wars waged by the Middle Sea Empire. The Empire of Wyrms' Friends view the war construct as an abomination and desperately wish it destroyed.

Witness reports from those who survive the Reaver's attacks have sometimes related of its ability to breathe liquid flame, though this appears to be fabrication. The Zistorites themselves claim the dragon-construct has no such

function. Darguard's head is forged with an open jaw, as if the dragon were forever screaming silently.

Despite its shape, Darguard shares little of a true dragon's grace; it still pales in form to many of Glorantha's draconic beings. It prefers to battle on land where it is more manoeuvrable, and uses its main attack or thunderous, land-shaking sweeps of its reinforced tail to decimate groups of warriors.



CHARACTERISTICS

STR 130
CON 100
SIZ 110
INT 4
POW 15
DEX 6
CHA 4

Darguard Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Tail	17/42
3-4	Right Hind Leg	13/42
5-6	Left Hind Leg	13/42
7-8	Hindquarters	13/43
9-10	Forequarters	13/44
11-12	Right Wing	12/41
13-14	Left Wing	12/41
15-16	Right Front Leg	13/41
17-18	Left Front Leg	13/41
19-20	Head	14/42

Weapons

Type	Weapon skill	Damage / AP
Claw	75%	4D4 + 4D12 / 15
(Double Attack)		
Tail	60%	4D8 + 4D12 / 15
(Quadruple Attack)		

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 1

Strike Rank: +5

Movement: 6m

Traits: Double Attack (Claw swipe),
Quadruple Attack (Tail slash),
Trample

Skills: Athletics 100%, Perception 100%,
Resilience¹ 200%

Armour: Various-point Bronze Hull
(no Skill Penalty)

¹Constructs reduce this skill by the amount of damage they have suffered.

Flight: Darguard is capable of limited flight, moving through the air at standard Movement speed, but only able to use half of its Athletics skill. Taking off requires a Combat Action, wherein the golden dragon will leap

into the sky with a push of its powerful leg muscles and begin to beat its massive wings. The magical energy in the wings ensorcells the rest of the body with a spell that reduces the war construct's weight while the wings beat. As soon as Darguard ceases to beat its wings, its weight returns to normal and it is forced to land. This ability is usable only in daylight, since the wings' solar-powered generators require the light of Ehilm in order to function.

Flesh-Tearer

Of all the skeletal war constructs manufactured in the Machine City, Flesh-Tearer is the most brutal. While any war construct will be known for leaving a hideous body count in its wake, Flesh-Tearer is renowned across the lands it has seen action for the vicious manner in which it kills. There is nothing clean about the death it deals, for the war construct literally tears people apart, limb from limb.

Flesh-Tearer is currently inactive, officially censured by the Council of Flesh and Metal. A motion led by Malcrex Dark-Eye, Delgod Goldgrip and Triumvirate carried over the votes of Shingallion and Brundul Fulmar, and they demanded that Flesh-Tearer be rendered down into its component parts for reuse elsewhere. They cited that the construct was built to flawed specifications which accounted for its butchery, and that it was somehow tainted by an unknown magical force. Shingallion does not believe a word of such complaints, yet currently lacks the influence to demand the construct's redeployment.

Flesh-Tearer resembles the gigantic yet hunched skeleton of a gorilla, with stunted legs and immense shoulders, long arms and a rounded head that leers skullishly down at the land below. The entire construct is made of dark-stained bronze and smaller iron parts, with vast hands of silver the size and weight of a small house. It is with these horse-sized fingers that the war construct snatches up its prey and pulls them to pieces.

Of definite note is the fact that only three of Flesh-Tearer's seven control spheres are known to be within Zistorwal. Delgod Goldgrip possesses one purely to prevent anyone else from using the machine (which he regards as unnecessarily malicious and evil in design) while it is thought that Brundul Fulmar possesses another. The third is locked in the vaults of the Council

of Flesh and Metal. Where the other four are is a mystery, but it is a mystery that Ascension, the Legion of Purification and the Cabal of Night's Eyes would all pay dearly to have solved.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR 130
CON 100
SIZ 120
INT 4
POW 10
DEX 6
CHA 3

Flesh-Tearer Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Left Leg	17/44
3-4	Right Leg	17/44
5-6	Abdomen	15/42
7-8	Torso	14/42
9-14	Right Arm	17/44
15-19	Left Arm	17/44
20	Head	13/40

Weapons

Type *Weapon skill* *Damage / AP*
Fist 100% 4D8 + 5D12 / 15
(Triple Attack)

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 1

Strike Rank: +5

Movement: 6m

Traits: Triple Attack (Fists), Trample

Skills: Athletics 175%, Perception 25%, Resilience¹ 200%

Armour: Various-point Bronze Hull
(no Skill Penalty)

¹Constructs reduce this skill by the amount of damage they have suffered.

