

## *Forgotten Realms Alternate Dimensions: Issue VII*

### Editorial

Welcome to issue VI of the Forgotten Realms Alternate Dimensions Webzine. My intention is for this to become a home for people who wish to publish material about their own versions of the Forgotten Realms. The content presented within these pages should in no way be considered canon material and is meant to represent a glimpse of the possibilities available to people running a campaign world in the Forgotten Realms setting.

I would just like to say a brief thank you to all the scribes at Candlekeep and everyone who has worked on the Forgotten Realms for the past few decades. Thank you for inspiring me and giving me many years of enjoyment with the Forgotten Realms.

**Note:** Much of this issue is focused on Maztica and is designed to work with the fan work Maztica campaign guide created by T.J.Hild found [here](#). Ignoring specific dates, events in the distant past can be used in conjunction with T.J.Hild's work and if you do not include the Spellplague in your campaign then slight alterations to future events will make it compatible with a normal campaign.

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## Alternate Dimensions Presents: Maztica

Maztica as we know it is built upon myth and legend that over the millennia has been exaggerated, inflated, and misinterpreted like the ultimate game of Kara-Turan whispers. Here is an alternate interpretation of the events of Maztica's past, present, and possible futures.

### **The Immortal Era**

The continent of Maztica begins with the Tearfall in -31000 DR when Ao separated the continents of Laerakond and Faerûn into twinned worlds in order to separate the warring primordials, deities, and their children.

In that microsecond of action, Ao created an alternate planet of Abeir; separated from Toril by a dimension, and in order to balance the loss of Laerakond on Toril he created the continent of Maztica, which existed as little more than bare rock with a single inhabitant, Maztica herself.

Maztica, like Othea on Faerûn, and the Earthmother on Laerakond (she would later become the part of the Moonshaes as parts of Laerakond were left behind and then shattered by the elven magic that formed Evermeet), took the form of huge mountains that served as a connection between the life giving Plane of Faerie and the Material Plane.

Through Maztica, all life should be born onto the continent, eventually turning it into a lush and vibrant land like Faerûn, or at least that was Ao's intention.

The continent of Maztica was in the beginning little more than a gigantic mass of bare rock with few features atop it except for Maztica herself. Migrants from Faerûn made their way to Maztica in the form of seeds dropped by birds, and small animals that travelled on driftwood, all would terraform the land in some way.

Then came the arrival of several groups of migrants over the course of a millennia. First were the sarrukh, fleeing the fall of Okoth and the evil of their race, a group of these reptilian humanoids made their way to Maztica through a gate, following the words of a being known as Jazirian who would, as a reward, remake them anew into his servants the couatl.

Next came the Aearee, fleeing the swarming dragon races of Faerûn and the subsequent downfall of their civilizations, the Aearee-Krocaa and Aearee-Syran headed west across the Trackless Sea in the hopes of escaping their draconic foes. On the far south-eastern shore of Maztica they witnessed a star falling from the sky (the arrival of a third group of migrants) and half their group heralded it as a sign they should stay, the other half viewed it as a sign they should move on.

The falling star was the arrival of a group of powerful beings in a vessel that could travel the stars. Damaged by debris formed from the shattering of Zotha, the vessel landed on the continent of Maztica in what is now known today as Tewahca.

These beings from another land (maybe another planet or plane altogether) exhibited all the powers of a god yet were not gods. They had physical bodies that were vulnerable to death by many means except the ravages of time. These quasi-deities were headed by the one known as Kukul and they followed him north towards the mountainous form of Maztica.

There the "gods" encountered Maztica, and Kukul claimed her for his own. Qotal discovered the

beings known as couatls that promised to serve him as Jazirian reborn, for their own god had perished some time before, betrayed by one of their own.

The gods remained exploring the surface of Maztica and nurturing its change until they discovered a lone human who had wandered from the jungles of the Aearee and shortly after seeing the “gods” died awestruck, but not before recounting his travels with his dying breath.

The gods of Maztica worked hard to bring him back to life, and when they could not they tried to recreate him, for all of them felt the tingle of worship in that moment before he died, and they hungered for more. Qotal and his sisters laboured away in the south creating men of mud, but they were thwarted by Zaltec and his brothers who flooded the lands and washed their creation down into the depths. There these formless beings of earth; given intelligence, were shaped by fell evils in the depths of the continent, they live on today as the tincalli.

Qotal then travelled across Maztica to the lands of the Aearee, where they found the rookeries of trees from Faerûn were struggling to adapt to the harsh conditions on Maztica. Qotal, his sisters and the Aearee worked together to create the “Woodmen” that were better able to thrive in the extreme environments they found themselves in. These Woodmen survived along with the Aearee until the Aearee’s dark kin arrived and slew them all or drove them away. Still, every now and then, lone villagers of Far Payit report seeing trees that walk and even talk, although this is dismissed as the feverish mind of someone touched by sickness.

Zaltec and his brothers, Tezca, Plutoq, and Azul worked away in the north to create weapons of war, for that is all they understood. These Metal Men were terrifying to behold and capable of great acts of destruction, but they were little more than automatons, and were nearly all destroyed by the four brothers in their anger, the rest were left to be claimed by the wilderness.

It was Kukul who succeeded where his “children” failed. He and Maztica worked together and following Maztica’s advice and example he gave of his own power to breathe life into the Maztican human. It looked like a human and acted like a human but it was subtly different from those in faraway lands, it was of Kukul’s blood and possessed the same wants and desires as its sire. The other “gods” quickly copied Kukul and added their own power to the mix to create their own versions of these children. From this mix the Payit, Itza, Green Folk, Dog Folk, Halflings, and Nahuat were created.

These humans lived among the gods and worshipped them for many years in relative peace and harmony amid the Valley of Kukul in the shadow of Maztica. The children of the gods wanted for nothing, for the gods created everything they would need, they seeded the surface of the continent with plants, animals, and minerals. The legacy of this seeding is still being rediscovered today, the early humans of Maztica had little use for minerals such as iron and it is preciously rare in abundance in this unfinished land.

Qotal began spending more and more time with his Aearee allies, and from them he learned of their ways and their magic. Zaltec in turn grew more and more suspicious of his brother who was falling under the influence of foreign invaders, he took to wandering in search of weapons to use against the Aearee.

Zaltec fashioned his own magic of blood, tooth, and claw, a magic of transformation. Some legends whisper he learned it from something evil that was trapped in the depths of Maztica herself, something

alien to this continent, others speak of an encounter with a serpent deity named Mirtek that attempted to slay Zaltec, the truth may lie somewhere in between, but only Zaltec knows for sure and he is not forthcoming with answers..

Eventually the disagreement between the two brothers came to a head and battle lines were drawn. Zaltec claimed his brother was working against them with the invading Aearee whose jungles were growing ever larger. Qotal meanwhile claimed Zaltec was twisted with poison and darkness and sought only death, destruction and war.

The sisters sided with Qotal and the Aearee, while the brothers sided with Zaltec. Maztica chose Qotal's side and in a moment of rage fuelled by jealousy and madness, Zaltec crushed the top of mountainous Maztica, seemingly slaying the great life giver and rending the surface of the continent forever in a great cataclysm.

The two sides battled for centuries in bloody warfare, while Kukul seemingly wallowed in grief. In reality he was working away in secret in the Vale of Tukan amid the wreckage of the Great Skyhome to fashion a great pyramid upon which Kukul would ascend to godhood and quell the warring factions of his children.

Qotal and Zaltec learned of this fabled Tawahca; city of the gods, and marched on it immediately. Zaltec arrived first and sought to take the power of godhood for himself. He sacrificed tens of thousands of his followers, growing ever larger and more powerful with each death. Qotal however unleashed a secret weapon, one that resembled 13 unique butterflies. They seemingly drained the power from the battlefield, and in that moment Kukul vanished. Ever since that day up until Qotal's return an ever growing desert has sprung up around the city of Tawahca and slowly expanded in all directions. Some say unless Kukul is properly avenged his curse will consume the entire continent.

### **The Godfall Era**

Following the era of enlightenment and destruction that was the Immortal Era; Qotal emerged as the head of the Maztican pantheon. His actions at the Battle of the Gods propelled him to deific status along with his siblings; for nothing inspires awe and devotion quite like warfare, and his first act was to imprison Zaltec and his brothers inside the shell of Maztica, in penance for their actions.