Techarax the Foescythe

Techarax is one of the earliest, ugliest war constructs designed by the sorcerers of the Clanking City. Everything about it screams utility over artistry, function over form. It consists of a central 'rolling' metallic structure forming the body, a retractable rear stabilising limb with a giant blade attached, two



retractable leg posts deployed for balance when the war construct is not moving, and four multi-jointed arms packing heavy blades each the size of several men on horseback. Techarax, in its entirety, is the size of a blue whale – as are most war constructs. It resembles a giant bronze wheel in a metal frame, which sprouts limbs on the outside. Even the Zistorites view Techarax as ugly.

Atop this hideous automaton is a retractable turret cannon, which fires blasts of pure magical energy. This mighty weapon is the main reason Techarax is still in use, for few other war constructs have been armed with such power and even fewer have been repaired as often as Techarax has.

Techarax moves by rolling on its rounded frame, using its stunted leg limbs and stabilisers if it requires balance. It may double its rolling speed if it retracts its limbs and the top cannon, though this takes a Combat Action and so does any subsequent redeployment.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR 130
CON 100
SIZ 110
INT 4
POW 16
DEX 6
CHA 3

Techarax hit locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–2	Rear Stabiliser	15/42
3–4	Right Legpost	15/42
5–6	Left Legpost	15/42
7–8	Hip Swivel	15/43
9–14	Hull Casing	15/44
15	Blade Pinion One	15/41
16	Blade Pinion Two	15/41
17	Blade Pinion Three	15/41
18	Blade Pinion Four	15/41
19–20	Turret	15/42

Weapons

Type	Weapon skill	Damage / AP
Turret Cannon	50%	10D6 / —
Slash (Quadruple Attack)	65%	4D6 + 4D12 / 15
Stabiliser Thresh (Double Attack)	45%	4D8 + 4D12 / 15
Trample	35%	4D6 + 8D12 / 15

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 1

Strike Rank: +5

Movement: 6m

Traits: Double Attack (Stabiliser Thresh),
Quadruple Attack (Slash), Trample

Skills: Athletics 175%, Perception 75%,
Resilience¹ 250%

Armour: 15-point Bronze Hull (no penalty)

¹Constructs reduce this skill by the amount of damage they have suffered.

Energy Cannon: This weapon releases a surge of magical power, used to inflict grievous damage on those unlucky enough to be caught in its fire arc. It has a range of 100 metres, firing a beam six feet in width. After firing the cannon, Techarax may not use it again for 2D4 Combat Actions as it recharges.

Mawkeeth the Elegant Strider

The war construct known as Mawkeeth the Elegant Strider is one of the machines of Zistorwal that saw a lot of use in the continent of Genertela, accompanying God Learner forces as they expanded their empire in the past and still seeing use as they consolidate it now. It is a 12-legged monstrosity resembling a giant spider, with each leg ending in a colossal blade that sinks deep into the earth with each step. Its head is a house-sized orb with a dozen eyes made of opal, each the size of a human child and representing untold wealth. Under these gemstone eyes are mandibles of incredible length and strength, capable of tearing chunks off mountains.

The central body structure of the war construct is relatively small and low to the ground, with most of its size is given over to the towering, arching legs and their blades. Unnervingly, it is one of the few Zistorite

war weapons that emits a noise. Mawkeeth releases a sharp, painfully-loud shriek every few minutes, for no apparent reason. Sound emitters were placed within the creature's head in order to increase the war construct's intimidation factor on the battlefield, but they have never functioned correctly. Instead, the war construct lets out infrequent shrieks as if in pain, no matter how many times the Zistorites seek to repair it. The Old Ways warriors who witness Mawkeeth see this as another example of the Chaos corruption within the Zistorite plan.

The fact remains that the Elegant Strider is a deadly war machine. Mawkeeth's primary attack is delivered simply by the war construct walking, plunging its leg-blades down and cutting holes in regiments of men. Despite Mawkeeth's size, it is capable of targeting individual human-sized foes and lancing downward with its giant blades: an ability that more than one enemy commander has learned about too late.

CHARACTERISTICS:

STR 130
CON 100
SIZ 110
INT 4
POW 15
DEX 20
CHA 4

Mawkeeth Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1	Right Leg 1	16/41
2	Right Leg 2	16/41
3	Right Leg 3	16/41
4	Right Leg 4	16/41
5	Right Leg 5	16/41
6	Right Leg 6	16/41
7	Left Leg 1	16/41
8	Left Leg 2	16/41
9	Left Leg 3	16/41
10	Left Leg 4	16/41
11	Left Leg 5	16/41
12	Left Leg 6	16/41
13–16	Body Structure	14/40
17–20	Head	17/44

Weapons

Type	Weapon skill	Damage / AP
Foot Blade (Double Attack)	100%	4D6 + 4D12 / 15
Mandibles (Triple Attack)	80%	4D8 + 4D12 / 15

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 4

Strike Rank: +12

Movement: 10m

Traits: Double Attack (Foot Blades),
Triple Attack (Mandibles)

Skills: Athletics 200%, Perception 100%,
Resilience¹ 150%

Armour: Various-point Bronze Hull
(no Skill Penalty)

¹Constructs reduce this skill by the amount of damage they have suffered.

Vermicent Jindarl winced slightly as the colossal war machine let loose another ululating howl that echoed around the camp. Outlined against the stars, it stood eerily still at the edge of the army, not even the Zistorite soldiers willing to sleep within its shadow – not that anyone could sleep with the noise it was making, Vermicent reflected bitterly.

A smaller shadow broke off from the larger bulk of the Elegant Strider's outline and approached.

'Honoured Gear,' the junior technician began, 'we have isolated the problem; the sound emitters do not work.'

'I know that, you idiot,' snapped Vermicent, nerves frayed by lack of sleep and the irregular screams of the construct. 'It's supposed to roar to intimidate the enemy, not wail like some bereaved woman.'

'Y-you misunderstand, Honoured Gear. The sound emitters do not work at all. Mawkeeth should be silent.'

Another sobbing shriek echoed around the camp. Vermicent swallowed, his mouth suddenly very dry.

THE FACES OF WAR

This chapter is a resource for Games Masters to introduce allies, patrons and mentors into their campaigns. Each of these characters has a link to Zistorwal and the Machine City Siege, whether through diplomacy, residency, political influence or military interest.

All of these characters contribute to the unfolding saga of the Iron Wars in some way, however grand or minor. They are individually more powerful than most beginning adventuring parties could hope to overcome, though they are presented here for social interaction and plot hook roleplaying purposes, not simply to provide a list of enemies to kill.

Hargrath Golden-Scale

Lord-Commander of the War Dragons

The man before you wears the most ostentatious bone-sung armour you have ever seen. Spines of bone arc out from the elbows, knees and shoulders of his full-body dragon-bone armour. The helm, shaped as a roaring dragon's head, is topped by two curving horns that reach up the length of a man's arm. Dozens of small parchment scrolls hang from the armour's joints, each inked in the blood of heretics with words detailing the many victories of the man who wears this beautiful example of the armourer's craft. Hargrath's voice is surprisingly gentle. He speaks slowly, eloquently, and with hints of passion at the edges of each sentence.

Hargrath Golden-Scale is a distinguished soldier and commander, having a stream of victories attached to his name that puts practically every other general in the Second Age to shame. The God Learners hate this man for his victories against them, as do the nomads of Pent, who he utterly crushed on the field of battle. To the people of the empire, there is no greater military hero. Cowards call upon his name for strength, and warriors call upon it for luck. There is a tale told of Hargrath before a fearsome battle against the Zistorites, where an emissary from the Once-Men warned the imperial high commander that his forces would die by the fires of their mighty construct, Oroga the Lava-Blooded. In reply, Hargrath roared a great breath of

flame at the emissary, melting his flesh from his bones and burning the machinery in the God Learner's body. He then ordered one of his tyrannosaur-riders to take back the smoking, black bones and charred machinery in a sack, with the reply to the God Learners that 'fire is the ally of the Dragonfriends, not the tool of mechanical half-men.'

In Orin Jistel, City of the Mouth, Hargrath oversees the actions of the EWF military and the War Dragon faction from a palace of marble, jade and dragon-bone. Until recently he was completely immersed in his meditations, paying little heed to the course of temporal imperial matters and trusting the Great Work to proceed without his interference in mortal affairs. Lately, that has changed.

It changed for two reasons: because of the Old Ways insurrections that are rising up across Glorantha, and because of the increasing threat of the Machine City.