As the Battle of the Gods raged, the Aearee-Noctre moved against their kin that had settled upon Maztica. This group of Aearee, that had embraced the worship of an evil goddess of utter darkness, descended upon the anchored rookeries and began burning them with dark-fire, they also brought with them enslaved dragons that had sworn service to their goddess, and these dragons consumed the Aearee in the hundreds to sate their enormous appetites.

Many warriors of the Aearee had gone with Qotal to fight against Zaltec and there were not enough left to save their cities. Only one rookery is said to have escaped the destruction and it fled far to the north pursued by a swoop of dragons. The rest of the surviving Aearee spread in all directions, some followed their ancient kin that moved south to Anchorome rather than stay in Maztica, others fled to seek Qotal's help.

The new god manifested his first avatar and with his loyal Eagle Knights he marched to the aid of the Aearee. He was too late, the civilization of the Aearee was lost, but he did battle with the Aearee-

Noctre nonetheless and forced them to leave Maztica. Some legends speak of him enslaving the dragons to serve the Mazticans, their descendants persists as the rare element infused dragons that exist today; the rain dragon, the fabled typhoon dragon that dwells off the shores of Maztica, the mud dragon said to live in the depths of marshes across the continent, and the as yet unverified smoke dragon said to live around the smoking cone of Mt. Zatal.

**Diamond Eyes:** There in the southern jungles Qotal's avatar encountered a lone human who had survived the destruction of the Aearee (for it was said that some humans lived among the great rookeries of the Aearee on the fringes, ignored by the creator race because of their primitive nature) and he was immediately enchanted by her beauty.

He pursued her above all else as the great civilization in the Valley of Kukul grew to ever greater heights. In the end Qotal forsook his divinity (fashioning a powerful talisman from it) for the creature known only as Diamond Eyes, and became as he was before. Then he realised his mistake, Diamond Eyes was a creature of wickedness, a tool of the patron goddess of the Aearee-Noctre and she wanted her revenge for his thwarting of her plans. She stole Qotal's talisman containing his divinity and fled.

Qotal was forced to turn to his brothers for aid and he released them from their centuries long confinement. After many trials they battled Diamond Eyes and recovered the talisman. Qotal became a god once more, but this too was a trick, his divinity was tainted with wickedness, and Qotal gradually turned towards shadow and madness.

Following this Qotal became more and more wicked, his rule became more and more tyrannical, and it was only when he assaulted his own sister that he realized the trick that had been played upon him.

His siblings rose against him and he was forced to flee Maztica in shame, leaving behind only a prophecy that would herald his return. His priests noticed the sudden absence of his powers and when his favoured servants; the couatls, began to leave Maztica en masse, the people of Qotal went with them to the very eastern edge of the continent where they erected the Twin Visages to mark Qotal's departure from the world.

Of course the followers of Zaltec refute this story as nonsense. They claim that in the depths of the jungle of Paiyatana; as it was known at the time, Qotal encountered the forces of a deity far greater than himself. When Qotal's followers forced the Aearee-Noctre from the shores of Maztica he made an enemy of this ancient creature of darkness and shadow. She found him and slew him so that her son; Quorlinn could take his place. It was Quorlinn that attacked Kiltzi and she released the brothers from their prison so that they could drive this impostor from Maztica.

Which story is the truth is unknown but there are certainly parallels between the story of Diamond Eyes and Quorlinn's betrayal of Krocaa in order to obtain the mantle of night.

With Qotal and the other gods living on the Outer Planes, the humans were left to rule themselves. The people had since the Battle of the Gods gradually drifted apart from the Valley of Kukul to form their own kingdoms. Zaltec's children were the first to leave and migrated north to escape persecution for their patron's actions and the death of Maztica; there they discovered one of the earlier attempts at creating man in the Pasocada Basin. Qotal's children followed the couatls east and settled in the plains that would eventually become covered with the jungles of Paiyatana.

These kingdoms took with them much knowledge, but without the gods to guide and nurture them eventually they returned to a more primitive way, living for millennia as they do now.

### **The Era of Humanity**

In the depths of Far Payit, the Itza eventually discovered some of the ruins of the Aearee, from these ruins they once again achieved a measure of civilization and knowledge that resembled a shadow of the great civilization they had created in bygone eras. These people rediscovered ideas such as roads, mathematics, trade, medicine, science. They gradually spread that knowledge to the other kingdoms of Maztica, some embracing the newly rediscovered ideas, others abandoning them as bad omens.

The cradle of civilization was still the Valley of Kukul which was soon to become the Valley of Nexal. Here all of Kukul's children had lived and mingled together creating a strong bloodline of humans. Into this mix returned the Nahuat people; children of Zaltec, who were directed by their god to claim what was rightfully theirs after millennia of trials at the behest of their god.

Thanks to the untimely aid of growing evils in the depths of Mt Zatal, the Nahuat people conquered the valley and renamed it the Valley of Nexal, with their capital of Nexala ruling over all.

**The Night of Wailing:** When Qotal fled Maztica he left behind a prophecy that would herald his return. Of course even the gods cannot predict the future with any degree of accuracy, so the prophecy is unlikely to be something Qotal foresaw.

When Qotal returned to Maztica few remained that devoutly worshipped the long departed god and thus he would be greatly weakened by his absence and become easy prey for Zaltec; his sworn enemy.

It appears that Qotal understood something of human nature and the need to believe that everything happens for a reason. By leaving behind a prophecy, Qotal ensured that should he make the events of the prophecy come true then belief in him would be restored and his power regained.

It is apparent that the couatl's had also returned in secret prior to Qotal's return for they were part of the prophecy and they may have had a hand in ensuring the events of the prophecy came true. Cordell's arrival in Maztica was certainly the work of one or more divine beings and their servant, and Qotal may have been one of them, although Lolth was surely another.

The Night of Wailing itself involved the transformation of the gathering of humans in Nexal into bestial humanoids that resembled orcs, ogres, and trolls. Witnesses report that wherever the ash from the eruption of Mt Zatal fell upon a worshipper of the Cult of the Viperhand, these beings were transformed by the power of Zaltec.

This account of events is only part of the truth. Zaltec, while a blood-thirsty god is certainly not one to destroy his strongest powerbase and then transform over tens of thousands of his loyal subjects into beast like men that are viewed as anathema by the other humans of Maztica, such an act would destroy many of his worshippers and divide his power. Zaltec at the time was head of the Maztican pantheon and viewed himself as the protector of Maztica, not its destroyer.

The events of the Night of Wailing were actually the result of several unknown quantities. Mt. Zatal, with its caved in conical top is actually the remains of Maztica herself, and in the depths of this volcano is the bleeding heart of Maztica, corrupted by Zaltec through millennia of sacrifices in a misguided attempt by this god to bring the being he called "mother" back to life, perhaps as penance for his

crimes.

Also imprisoned within Mt. Zatal was an ancient and evil sarrukh being known as the Viper who called evil beings to her in order to bring about her own freedom. One group of these servants were the drow known as the Ancient Ones, of which Darien was a member. She travelled to Faerûn (with the aid of The Viper) in order to bring humans that were not of Maztica's making to Maztica so that their sacrifice could be used to bring about the Viper's release. The Cult of the Viperhand was in service to the Ancient Ones and also therefore the Viper.

Darien, in her travels of Faerûn, began to hear the whisperings of Lolth who wanted to punish the drow that had forsaken her centuries before, and like the other gods of Faerûn Lolth wanted to expand her influence to the continent of Maztica. Darien manipulated Cordell to gather a fleet to sail the ocean, and Qotal's servants separately ensured the safe passage of the vessels across the Trackless Sea.

Darien was instrumental in the success of Cordell's march across Maztica towards Nexal; the cradle of life on the continent. Once there she claimed to Cordell that the Nexalans were about to attack, but this was a complete fabrication. Cordell performed a pre-emptive strike and the end result was Bishou Dominicus' sacrifice upon the altar in the Pyramid of Nexal.

The soul of Bishou Dominicus was drawn into Maztica's engorged heart deep in the depths of Mt. Zatal and was immediately rejected. The volcano erupted as the heart vomited forth the hundreds of thousands of souls that had been drawn into it over the years. The Viper was released by this eruption of natural and magical energy and has not been seen or heard from since.

Many of the souls immediately sped upon their way to the Outer Planes and the next leg of their journey. A great number of souls however latched onto the nearest living being and twisted them with the hatred and rage of centuries of imprisonment. These wicked souls picked weak willed individuals that they could dominate more easily.