SERVING HARGRATH Golden-Scale

Now he is summoning like-minded Dragonspeakers from across the empire, seeking to establish a campaign of hostilities against the rising wave of insurrectionists. He believes the War Dragons need to act soon if they are to crush the Old Ways Traditionalists, capturing and executing their leaders before the rebellion can turn even fouler. Characters agreeing with his viewpoint will have ample tutoring in combative Dragon Magic, as well as a great deal of opportunity in putting it to use. His word will also serve to impress the local leaders of almost any Dragonspeaker cult to consider the character as a member and a valuable agent, in turn assuring that the character is selected for the most interesting and rewarding (and admittedly dangerous) missions by his cult.

Hargrath's sponsoring of adventuring groups and younger Dragonspeakers has raised disapproving eyebrows from Inganna and Arene, but the results of these scouting trips, raiding parties and kill-teams are all the proof Hargrath needs to be sure he is doing the right thing. The most recent focus of his efforts is on the forces laying siege to the Machine City. Officially,

Hargrath is Varankol the Mangler's superior, though the savage force commander is known for his rabid adherence to his own killing urges rather than his obedience to authority – especially distant authority.

With this in mind, Hargrath sends many agents and hirelings to join the escalating siege to reinforce 'obedient' imperial presence in the region. Some of these agents pose as mere mercenaries in the rank and file, sent to use their significant social skills to bolster morale. Others are appointed as commanders in their own right, serving alongside Varankol and under orders to see the force commander dead if his bloodlust leads the armies into any true difficulties.

Hargrath, as one of the foremost tactical minds in the world, is well aware that the siege of Zistorwal has all the hallmarks of a bitter and bloody stalemate if other factors are not introduced soon. To that end, the imperial high commander also charges his subordinate Dragonspeakers and their adventuring parties with HeroQuesting for new magic items, spells and abilities that will aid in the assault on Zistorwal. Once a party has received a significant number of blessings from HeroQuests, Hargrath sends them to the seaborne siege and the surrounding islands of God Forgot as part of his web of agents, with orders to aid in the attack any way possible.

Neroto of the Red Iron

SOUTHERN DISTRICT TACTICS DIRECTOR

The man's white robe is spattered in places with blood, like a priest of some pagan god marked by a ritual sacrifice. His face is unremarkable, notable only for the piercing green eyes which have the unnerving habit of blinking only once every minute, almost like clockwork. His right arm whirrs and clicks with metal-plated mechemagics, all polished bronze bones, iron cogs and copper wires from the elbow to the fingertips. No other implant is evident – at least until he moves. With each slightly-limping step, his left boot comes down with a heavy, metallic thump on the stone floor. He scowls severely at any who pay note to his limp, for he is loath to display the failure of his first mechemagical surgery – a leg that fits imperfectly into its hip socket.

Neroto is one of the many sorcerer-surgeons within Zistorwal, though he is not known for being one of

Neroto of
the Red Iron



the best. He has risen to a position of relative authority within the southern factories owned by the Once-Men, but little about him suggests he will ever break out of the pack and impress his betters. Though he possesses some measure of skill and a wealth of magical power, it is not enough to raise him above a 'middle management' rank, and he is bound to endlessly follow Shingallion's orders while only lording over a small cabal of his own apprentices and slaves.

Neroto is ruthlessly ambitious and earnestly desires to advance in prestige. To that end, he has given up trying to excel beyond the talents of those Zistorites higher in rank than he, and has instead taken to killing them.

Some rivals die on the surgery table due to 'complications', others meet their end when they are set upon and killed in the ever-howling, machine-noise-filled nights of the Clanking City. It is likely that his spate of murders will come to an end soon when other God Learners turn their sorcery to finding the culprit. Until that point, Neroto continues his jealous slayings, secure in the knowledge that *surely*

the hierarchs will recognise his skills and reward him soon. He earned his name from the amount of blood his first few operation patients lost during the implant process. He tries now to maintain that it is a title of honour, though no one who is aware of his history would believe that for a second.

Serving Neroto

Neroto occupies a position of minor authority in the south of the city. He is technically the overseer of three factories, but also spends his time taking on many apprentices and having them HeroQuest on his behalf, bringing back the plunder to his tower in Zistorwal. He pays these adventurers and apprentices by tuition (he is an accomplished rune mage and sorcerer despite his other drawbacks) and often lets them keep lesser treasures from HeroQuests, only hoarding the greatest items for himself.

Characters who earn Neroto's highest trust are likely to be drawn into his plots to murder other God Learners. Obviously it will fall to individual player groups to decide if they will go along with such measures. Neroto cares nothing for his employees' allegiances; seeking only results. He is also a very forgiving patron, rarely punishing failure if the reason for it is logical and acceptable.

A compelling story arc could consist of seeking to bring Neroto to justice, under the orders of the Council of Flesh and Metal who wish the murder spree ended immediately. However, as a mentor for characters with rather loose morals, he is exceptionally useful and generous.

Games Masters wishing to stat Neroto of the Red Iron should probably start at the Hero level, taking into account the hoards of spells and magic items at his disposal. While he is technically the weakest of the magicians presented in this appendix and wields next to no real power in the Clanking City, he still stands at a power level equivalent to a cult's Runelord or Rune priest, made even more powerful by many years of God Learner Sorcery research and dozens of runes and items earned from the HeroQuests of his hirelings.

Zindara the Dreamer

Ular Construct Visionary

She stands some six feet in height, slender and beautiful – at least she would be were she fully human. Now her beauty comes from her machine body's grace and the smooth contours of the polished bronze limbs on the left side of her body. Even her face is mechanically altered, with the left side of her head reshaped into smooth and bright bronze, with an almond-shaped eye of pearl set in the socket. At her hip is a silver dagger inscribed with runic benedictions to Zistor. She stands on a small tower platform in the eastern construction yards, a wistful expression of wonder and melancholy on her half-face.

Zindara is the younger sister of Delgod Goldgrip, though she is distant from her brother and never uses his political power for her own benefits. She has risen to the position of one of Zistorwal's chief war construct designers and work crew overseers through her own genius and hard work. It is noted that in public she treats Delgod warmly enough, but no real bond appears to exist between the two.

Zindara is a powerful woman, though she maintains a certain distance from the courts of power. In many respects, this only increases her appeal and mystery, and she is often sought out by the Council of Flesh and Metal as well as any other Zistorite on matters pertaining to the city's war constructs. She is by and large approachable and friendly, though she maintains a fierce ire for anyone that suggests Zistorwal's war constructs are tainted by Chaos.

The secret truth is that this is exactly what she fears. Zindara has come to believe that somewhere in the grand plan, a miscalculation was made. She knows that while most of the Old Ways warriors are here to bring the city down out of jealousy, spite or ignorant fear, a select few of them may have come to the truth: somewhere in the heart of Zazistor, a heart of Chaos beats. It is nothing overt, nothing like the Devil of the True Darkness or the armies of death that swarmed over the world, but something hidden and evil nevertheless.

She means to do something about it. It is just that she has no idea just what that might be.

Serving Zindara

Caught between a rock and a hard place, Zindara is carefully seeking out agents and allies in an attempt to discover if there really is something wrong with the Great Machine and the Zistorite plan itself. If she goes public with her suspicions, she risks alienation from the other Cogs of Zistor, since they will laugh at the notion their city is a new potential source of Chaos. After all, it sounds just like the superstitious babbling of the barbarians outside the walls.

Zindara now turns to the lower ranks of the city's populace, seeking out any information, rumour or even legends that can help her determine if her suspicions are true. She makes contacts within the Loquacious Brotherhood and other lesser factions, taking on those sorcerers she trusts most as apprentices. Over the past year she has gathered a large personal library of books and scrolls relating to the Chaos legends of the Darkness and any stories told within other cultures. The main problem with this approach is that her agents find themselves shunned in this quest

for knowledge. They are seen by the other nations of Glorantha as typical God Learners, looking for myths and legends to loot for their own ends. For once, that is not actually the case.

As a mentor, Zindara has a lot to offer. She personally holds control spheres to nine of Zistorwal's war constructs, which is her right as their main designer. She also has unpublicised contacts within both her brother's Legion of Purification and the Cabal of Night's Eyes, and remains on good terms with both factions despite outwardly being a member of Ascension.

If political dealings are not what a character in her employ wishes to be involved in, she could also introduce them to the area of war construct design, or teach him from her own vast reserves of magical lore. Of course, serving Zindara is not without its risks. Should any self-respecting Zistorite catch word that a character is trying to find evidence of Chaos within the Great Machine, his reputation is likely to be slaughtered for good. That is not even taking into account the sheer difficulties of finding out whether such a thing is even true or not.