Many of the people closest to the eruption were; by orchestration, members of the Cult of the Viperhand, however a great many people were warriors or innocent bystanders that had gathered to watch the spectacle of battle.

The weakest were augmented with raw physical strength and their nature's changed to be more aggressive and evil. They resembled the orcs of Faerûn and so were mislabelled Maztican Orcs. The strongest and most evil were twisted even more and became great giants of men with a taste for raw flesh and a rage they could not control; some were even granted the ability to regenerate all wounds by eating the flesh of humans. These were termed Maztican Ogres and Trolls for the similarities they had with Faerûnian monsters.

Zaltec and Lolth sought to capitalize upon the situation and so they transformed a number of chosen individuals into forms more useful to them. Zaltec transformed his most devout and powerful worshippers into Jagres, beings of enormous physical strength with the ability to shapeshift into deadly animal forms. Lolth transformed the Ancient Ones into Drider as a punishment for their ignorance. Other gods from other pantheons with a minor presence on Maztica may have used this opportunity to create their own servants; certainly the magic released that day spread out across the Nexal Valley, transforming people seemingly at random. The fallout area of this event may have extended much further than many realize with small pockets of twisted creatures being discovered all over Maztica in



the years to come.

### **The Future of Maztica**

The future of Maztica is one of struggle against the invading foreigners of Faerûn. Events in Amn and the disruption of sea traffic in 1368 and 1369 DR eventually lead to the destruction of New Amn and the Faerûnian presence on Maztica becoming relatively minor.

If you use the Spell Plague then after 1385 DR, Maztica is whisked away to Abeir where events continue in isolation from Toril before its return following the Sundering, events from 1385 DR onwards then lead directly into the Maztica Campaign Guide by T.J.Hild found [here](#).

**The Destruction of New Amn:** This event has long been a possibility given the precarious and isolated situation the Faerunians are in (with supply lines taking anywhere up to a year in normal times), plus the poor treatment of the native Mazticans at the hands of the Faerunians. Rebellion was just a matter of time.

This isolation only became more severe in 1368 DR, with the rise of Iakhovas and his sahuagin allies that halted all shipping transport between the two continents. New Waterdeep is sacked in 1369, Later the Sythillisian Empire appears in 1370 DR to plague Amn and hamper its trade with Maztica. No sooner are these issues solved; with New Waterdeep moved to Maztapan island, and the Swordbelt Alliance crushing the tincalli in 1378 DR, then plague strikes Amn and all sea trade is cut off as Amn experiences widespread xenophobic panic in the wake of the plague.

While this is ongoing, Cordell; a true Amnian, is seeking to expand his empire in the pursuit of ever greater profit. He uses his good relations with Tokol, ruler of Kultaka, to have New Waterdeep put down for a time, then he exploits Tokol again to plunder the mines in that region, giving little to the Kultakans in return.

Pezelac finally begins to see the fruit of years of bountiful harvests and Cordell notices the wealth pouring into this newly affluent native nation. In 1379 DR New Amn invades and easily conquers the defeatists and almost pacifistic Pezelac nation, greatly enriching the greedy Cordell.

It is then that disaster strikes New Amn. The security of the entire nation depended upon the military genius and charisma of one man, Cordell. Despite the quarantine procedures in Amn, a few merchant ships reach Maztica each year, one of them carrying the virulent plague that originated in Tashluta. This plague spreads like wildfire among the natives and frequent contact with the Faerûnians leads to much infection, to the point that even Cordell is infected.

Despite the ministrations of Bishou Devane, the plague ravages Cordell and he perishes in the year 1382 DR. Some whisper it was the Bishou himself that was keeping Cordell sick, for no other priests were allowed near the Governor without the Bishou in attendance.

After many months without any word from Amn; which is still under quarantine, Bishou Devane seizes the opportunity and appoints himself Governor of New Amn. This move immediately alienates the natives of the Payit nation as well as New Amn's Kultakan allies. Most Mazticans still resent the Church of Helm for the poor treatment they had received and continued to receive at the hands of the Faerûnians and the heretical Church of the One True Vision.

Relations with the natives soured immediately and Tokol refused to have any contact with Governor

Devane. It is then that New Waterdeep has its revenge by informing Tokol of the exploitation it has suffered by Cordell and continued under Governor Devane as they plunder the mines of Kultaka of all wealth and give the Kultakans a paltry sum in return.

The following year the Pezelac nation rises up and destroys the Calishite settlement of Drakmul and removes New Amn's control over the region. More than half of the warriors in this uprising appear to be from neighbouring Kultaka.

In 1386 DR Kultaka and New Amn go to war. The numerically superior and warlike Kultakans had learned much from Cordell's March and had developed counters against the Faerûnian battle tactics. It was only the rise of sleeping Nexal that allowed New Amn to gain the upper hand.

Governor General Devane decided to leave the nations of Kultaka and Nexal to fight each other, he would then destroy the winner and crown himself King of Maztica. Unfortunately the Kultakans and Beastmen of Nexala decided that they both hated the Faerûnians of New Amn more than each other and so agreed a temporary alliance to eradicate New Amn first, before they destroyed each other.

So it was that the superior generals of Tokol and Hoxitl lured the over confident and inexperienced Governor General into a simple trap and set about massacring the New Amnian forces. Only the arrival of refugees from Tukan saved any of the Faerûnians that day as they arrived on the flanks of the Nexalans and the Eagle Knights proved very effective against the Beastmen.

The Faerûnian army routed back to New Amn where the Payit natives were waiting for them. The bloody slaughter of Faerûnians soaked the land red that day, and the survivors piled into what boats they could and made for New Waterdeep.

Thus the nation of New Amn was broken and the people of Maztica regained their land.

- **-31000 DR: The Tearfall:** Ao separates Abeir-Toril into twinned worlds Abeir and Toril. Upon Abeir he places the continent of Laerakond upon a hastily constructed water planet in a pocket dimension. To replace the loss of Laerakond, Ao creates the continent of Maztica. At this time Maztica is little more than bare rock.
- **c- 30000 DR:** The Aearee Krocaa and Aearee Syran leave Faerûn pursued by dragons.
- Kukul arrives on Maztica from another world aboard his vessel the Great Skyhome. He settles in a fertile valley surrounded by mountains and home to the being known as Maztica. Kukul sires the rest of the Maztican pantheon with Maztica.
- The fleeing rookeries of Aearee Krocaa and Aearee Syran arrive in the south eastern arm of the continent of Maztica. The rookeries split as one group continue south. The rookery of Paiyatana lands on the slopes of Mt. Ushtak on the far south-eastern end of Maztica.
- Kukul, and his children discover a lone human wandering the southern lands of Maztica. He dies shortly afterwards but the gods attempt to make more children in the image of this human.

- In the Vale of Tukan; which was then a lush paradise, Qotal and his sisters attempt to replicate man out of nature's elements. The experiment is ended when Zaltec and his brothers cause a flood to wash away the creations into the lands below the surface.
- Qotal and his sisters travel east and encounter the Aearee from whom they learn much of the magic of air and creation. Together Qotal, his sisters, and the Aearee help to reinvigorate the dying jungles of south-eastern Maztica; this gives rise to the creation of the "woodmen" of Maztica.
- Zaltec and his brothers' work together to create man out of metal, huge golems that can destroy all in their path. The golems lack intelligence and remain inert, another failed experiment.
- Kukul and Maztica surpass their children, creating a near exact replica of man by sacrificing part of themselves to fuel the creation process. Each of the "gods" of Maztica donate a portion of their own power to create their version of man; their children.
- Kukul and the gods of Maztica settle in the Valley of Kukul, will come to be known later as the Valley of Nexal, in the shadow of Maztica herself with their children; man, living among them and worshipping them as gods.
- **c. -25000 DR: The Battle of the Gods:** The forces of Zaltec and Qotal clash at the city of Tewahca on the steps of the Great Pyramid. Kukul overlooks the destruction in frozen bewilderment. Following the war; Maztica is dead, Kukul vanishes never to be seen again, Zaltec is banished to the shadows, and Qotal becomes the head of the Maztican pantheon.
- The Aearee of Maztica are attacked by the Aearee Noctre while many of its warriors are fighting for Qotal. The rookeries are decimated except for a single structure that flees north. The surviving Aearee flee north, south, and west.
- Without Zaltec's guidance the Nahuat; children of Zaltec, flee to the north fearing persecution by their enemies. After years of wandering they encounter the men of metal in the Pasocada Basin.
- Qotal and his children hear of the plight of the Aearee from the survivors and move to route the Aearee Noctre from the jungles of Payit. There Qotal encounters the lone maiden known to legend as Diamond Eyes.
- **c- -24900 DR to 24000 DR:** Qotal relinquishes his divinity to be with Diamond Eyes, only to discover she is Shar in disguise. Qotal releases Zaltec and his brothers from prison to help him recover his power. Shar returns Qotal's divinity but tricks the deity as it is tainted with her evil.
- Qotal gradually descends into evil and madness before fleeing Maztica in shame after his siblings unite against him.

- **c. -24000 DR:** Qotal ceases to respond to his faithful and is thought by many to have left Maztica for good. The flight of his favoured couatl's reinforces the belief that he has departed Maztica.
- The Itza; children of Qotal, follow the couatls as they leave Maztica, erecting the Twin Visages at the site where they left the continent.
- Called into service by the god Ubtao, an army of winged serpents known as couatls arrives in the jungles of Chult from an unknown continent to the west.
- Following Qotal's departure, Zaltec assumes the position head of the Maztican pantheon. The increasingly bloodthirsty rule of Zaltec's followers in the Valley of Kukul cause a diaspora as they seek to escape the sacrifice and blood letting that becomes common. This leads to the formation of the Dog Folk in the north, the Green Folk in the south, and the Maztican people in the Valley of Kukul as the children of Tezca, Plutoq, Kukul, and Azul mingle their bloodlines together.
- Zaltec punishes the Nahuat for worshipping the Metal Men of the Pasocada Basin. The Nahuat used their magic to leave their bodies behind and become one with the Metal Men, giving them life and sentience beyond simply obeying commands. Zaltec ordered his children to destroy the Metal Men and once victorious he led the survivors into the Sands of Ilzcala where the harsh life would make them strong.
- **c. 400 DR: Golden Age of the Payit:** Despite the absence of their patron deity Qotal, the nation of Payit in Maztica sees six hundred years of great peace and plenty beginning around this time.
- Ulatos, Tulom-Itzi, Pezel and Kultaka are all founded during this period. Nexal as a nation does not yet exist, but the Valley of Nexal is heavily settled. Written language is developed in Payit.

As Payit progresses in the sciences and trade, more westerly peoples become increasingly warlike. Many new weapons and tactics for war are developed in these regions. Sea exploration which had begun in order to find greater and safer trade routes lead to many deaths, but also the populating of many of Maztica's surrounding islands. The science and magic of astronomy is further developed by the Payit.

- H'Calos the Star Worm falls to the world encased in an enormous egglike meteorite in the Vale of Ixtzul in Far Payit. H'Calos emerges from the egg and causes vast destruction before he is forced into a magical slumber.
- Anadjjin, having survived a great war in far off Anadia, notice the falling egg/asteroid and follow it to its final destination, discovering the bright blue-green world of Toril.

- **418 DR Year of the Eagle's Flight:** After years of migration, some aarakocra of Maztica arrive in mainland Faerûn more than thirty thousand years after the fall of the progenitor Aearee race disappears. The quetzaldaun remain in the jungles of Maztica with hardly greater numbers than at the time of their creation.
  - A great road is built by the Payit that connects Ulatos to Tulom-Itzi as trade reaches its height.
  - **c. 600 DR:** The guardianship of the eternal slumber of H'Calos passed onto a magically created race of ant-men known as the bacar. Humans abandon the Vale of Ixtzul.
  - **951 DR Year of the Empty Hourglass: The Great Catastrophe:** On her wedding day, the Princess Aliah of Ulatos is murdered after a failed kidnapping attempt by Teacal, the young prince of Tulom-Itzi. This event is said to mark the end of the Golden Age of Payit.
  - **987: Year of the Flaming Dwarf: The Rockfire Disaster:** Seeking fortune in the west, dwarves travel tunnels under the Sea of Swords. They are pursued by drow and battle follows the dwarves throughout the long journey. Drow spells weaken the unstable walls of the Underdark and both magma and ocean water fills the Underdark. Many on both sides are killed but others flee further west, trapped under Maztica. The dwarves arrive in the Sands of Itzcala in Maztica while the drow travel farther south until they arrive in the foothills of the Axapoztlan Range.
  - **1007 DR: Year of the Bold Barbarian:** The shaman Tecco of the Nahuat people wanders the Sands of Itzcala for a year.
  - **1008 DR Year of the Treacherous Path:** In a cave hidden in the Axapoztlan Range, the shaman known as Tecco is confronted by the god Zaltec. Zaltec commands the shaman to lead the Maztican people south to conquer all the lands before them. Tecco carries the stone pillar from which Zaltec formed his avatar back to the Mazticans.
  - **1099 DR Year of the Restless:** The Maztican tribe settles in the Valley of Nexal and allies themselves with the city of Tezat. They are led on this journey by Tecco's grandson Cattl.
  - **1060 DR Year of the Fantastic Spectacle: The Dawn of Nexal:** Cattl is slain by his son Ipana and the truce with Tezat is broken in an act of great betrayal. Ipana raids the city and destroys the temple of Tezca. He also returns to the Valley of Nexal with many sacrifices for their bloodthirsty god.
- Ipana changes the tribe's name to the Nexala and its capital city, Nexal. Ipana becomes the first Revered Counselor of the Nexala. The cities of Azatl and Zokil are absorbed into the fledgling Nexalan Empire. Tezat continues to resist.
- **1095 DR Year of the Dawndance:** Despite thirty-five years of warfare and attempted subjugation, Tezat remains independent of Nexal. Ipana's grandson Tenoch becomes the

Revered Counsellor of Nexal upon the death of his grandfather, and is no more successful than his grandfather in conquering Tezat.

- **1115 DR Year of the Haunted Herald:** Tenoch's son Ipana II takes the title of Revered Counsellor of Nexal after his father's twenty year reign. Ipana II's reign lasts twelve years.
- **1120 DR Year of the Perplexing Sphinx:** A great banquet is held to celebrate the sixtieth year of Nexal's might by Ipana II and within a year all representatives from Tezat who attended sicken and die. Nexal finally overtakes Tezat due to the lack of strong leadership.
- **1127 DR Year of the Luminar Procession: The Reign of Ipana III:** Ipana II is murdered by the same poison used to overcome Tezat by his own nephew. Ipana II's son, Ipana III takes the title Revered Counsellor at only ten years of age.
- In Far Payit a flock of lizard-like raptors are found in the Ocostun Jungle (velociraptors). Hishnashapers attempt to tame and alter the beasts to an even greater form. The newly formed dilophodiles slay their creators and escape into the Utalan Marsh.
- **1137 DR Year of the Falling Menhirs:** Ipana III's reign is credited with introducing the ceremony known as the Feathered Wars, in which the armies of different cities would war simply to take captives for sacrifice to their hungry god Zaltec.
- **1138 DR Year of the Sharpened Teeth:** All of the captives are sacrificed and a second Feathered War is enacted. In this second war, many warriors of Ipana III's own army are taken captive and sacrificed. This convinces him to seek war outside the Valley of Nexal.
- **1139 DR Year of Shining Waves:** Nexal, led by Ipana III, easily overcomes the small city states of Cordotl and Palul and then heads northwest to battle the Otomi. The battle lasts three years until the Nexala abandon the campaign. The fierce warriors of Kultaka are also forced to hold off Nexal's predations, and manage to do so for a full two hundred years.
- **1142 DR Year of the Sword's Oath:** After his defeat, Ipana III moves westward to battle the isolated Huacli people, from which he takes the city of Ixtal. Soon after, the other city-states of the Huacli fall and become subjugated. The fresh flow of sacrifices comes annually from these city-states.
- **1178 DR Year of the Secret Rider:** After a reign of fifty-one years, Ipana III dies of old age and his grand-nephew Tolco takes the throne.
- A band of explorers from Kara-Tur arrive in Maztica and settle in the Pasocada Basin. They encounter the ruins of the Metal Men and the Nahuat. These people become the Azuposi.