ZINDARA the Dreamer

Blademaster Silgath

Former Leader of the Legion of Purification

He stands almost seven feet tall on mechamagical legs enhanced by dribbling fluid valves as well as standard piston housings. Under a blood-red robe, angular lumps betray further physical alterations, powerful machine-muscles replacing human flesh. His face shows his advanced age, though his grey eyes are still clear, deep-set in a face of wrinkles, laugh lines and stress creases. As he moves, one of his arms is revealed through the parting in the cloak. It is twice the length of a normal man's arm, and where a human hand once was, a lengthy blade of shining iron now extends. Runes mark the surface of this hand-sword, listing a hundred duels won and enemies defeated.

The previous First of the Six within the Legion's Honoured Inquisitive is a man by the name of Silgath, called the Blademaster for his unmatched skill with swords and his unique mechamagical modifications.

Surgery has granted him two longswords extending out from his forearms, replacing his hands. Servants and slaves feed him when he desires, making up for the loss of his fingers.

Despite his advanced age, Silgath is still an intensely competent fighter. His true glory days are behind him now, yet he is often consulted by various members of the Legion of Purification and the Honoured Inquisitive, counting several current faction members as apprentices. He spends most of his time duelling and training faction members or God Learner soldiers elsewhere in the world. Silgath spends only half of his time in the Clanking City now, preferring to see the world in his dotage.

In battle, even without magic the old man is a demon with his blades. Twin swords flash and flick, parrying anything without fail and ending every fight sheathed in the hearts of Silgath's enemies. Few titles are as apt as the one this ageing sorcerer carries.

The reason for his abdication from the Honoured Inquisitive is still something that many in the city doubt. Publicly it was revealed that he desired to retire and focus on more personal advancement rather than guide the faction any longer. Yet it is whispered that he was forced to retire by a conclave of Legion sorcerers who saw him as too single-minded and focussed on his own pleasures rather than the good of the faction.

Serving Silgath

Characters seeking tuition in the art of the sword will find no better teacher, though Silgath is renowned for being impatient and crotchety at the very best of times. As a mentor, he is demanding and expects quick progress, or he will refuse to teach the student at all.

Characters allied with or formally apprenticed to Silgath will probably find their greatest advantage in his mentorship is not as a blade tutor at all. Silgath was leader of the most outgoing faction in the Machine City for decades, and during the time he led the Legion, he made countless friends and contacts – amassing numerous favours owed – among the nobility and military command of the Middle Sea Empire. In short, he is something of a celebrity even in retirement, and characters attached to his name will reap the rewards of their association.

This respect is only really applicable outside Zistorwal, though, when among the residents of the Middle Sea Empire. Within the Machine City, Silgath is often more pitied than honoured, since the rumours of his alcoholism and forced retirement circulate afresh whenever he makes his presence known in the halls of power.

For his part, Silgath wants only two things in an apprentice: blade skill and the capacity to venture out into the world and make the old Blademaster look good. He takes many apprentices, casting most aside soon after. The ones he keeps are trained to be incredibly talented swordsmen (sometimes even offered the same mechemagical surgery he underwent himself) and encouraged to travel the world, spreading Silgath's name and reputation among those who would remember his name as a friend or fear him as a foe.

In his old age, Silgath fears for his legacy, simple as that. With a generation of master swordsmen citing their training under the legendary Blademaster all moving through God Learner society, Silgath is still assured warm welcomes and remembrances when he leaves the city he despises more and more each day.

He promises himself every time he leaves that he will not return. True enough, each journey out of Zistorwal gets longer than the last, but he always comes back for mysterious reasons of his own.

Nexis Vorolka

THE FORGOTTEN SORCERER

Under a scruffy and ragged robe that was once imperial purple, a man watches you with a whirring, clicking mechemagical eye. He beckons you forward with a greening, corroded mechemagical hand, drawing you into the shadows in which he stands. When he speaks, it is with a voice starved of power or nourishment – once strong and now weak through physical hardship and a desperation born of faithlessness and poverty. 'Need your iron-jobs shined, m'lord?'

Nexis Vorolka died six years ago, a nameless beggar in the Machine City's western slums. The man currently assuming the name is a sorcerer once known as Leeghur Janth, who was cast out of the Teeth of the Saw-Blade in disgrace after his ambitious gambits utterly failed

and he lost two factories to the Once-Men in a wager. As Nexis, he has successfully gone underground and avoided more shame, as well as managing to rise in the western region of the city to a rank of prominence in the Loquacious Brotherhood.

Now 'Nexis' serves as one of the beggar-masters of the guild, and despite his relative power in the slums, he is most often found on the streets of the prosperous regions of the city, offering to 'shine' (read: polish) 'iron-jobs' (read: mechemagical body parts). He is the Zistorite equivalent of a bum who cleans windows or polishes shoes – the difference is that he uses his oily rag not just to clean the augmentations of other sorcerers, but to get close enough to them to overhear what they are saying, pass messages and any other form of espionage imaginable.