- **1179 DR Year of the Stalking Satyr:** Tolco leads Nexal's armies into a humiliating defeat with the Kultakans and turns to Pezelac. Slaves and sacrifices are taken, but the battles grind to a stalemate and Pezelac is not subjugated.
- **1190 DR Year of the Poisoned Quill:** Despite greater losses, the Kultakans repulse a second invasion by Nexal's forces when Tolco is slain. After their Revered Counsellor's death, the Nexalan army abandons the field of battle. Tenoch II, great-grandson of Ipana III becomes the sixth Revered Counsellor of Nexal. His reign lasts a full twenty-one years and the Nexalans prosper under his rule. Many new roads are built and after a successful raid led by Tenoch II's son Chimal; the pyramid of Zaltec was raised to the highest in all the nations of Maztica.
- **1211 DR Year of the Crimson Crag:** Tenoch II dies of natural causes and his son Chimal ascends to become the seventh Revered Counsellor of Nexal. His eighteen year reign is marked by an increase in trade, even with nations as far as Payit, for the first time in Nexal's history.
- **1229 DR Year of the Carrion Crow:** Chimal is replaced by his weakling and disinterested son Totep, whose reign as eighth Revered Counsellor lasts a paltry six years.
- **1235 DR Year of the Black Horde:** Totep is poisoned and His death is rumoured to have been caused by his own military leaders. Zomoc, one of Totep's generals, assumes the title of ninth Revered Counsellor. Zomoc immediately sends his chief general Coyo to begin a campaign of warfare against the Kolan tribes of the southwest coast across difficult terrain.
- **1255 DR Year of the Raging Flame:** After twenty years of constant warfare and frustration, Coyo finally subjugates the Kolan people and leads a long line of slaves and sacrifices back across the desert to Nexal.
- **1256 DR Year of the Dusty Throne:** Fearing Coyo's threat to his throne, Zomoc magically coerces Coyo to offering his heart to Zaltec after a year of celebration and feasting.
- **1260 DR Year of the Broken Blade:** Zomoc dies in his sleep after years of paranoid insanity. Izco, nephew of Coyo ascends as tenth Revered Counsellor of Nexal. The reign of both Izco and his son Izco II is marked by great advances in the artistic and cultural growth of Nexal.
- **1272 DR Year of the Shrieker:** In order to celebrate the passing of the title of Revered Counsellor from Izco to his son and to consecrate further construction upon the pyramid of Zaltec, one-thousand hearts are offered to Zaltec. This paltry amount offends the god who causes Mount Zatal to erupt and cause hundreds of additional deaths. A grand Feathered War is enacted and ten thousand hearts are offered to Zaltec as the temple is re-consecrated.
- **1288 DR Year of the Roaring Horn:** After the death of Izca II, the great and venerable warrior Pakli is chosen as the twelfth Revered Counsellor. Pakli immediately begins campaigns against the Otomi, the Kultakans and even mounts expeditions to rein Payit under Nexal's

control. The wars drain Nexal's treasuries and end in disaster. Revolts form in various city-states, Pezelac and Kolan which Pakli spends his remaining years attempting to quench.

- **1290 DR Year of the Whelm:** The Kultakans elect the young warrior Takamal as War Chief.
- **1302 DR Year of the Broken Helm:** Chalco, a great warrior, is appointed thirteenth Revered Counsellor of Nexal by nobles of the city with the hope that he will bring military glory back to the empire after recent humiliating defeats. Chalco attacks the Kultakans and sees far more success than Nexal had in the past, but the capital city of Kultaka rallies around Takamal and once again fights the invaders back.
- **1303 DR Year of the Evening Sun:** Chalco begins a new campaign against the Otomis, bringing a huge army formed in part by Huacli subjugated states. Chalco razes the Otomi's capital city despite heavy losses. Many Otomi flee into the mountains, retuning only once Chalco has departed.
- **1306 DR Year of Thunder:** Chalco sends expeditions to find both the original cave from which Tecco first encountered Zaltec and to find the fabled City of the Gods, Tehwahca. The expeditions are not successful and most do not return.
- **1328 DR Year of the Adder:** Chalco dies and his young son Axalt ascends as fourteenth Revered Counsellor of Nexal. His reign is often considered the peak of the Nexalan Empire. Nexal's continued campaign against the Kultakans fail due in large part to the cunning of Kultaka's own War Chief and Revered Counsellor, Takamal.
- **1345 DR Year of the Saddle:** Axalt's own son Naltecona leads the most successful forays into Kultaka as Axalt builds an aqueduct and a grand palace. Other than the Great Pyramid of Zaltec, the palace is the grandest structure in the whole valley.
- **1350 DR Year of the Morningstar:** Naltecona ascends as the fifteenth Revered Counsellor of Nexal after his father dies at a relatively young age. This time marks the end of the Rise of Nexal.
- **1351 DR Year of the Crown:** Naltecona orders yet another failed invasion of Kultaka.
- This year marks the first in a string of omens that occur once per year, heralding and forewarning of the coming of Cordell. Each year on the anniversary of the first, a new omen occurs, including the bursting into flames of Zaltec's temple, the changing of the color of the sky to that of blood, and a twelve day eruption of Mt. Zatal.
- **1360 DR Year of the Turret:** Akbet-Khrul, the self-named Grand Vizier of the Pirate Isles, leads two dozen galleys filled with bloodthirsty pirates against Captain-General Cordell and a much smaller force of mercenaries hired by desperate merchants from Amn. Superior tactics and the favour of Helm "the Vigilant One" win the day for Cordell and his Golden Legion.



Akbet-Khrul's pirates are routed, leaving the passage through Asavir's Channel safe for merchant traffic over the next several years.

- As Cordell requests funding for an expedition to Kara-Tur that eventually leads him to the True World, three out of the four lakes in the Valley of Nexal begin to boil and emit steam.
- **1361 DR Year of Maidens: Discovery of the True World:** The Amnian general Cordell sets off with his Golden Legion from Amn and “discovers” the continent of Maztica. The Amnians defeat the native Mazticans and conquer the city of Ulatos. Helmsport is founded. Other Faerûnian nations hear rumors of the newly discovered land.
- **1362 DR Year of the Helm: The Return of Qotal:** In mighty Nexal itself, Cordell's lieutenant Darien reveals herself to be drow and the actions of that day lead to the Night of Wailing, where those in the shadow of Mt Zatal transform into terrible and vicious humanoids. The humans of Faerûn quickly misname these Beastmen as orcs, ogres, and trolls.
- Naltecona is slain. The combined forces of the Golden Legion and the remaining native Mazticans flee into the Sands of Tezca led by a former Golden Legion commander known as Halloran, his wife and Chosen of Qotal Erixitl and the Eagle Knight Poshtli.
- The Prophecy of the Cloak of One Plume is fulfilled and Qotal returns to the world to battle Zaltec in the newly rediscovered city of the Gods, Tehwahca. Tukan is founded by the fleeing humans.
- Helmsport is declared the capital of New Amn. The clergy of Helm in the South declare that the year marks the beginning of blessed works for the faithful.
- **1364 DR Year of the Wave:** The Golden Legion opens a new colony further west in Maztica known as Qoral. North of Kultaka, the Flaming Fist mercenary company builds Fort Flame, though they do not fare nearly as well as Cordell's original mission.
- First non-Amnian ships arrive from Faerûn at Helmsport. The mercenaries lose over two-thirds of their complement to failed explorations and wild Maztican elf attacks. The Flaming Fist [1366] mercenary company later establishes Fort Flame, a small embattled fort north of Kultaka and the coastal islands just off the Bay of Balduran.
- **1365 DR Year of the Sword:** Cordell refuses to allow trade ships from Waterdeep to dock at Helmsport. The ships continue north until they reach Maztapan Island and forms a colony inland known as New Waterdeep. New Waterdeep forms a bond with their southerly Kultakan neighbours to Cordell's displeasure.
- The Waterdhavian colony expands northward and forms a second settlement known as Trythosford. The remaining Waterdhavian ships head home, and even though three sink on the journey, the remaining ships (five of the original twelve) dock in Waterdeep Harbor.