The real Nexis Vorolka died of natural causes – his 'replacement' was just the first one to come across the decomposing body. This second Nexis is a rather cunning sort, however. Like several others among his guild, he has mastered the art of making his

mechamagics look rundown and damaged from ill-care, while they actually function perfectly well. It all adds to his grimy appearance.

SERVING NEXIS VOROLKA

As a guild leader in the Brotherhood, Vorolka is a busy man. He is the spider at the heart of a web of deceit, assassinations, secrets, couriered messages, intercepted messages and idle gossip that could be dangerous and scandalous in the right – or wrong – hands.

As such, he requires agents, underlings and assistants. Most often these are drawn from within his guild and he is always on the lookout for those who can walk the walk when it comes to a place in the Loquacious Brotherhood. As ambitious as he is, Nexis one day plans to take over the guild in its entirety, serving as the one and only authority in Brotherhood matters. He would prefer to do this without violence, however. He is not a malicious man by nature.

Sometimes Vorolka will go outside his guild for assistance and in search of employees. These often take the form of low- to mid-level sorcerers of the Cogs of Zistor (and even non-Zistorite visitors to the city) in order to carry messages or snoop around certain locations and social scenes. In return he offers secrets his employees might require themselves, or tuition in magic should they desire it.

Characters allied with Nexis will have inroads into many of the political movers and shakers of Zistorwal, even though it will be from a position of perceived inferiority. The beggars guild are everywhere and see almost everything, but the respect they earn for their skills is given in secret – and only grudgingly – no matter how much influence a character makes behind the scenes as one of Vorolka's agents, it is never going to be a power he can flaunt in public.

Unit 80G-XT-G ZISTORUAL'S URBAN LEGEND

The Venafor Enslaved twitches spasmodically, its fingers clicking as they flick open and closed in rapid succession, and its skull shaking on its neck as if caught in some kind of silent laughter. As it moves, its joints twitch erratically, and from the grinding of worn-down gears and soft hiss of gas escaping corrupted pistons, it seems the war

Dressing Down for the Ball

The process of rendering mechemagics apparently deteriorated is dangerous even for those with the skill to know what they are doing. To successfully 'filthy up' a character's mechemagics requires a Mechanics skill of 70% or higher, a Disguise skill of 50% or more and a successful Disguise check. With these skills, it is no difficulty at all for a character to make his mechemagics appear dysfunctional and ill-maintained – the perfect disguise for some occasions, certainly, and especially useful for leading foes into believing a character is weaker than he really is. It comes with a penalty of -20% on all Influence rolls, however. 'Unqualified' characters may try the same thing, but they have a percentage chance of ruining the mechemagics equal to the number of points they are 'short' on the requisite skills.

machine has seen better days. From a sheath on its back, it draws two wickedly serrated Meridian swords, with the teeth of each blade clearly made by the automaton biting the swords and tearing chunks off in order to make them cut more viciously.

Unit 80G-XT-G is named for the subterranean sector where its legend began. It was originally a Venator Enslaved in the service of the Cabal of Night's Eyes, though it was affected by some untraceable sorcery during an illegal clash between Night's Eyes sorcerers and rivals in the Once-Men. Ever since the battle, a great many murders and mutilations in the city have been attributed the actions of the rogue Venator 80G-XT-G, which is appropriate enough since a great many of them have been its work.

It wanders the less-populated parts of the city now, both on the surface and in the underground, stalking Zistorites in order to kill them and steal their mechemagical body parts. A few rare survivors have managed to escape using their magic after losing a limb or two, but most are found as mutilated corpses some days after their initial disappearance. 80G-XT-G hunts them for spare parts; its own body is degrading due to the magic spell that still curses it and it seeks replacement parts wherever it can find them. Curiously, it has discovered that mechemagics from humans work better and last longer in its failing frame than the parts it plunders from other Enslaved. Currently, the automaton is something of a hideous hybrid of Enslaved and Zistorite body parts.

Theories do the rounds from time to time about how this construct merely wants to be human and is adopting a grisly and flawed method of attempting to make it so. What most Zistorites are far more concerned about, however, is the fact that a Venator can display so much intelligence and subtle skill on its days-long hunts, before finally bringing prey down by striking when they are most vulnerable. Even more intriguing is the fact that the construct always manages to escape without a trace.

A great many important sorcerers would pay good money to capture this automaton and unravel the secrets of why it behaves the way it does. Some of these magicians have scholarly aims. Others less

pleasant ones; if the cause of the intelligence behind this murderous rampage can be understood, perhaps it can be copied and developed in more stable conditions for use in other Venators.

SERVING UNIT 80G-XT-G

Characters serve the murderous construct by dying, plain and simple.

That said, Games Masters might want to explore the notion that 80G-XT-G has also developed the capacity to converse and express itself, and that its behaviour is something the automaton is willing to explain or debate. It might even abandon its blood-hunts if the characters could find a way of reversing the unknown magic that has cursed it with a failing body and preternatural intelligence.

A potential theory is that this unit is actually the puppet of a clever Zistorite using it to murder his rivals. A long and satisfying campaign could be created out of the hunt for the puppetmaster behind the killer, with the final confrontation occurring as the characters face the magicians behind it all. That will make for a tough climax, especially when taking into account the magic the controlling sorcerer must have at his disposal.



Stories of the Clanking City

The Twitch

A few Zistorites' mechemagical implants are showing signs of malfunction, twitching and acting against their owner's will. Is it a single sorcerer experimenting with remote control of devices, some kind of unique mechemagical disease or degeneration, or a sign that something is starting to unravel the very principles that mechemagics are based on?

Little Brother

Word has reached the EWF that a group of Zistorites have started building another Machine City elsewhere in Glorantha. The characters are tasked with finding it, scouting it, and if possible destroying it before it can become a blight as great as Zistorwal.

Rust

A sorcerer of the Cabal of Night's Eyes has discovered a section of the Great Machine that appears to be fully submerged beneath the waters around Locsil. Equipped with sorcery and mechemagical implants, he is recruiting an expedition into the depths. What will he find down there, and why do those chambers need to be submerged anyway?

Draconic Conversion

A savant in the EWF has hatched an ingenious plan. Rather than destroy the blasphemous Darguard construct, it may be possible to use sympathetic magic to transform it into a real, true dragon! He has developed a ritual that he believes will accomplish the task – now all he needs are capable agents to sneak into Zistorwal to enact it. Unfortunately, it is not only the Zistorites who stand in their way; many among the EWF itself consider their plan a violation of draconic purity.

The Package

A patron asks the characters to deliver a sealed package to a contact inside Zistorwal. Shortly after their delivery, the contact is found dead and they are the prime suspects. How will they clear their names? How long will they even survive as Fleshbound on the run in the Machine City?

The Swarm

A swarm of clockwork insects have claimed a small area of Zistorwal for themselves, savagely stripping the mechemagics from anyone who trespasses. Since the Fleshbound are ignored by the mysterious insects, the Zistorites are looking to recruit a band of capable, unenhanced mercenaries to investigate. Where did the swarm come from? What do they want? And what are they building with their scavenged parts?

Lend a Hand

The characters must bring a mechemagical arm and a Zistorite surgeon to an influential God Learner who wishes a replacement limb as a symbol of his power. If they think things are bad when their 'Port Orb misfires and lands them dangerously close to the massed besieging armies, it only gets worse when the arm animates with a will of its own.

Runaway

A youth known to the characters has run away from home to join the Zistorites. He has taken something important, which he plans to exchange for his first mechemagical implant. The characters must gain entry to the Clanking City, find him, recover the stolen item, and either talk him out of his choice or at least ensure that nothing goes terribly wrong.

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Glorantha

THE SECOND AGE

THE CLANKING CITY

The Clanking City details Zistorwal: part factory, part fortress and vital instrument of the God Learners in their efforts to further their unique magical ends. Under smoking towers, the citizens stride among machinery built upon stolen secrets and enhanced by God Learner magicians and engineers.

Through the streets strides a giant automaton; the avatar of Zistor, the man-made god. In underground surgeries, devout Zistorites replace their weak mortal flesh with alchemically-treated mechemagical implants, rising from blood-stained tables bearing metal limbs powered by sorcery and clockwork.

This is the Machine City, known as the Clanking City for the noise its thousand engines make, and it stands defiant against a great siege mounted by the Empire of Wyrms' Friends and their allies of convenience. Within these pages you will find an in depth description of Zistorwal at the peak of its golden age, detailing the city itself, the movers and shakers of its twisted politics and its quintessential tools, from cunning mechemagics to towering war constructs.

The Clanking City allows players and Games Masters alike to experience Zistorwal at the height of its prominence, but be careful: something dark and terrible coils around its heart...



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