- The Tlincalli scorpionfolk of Maztica's underdark perform a ritual in response to Cordell's invasion transporting over a thousand scorpionfolk to Amn. The colony burrows deep to find the abandoned dwarven kingdom of Xothaerin and begin to modify the city for habitation. This new settlement is dubbed Oaxaptupa.
- **1366 DR Year of the Staff:** Tensions flare between Cordell and the colonies of New Waterdeep over weapon trade agreements with the Kultakans.
- After two years, the Flaming Fist [1364] mercenary company receives reinforcements at the embattled Fort Flame. The fledgling garrison and colony grows to about three hundred. Newly arrived elves in the group hope to negotiate peace with local wild elves.
- The priesthood of Helm sends twelve missionary priests inland along with New Waterdeep's explorers; they return in three months with new Maztican converts and inland survey maps.
- **1367 DR Year of the Shield:** The Beastmen of Maztica round up all the humans of Nexal and put them to work excavating Mt Zatal.
- **1368 DR Year of the Banner:** Trade increases as both New Amn and Waterdeep compete for the highest profits. Some suspect sabotage as ships from New Waterdeep continue to sink en route.
- This year signals the opening of major trade routes to and from Maztica. After eighteen months of frosty negotiations, the ports of Helmsport and New Waterdeep are opened to all parties, Maztican and Faerûnian alike. Qoral has become a small, thriving, agricultural town that feeds the Amnian trade back east. New Waterdeep and Helmsport found rival shipbuilding industries to improve trade and profits.
- Waterdeep's ships still sink on voyages to and from Maztica. Amnian sabotage is suspected. The Lords' Alliance quietly builds evidence to censure Amn for illegally interfering with lawful trade and violating its trade agreements.
- **1369 DR Year of the Gauntlet:** Kultakan invaders destroy New Waterdeep and force the survivors to flee north to Trythosford. Sahuagin attacks prevent aid from reaching shore.
- **1370 DR Year of the Tankard:** An assassin is unsuccessful in murdering Cordell in his sleep. The jaguar knight assassin disappears before being captured and is never found.
- Governor-General Cordell [1366, 1371] is attacked in his bed chamber by a jaguar knight wielding forged-metal claws like a Malar-priest. The knight escapes once he knows the assassination attempt has failed. No attempts to track him are successful.
- Fort Tussin is founded by New Amn along its western frontier.

- The first ships from Faerûn in almost a year reach the struggling Maztican colony of Fort Flame, the colony of Baldur's Gate, by way of Helmsport in New Amn. A representative of the Knight's of the Shield bluntly informs Bellan, the fort's charismatic leader, that Amnian ships will steer clear of Fort Flame if the colonists of Balduran do not ally with New Amn against New Waterdeep and Trythosford. Bellan resists the man's threats.
- With Cordell's permission, Lord Drakosa, a minor Calishite noble of Memnon, goes upriver past Qoral and establishes another plantation colony, Drakmul.
- The first Durpari merchant ships return from Maztica with trade goods.
- **1371 DR Year of the Unstrung Harp:** H'Calos the Star Worm is awakened and destroys Ixtzul, Maju, Cowl, and everything in between before finally being confronted and defeated by the Golden Legion. The wizard Artur Vagnos creates the great beast known as the vagnosaurus to destroy H'Calos, but the creature flees into the jungle after devouring the wizard. It wreaks its own havoc on its entire journey to Maztica's western coast. The creature then disappears into the sea, never to be seen again.
- Alanza DaNosta, the acting captain of the Golden Legion in its battle with H'Calos, founds a colony along the east coast of the Bay of Coxi.
- **1373 DR Year of Rogue Dragons:** New Waterdeep is resettled on Maztapan Island while the old site remains under Kultakan control.
- Having stolen a pearl charter from one of Drakosa's returning ships late in the year 1371 DR, the Sea Witch and Captain Mala finally land at the new site of New Waterdeep and begin plaguing the ship traffic into New Amn.
- **1374 DR Year of Lightning Storms:** The tlincalli of Oaxaptupa raid Murann and the Trade Way. They demand reparations for the plundering of Maztica as they perform all manner of atrocities.
- After consulting with the other members of the Shield Council, Tuth meets again with Dabron. The Knights of the Shield agree to have Sfena removed from the Realms in exchange for lucrative trade concessions in Baldur's Gate's struggling colony of Balduran in northern Maztica.
- **1375 DR Year of Risen Elfkin:** With trade concessions in place between the Merchant's League and the Knights of the Shield, sea traffic to Fort Flame begins to increase dramatically from this year.
- **1376 DR Year of the Bent Blade:** Oaxaptupa is sacked by an uneasy truce of the Swordbelt Alliance. The alliance first discovers that the tlincalli are utilizing a portal to the Abyss for reinforcements from their demonic patron Obox-Ob.

- With fortunes on the rise for Fort Flame, the settlement spurns the demands of New Amn (a move orchestrated by newly recruited Knights of the Shield in Fort Flame) and informs New Waterdeep that New Amn was behind the loss of its previous colony through its Kultakan allies.
- Hoxitl and the Beastmen of Maztica round up all humans in Nexala and imprison them inside a prison hollowed out of Mt. Zatal by the humans themselves. Those that don't perish in their work become part of the larder of the Beastmen and over several generations devolve into bestial underground dwelling humanoids. The Beastmen of Nexala begin to assault the other cities other Nexal valley with increasing success.
- **1378 DR Year of the Cauldron:** Nearly two decades of bumper crops and a lack of tribute to Nexal has caused the population of Pezelac to soar. New Amn begins to turn its greedy paws towards its abundant neighbour.
- **1379 DR Year of the Lost Keep:** Following a small border dispute over newly settled Pezelac villages around the forests of Payit, Governor Cordell invades and swiftly conquers the nation of Pezelac whose people lack any means of proper resistance.
- **1380 DR Year of the Blazing Hand:** Fearing plagues that have ravaged Amn in recent years, traffic between Amn and New Amn begins to slow due to quarantine procedures that have been put in place by the Council of Six.
- **1381 DR Year of the Starving:** The population of Pezelac continues to soar until this year when a freak cold snap devastates the harvests. The natives of Maztica begin to starve.
- **1382 DR Year of the Black Blazon:** Plague spreads across Maztica, although the Church of Helm in New Amn does much to alleviate the disease among the Faerûnians (the natives are left to the ravages of disease though).
- Governor Cordell dies from the plague, despite the ministrations of Bishou Devane.
- **1383 DR Year of the Vindicated Warrior:** Quarantine procedures in Amn slow the appointment of a new Governor for New Amn. Interim Governor Devane appoints himself in order to quell unrest among the populace. This move immediately alienates the natives of Maztica who despise the Church of Helm for recent atrocities.
- **1384 DR Year of Three Streams Blooded:** Agents from New Waterdeep contact Tokol; War Chief of the Kultakans and provide him with information regarding New Amn's exploitation of gold mines on their land. Tokol sends the severed heads of the miners to Governor Devane in New Amn. Sacrifices begin in earnest among the Kultakans.
- **1385 DR Year of Blue Fire:** Lady Shaliar makes an unannounced appearance at the settlement of Drakmul, after contact was lost with her agent the jhasina Tara. Winter Zulth of Waterdeep

disappears in a freak storm during a routine exploration of those lands around the Gulf of Qotal aboard a fleet of Horizon Sails' ships.

- Taking advantage of the disruption and chaos around Kultaka's break with New Amn, the forces of Pezelac attack and destroy the settlement of Drakmul. Drakosa is slain along with much of his settlement. Many of the slaves escape including the jhasina and her mentor Lady Shaliar (who finds her return to Faerûn blocked by some unknown means) as well as almost the entire tribe of Talu'min from the Lake of Steam that had been raided by the Zhentarim for years and sold to slave markets in Calimshan and then on to Maztica.
- Kultaka and New Amn declare war and initial skirmishing severely damages the settlement of Qoral. Most of the fighting is centred in Pezelac which is currently under New Amn's control.
- **1386 DR:** The sleeping menace of Nexal suddenly comes to life once again by attacking Kultaka as that nation itself wages war against New Amn.
- Governor Devane, not wanting to waste any of his forces, pulls back and leaves Kultaka and Nexal to destroy each other; he then intends to pounce upon his weakened neighbours.
- **1390 DR:** After years of warfare the nations of Kultaka and Nexal decide (with guidance from other sources) that the real enemy is New Amn. Uniting their forces they march on New Amn much to the surprise of Governor Devane.
- **1391 DR:** With thousands of natives hastily conscripted into the armies of New Amn, Governor Devane hurls his forces at Nexal and Kultaka with abandon. As land is taken or lost the Governor orders his Faerûnian troops acting in support to burn and salt the earth.
- **1393 DR:** The forces of Nexal and Kultaka surround the ineffective Governor General Devane and his forces around the settlement of Patul. The battle is prevented from turning into a massacre only by the timely arrival of a large number of refugees from Tukan that have travelled out of the House of Tezca seeking refuge from the scouring winds and blazing sunshine that are slowly desertifying their home.
- The battle between the Old World and New ends in a loss for the Old World, but the forces of Nexal and Kultaka are too weakened by disease and battle to finish the conquest.
- **1394 DR:** Upon his return to New Amn, Governor General Devane and the Faerûnians of New Amn are attacked by the Payit peoples and driven from Ulatos. Helmsport is torn down and Ulatos remade as it once was. The cowardly Governor General Devane flees to New Waterdeep with the remnants of the people of New Amn, bringing his heretical Church of Helm with him.

## The Watch Lineup

### The White Widow – By Kenneth Fabacher

Given Name: Faelyn'geld Zaulyl

Alias: Faelyn Anauril

Professional Alias: The White Widow

### **APPEARANCE**

Height: 5'9

Weight: 140lbs

Hair: White with streaks of silver

Eyes: Bright hazel with silver flecks

Complexion: Fair

Physique: Lithe musculature ('dancers' figure)

Age: 366 (apparent age 18)

Other: Angular features, arched eyebrows

**General:** Fael possesses a lithe dancer's figure with well-toned muscles cut to perfect form. She is very pale (as she is, in truth, an albino drow) with fairly straight/thin hair that she is fond of wearing in long pig-tails (her hair flows all the way to her lower back). Though predominantly white, her hair also has silver highlights within it, a fact that brings out her bright hazel eyes which also possess silver flecks within them. She is a remarkable beauty with a unique appearance, a fact that she not only embraces but also relishes.

### **SUB-APPEARANCE**

**Clothing style:** Fael always dresses in tight, form-fitting clothing of exquisite design when not on a mission or otherwise working. She enjoys clothing that accentuates her curves and shows enough skin to inflame the imagination without revealing all in the process. When simply relaxing she enjoys loose, diaphanous clothing that reveals scantily clad under clothing of rather artful design. In either example she prefers hues of purple, pink and red.

However, when she is 'working' she favors very utilitarian clothing (that somehow still manages to accentuate her beautiful figure) of jet black. Such clothing is rife with pockets, clamps, and buckles for holding her gear and accessories for spying and assassination. There is one strange twist to her outfit though. She always tries to leave at least one person alive whom she allows to see her. That individual always sees an obviously beautiful woman (whose face is always covered) in solid white spidersilk with silver 'webbing' throughout the suit and a stylized crimson red hourglass sitting in its center. This is the source of the name White Widow.

**Grooming:** Fael is always immaculately clean with every hair in place and all of her clothing perfectly tailored and pressed. She is never seen to be 'out of sorts' unless returning from a particularly difficult job (which is rare as she is seldom seen until she wishes it). As stated above, she is fond of wearing long pig-tails but is also fond of braiding and highly artistic hairstyles. On more than one occasion she has set a trend with her clothing and hair styles.

**Posture, Gait & Coordination:** Fael always comports herself as the perfect Lady and walks with an erect posture with both grace and poise. Her coordination is phenomenal and her dancing/tumbling is a wonder to behold even to those who have seen her routines many times over.

**Habits/Mannerisms:** Fael loves to touch people. Men and women, young or old, beautiful or ugly as a warthog, and generally regardless of race. She is a woman who quickly puts people at ease with her charming and flirtatious demeanor (and she is known for her very open lovemaking, a fact that sees many scrambling to be in her company). She is brazen about her sexuality and few are resistant to her alluring charm.

**Voice:** Fael has a lovely alto voice and is capable of putting many a bard to shame with operatic-style singing. However, her 'daily' voice is a sultry soprano that sets many a suitor's blood to pumping. Fael is a woman who excites all the senses and hearing is no exception.

**Scent:** Fond of subtle perfumes that could be described as 'spicy' Fael is never without some form of fragrance unless she is on a job. She has a keen sense of smell and knows which scents will work best for her own chemistry and chooses accordingly. She wears only the most exquisite examples of perfume.

**Mood:** Fael portrays herself as a delightful woman who seeks to see and do everything the Realms has to offer a woman. She is a joy to be around and has managed to befriend just about everyone she's ever encountered. She is a consummate bachelorette who refuses to 'settle down' with anyone...a fact that just seems to inflame men and women all the more.

## PERSONALITY

Despite all of her pleasant interactions with the world around her (interactions she does truly enjoy) Fael is as dark-hearted a drow as they come. She has worked for a VERY long time as a spy and assassin for hire and has only been caught on one occasion. Despite her profession, however, she is not a wanton killer (she does not truly receive joy from the act of murder-she simply lacks true empathy for most people and thus has no qualms about ending someone's life even if her target is a long-time acquaintance). She is capable of caring for others but only in exceptional cases (which she has no control over, it either happens or it doesn't).

**What Pleases Her:** Fael loves to mingle and interact with others on an almost constant basis. She is full of energy and seldom tires of parties, quiet get-togethers, dalliances, trips to other lands or anything else that fills her days with distraction. She loves to sing and dance and does so often, even when not performing on stage. She enjoys and constantly trains her skills as a spy and practices the arts of deception, distraction and blade-skill regularly.

**What Angers Her:** Fael has not truly been angry in a very long time. Failing a contract will get her angry but as this has only happened twice in over a century, one of which led her to an even more stable position for herself, she hasn't had to contend with this often. She does occasionally get peeved by the few people who manage to resist her charms but takes such situations in stride and actually admires those who can resist her (if only begrudgingly). This is especially true when such an individual does so out of dedication to a single lover.

## BACKGROUND

Born in 1000 DR (Year of the Bloodrose) to a now fallen House in Menzoberranzan, Fael only managed to survive her House's destruction by escaping their compound during the final moments of

the battle that took her family. She was of noble birth and was less than a year away from entering the Academy to begin her training as a priestess. She was sent to a bolt-hole as a last ditch effort to preserve someone of noble blood to bring doom upon their enemies as a testament to their failure. Far more intelligent than the average drow, Fael knew she would be discovered and slipped away at the first opportunity.

She did not care for the fate of her House despite being treated far better than her other sisters (for drow albinos, especially female albinos, are highly prized for their ability to infiltrate elven settlements on the surface and were typically trained beyond the already rigorous programs of other drow nobles). It was rumored that House Baenre was behind the attack on her family as the Matron Mother desired Fael for her own purposes. House Barrison Del'Armgo, however, located the girl first (it is difficult for an albino drow to hide among others) and took her in. Because she could not attend the Academy and because training her as a priestess would bring undue attention to the girl, the Matron Mother trained her the only way she could: as a peerless spy and assassin.

For decades the girl trained hard while the House Wizards developed shielding magic to block House Baenre's attempts to locate the child. Eventually Yvonne Baenre discovered the truth but by then it was too late to act as the Law of the Spider Queen had seen 'justice' done and the girl had been too well hidden afterwards. Even Lloth had not initially revealed anything to her most faithful servant. Fael became a master of disguise and was given ample magic to afford her the ability to shield her presence and maintain her cover. She took out many targets at the behest of her patron House and even managed to slay a couple of key Baenre nobles. In truth, her Matron Mother thought she might have stumbled upon the means of replacing the preeminent House in Menzoberranzan. But that was not to be the case.

One of her final missions for House Del'Armgo was to assassinate an apprentice of the Spider-Mage Jalynefein...but the infamous drow wizard knew she was coming and ensnared her. The Spider-Mage brokered a deal with the young drow: In return for giving her magic to shield herself from her patron House and her freedom (which she desperately desired) she had only to retrieve a certain spell from House Del'Armgo. It was without a doubt the most dangerous mission she had ever undertaken but she did succeed in procuring a copy of the spell and the Spider-Mage was true to his word. He replaced the magic that shielded her (but was easily traceable by House Del'Armgo's capable wizards) and transported her to the surface. They faked her death and she has been free ever since.

She relished life on the surface far more than she had anticipated. She found that while she still needed to be ever on her guard, the threat of death was far less prominent than in her home and people in Waterdeep (and other great cities she visited) were actually capable of both trust and loyalty. Though these traits largely remain foreign to her, it has engendered an acceptance of the surface in her...she will never return to the Underdark again. Besides, she prefers the wide open spaces and fragrant forests to the oppressive and dank underground. She eventually developed an alias for herself and became an actress, dancer and singer. Her true profession would be as an assassin, of course, if for no other reason than to maintain her skills should her whereabouts ever be discovered.

For well over a century now she has developed extensive contacts throughout Faerûn (and even



beyond) and has no shortage of potential contracts. She acts through intermediaries and even her closest agents do not know her by her alias (let alone her true) identity. She only accepts contracts when she desires though these days she works for the only individual who has ever managed to learn her true identity.

### Goals

Fael's goals are simple. She will live a life of pleasure until she dies and strive to be the best assassin there is for as long as she lives (Note: Fael uses magic to keep her body young). She is in a position where she truly does not have to work anymore unless she wants but continues to do so because she has developed a strong measure of loyalty to her patron. Truthfully though, she wouldn't stop anyway as she enjoys the challenges each job brings.

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The White Widow

NE Drow (Albino) Female

Ftr8/Rog8/Rgr2

Str	14 (+2)	Int	18 (+4)
Dex	20 (+5)	Wis	16 (+3)
Con	14 (+2)	Cha	20 (+5)

**Equipment:** Glamored Mithril Shirt of Silent Shadows +4, Glamored Mithril Buckler +3, Keen Speed Rapier of Defense +6, Hand Crossbow of Distance +3, Wraithcloak, Boots of Tracelessness, Ring of Protection +2, Ring of Resistance +4

**Languages:** Common, Drow Sign, Elven, Orc, Sylvan, Undercommon

**Skills:** Acrobatics +16, Bluff +16, Climb +15, Craft: Poison +17, Diplomacy +16, Disable Device +16, Disguise +16, Escape Bonds +16, Handle Animal +18, Heal +14, Intimidate +18, Knowledge: Dungeoneering +15, Knowledge: Local (Waterdeep) +15, Knowledge: Nature +15, Perception +16, Perform: Act +16, Perform: Dance +16, Perform: Sing +16, Ride +14, Sense Motive +14, Sleight of Hand +16, Stealth +20, Survival +16, Swim +15

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Rapier, Hand Crossbow), Weapon Specialization (Rapier, Hand Crossbow), Improved Critical (Rapier, Hand Crossbow), Improved Initiative, Daylight Adaptation, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack, Blind Fight, Greater Weapon Focus (Rapier, Hand Crossbow), Greater Weapon Specialization (Rapier, Hand Crossbow), Track, Shield Focus

**Fighter Features:** Armor Training II, Weapon Training I, Bravery +2

**Rogue Features:** Improved Uncanny Dodge, Sneak Attack +4d6, Trapsense +2, Evasion, Trapfinding

**Ranger Features:** Favored Enemy (Drow), Wild Empathy, Combat Style (Sword & Shield)

**Racial Traits:** Darkvision 120ft, Poison Use, SR 29, Immune to Sleep, +2 vs. Enchantment

**SLAs:** Dancing Lights, Darkness, Faerie Fire 1/day each

## Welcome to the Jungle: Cult of the Viperhand

The Cult of the Viperhand shot to infamy in recent years for their part in unleashing the Night of Wailing. During that event almost the entire membership of this cult was transformed into various races now known as the Maztican Beastmen.

Questions still remain however regarding the origins and the agenda of the Cult of the Viperhand.

### **History of the Cult of the Viperhand**

Founded in 1111 DR following the arrival of two peoples in the; soon to be called, Nexal Valley. The Cult of the Viperhand was born out of a need for freedom of a secret evil trapped for millennia inside Mount Zatal.

The first arrival was a group of drow that had spent a century travelling the Underdark looking for a new home. A number of their group arrived in the Nexal Valley in secret and established themselves in caves around Mount Zatal.

The second arrival was the Nahuat tribe that were led to the valley by directions from Zaltec himself.

The warrior tribe of the Nahuat brought a destabilising element to the balance of power in the Nexal Valley, but the tribe themselves were woefully small compared to the nearby cities of Tezat, Azatl and Zokil. Gaining ascendancy over these three would require a miracle.

Also hidden in the valley was an ancient and supremely evil reptilian being, a remnant of a race from bygone eras unknown to almost anyone on the planet. This being was part of a group in service to the benevolent deity Jazirian who battled the evil Mershaullk for control over an entire race. Jazirian lost the battle, betrayed by one of his own faithful and as punishment that servant was transformed back into her original form and imprisoned inside the bubbling volcano that was Mount Zatal to ponder her crimes.

When the drow arrived at Mount Zatal, the volcano had long since cooled, and the evil creature was encased in a cocoon of rock and magic that he could not hope to breach himself. He stretched his mind out to the drow and ensnared them with his power and the Cult of the Viper's Hand was born.

The drow began recruiting members from among the Nahuat people and the other cities of the Nexal Valley. It was the Cult that secretly implemented the plan to topple Tezat's dominance over the valley and set Nexal on the path to glory.

Remaining confined in the Nexal Valley the Cult of the Viperhand as it came to be known worked towards the mysterious goals of the being known only as "the Viper" until the eruption of Mount Zatal, and the Viper's disappearance, since then the Cult has been led by Hoxitl for his own ambitions.

### **Organisation**

In its original inception the Cult of the Viper's Hand was led by a being known as the Viper; a mysterious and ancient being imprisoned inside Mount Zatal who used to communicate with her drow servants through the use of magic.

The drow were known as the Hands, but the humans in service to them called them the Ancient Ones because of their incredible long life (by human standards). The Hands were responsible for distributing

the orders of the Viper and ensuring they were carried out. They delivered these messages to the human members of the cult in the valley below.

The humans were split into two groups, the Fangs, and the Scales. The Fangs were the warriors of the group and were the ones that carried out most of the orders given from above, they were the most numerous and generally least powerful of the group (with some exceptions). This group was exclusively male for only men are allowed to fight in the Maztican societies of the Nexal Valley.

The Scales were members of the cult that had been recruited from other sections of society, they could be male or female (although most were male) and included priests, scholars, crafters, and plumaweavers and hishnashapers. This group was responsible for keeping the cult and their activities secret from the rulers of the cities in the valley (until it was time to strike), as well as aiding them in their goals through less direct (violent) methods.

Now the organisation of the cult has devolved significantly since almost all its members were transformed into overly aggressive monstrous humanoids of various types and the Ancient Ones and The Viper are now gone. The Jagre are in charge commanded by Hoxitl who is called "the Hood", the other Jagre are known as "the Fangs", and the rest of the Beastmen are "the Talons" representing various aspects of Zaltec's power.

**The Viper (NE sarrukh female Wizard 22/Psion 15):** This creature is one of the most ancient beings on the planet. She was originally a native of Okoth and fled that realm during its fall for the Outer Planes and other worlds, where they carried on enslaving other races and living in decadent luxury. At some point a group of sarrukh broke away from the Okothians and returned to Faerûn, embracing a being known as Jazirian and a different set of more benevolent ideals. They were led to the newly created continent of Maztica and hid in the depths of Mount Zatal for a time.

For their devotion, and to hide them from a race of fiends that relentlessly pursued the sarrukh of Okoth, Jazirian transformed them into couatls. One of their number was a traitor and she betrayed Jazirian and the group to the Okoth Sarrukh. A war ensued and Jazirian was slain, but not before the Viper was changed back to her original form and imprisoned in the depths of the volcano.

30,000 years later the Viper ensnared nearby drow into her web and engineered her escape by causing the catastrophic eruption of Mount Zatal and the Night of Wailing.

The Viper has since disappeared, and none in the cult have heard from her since.

**Darian (CE drow female Wizard 12):** This albino drow was tutored by the Viper personally in the ways of magic and sent to Faerûn in order that she might engineer the Viper's escape from her prison. Darian was to ensure humans, not of the blood of Kukul and Maztica, would make their way to Maztica. Unfortunately for the Viper, Darian heard the voice of Lolth during her time in Faerûn and brought it back with her to Maztica.

Serving two masters now, Darian helped bring about the Night of Wailing by ensuring the sacrifice of a non Maztican human in the pyramid of Nexal. She did this by protecting Cordell during his invasion, and at the crucial moment in Nexal she lied about the Maztican's planning an attack on the Golden Legion which caused Cordell to order a pre-emptive strike and ultimately led to the sacrifice of Bishou Dominicus.

The release of magical energy in a huge explosion released the Viper from her prison but also allowed Lolth to transform the Ancient Ones into driders for their lack of faith as well as allowing that foreign goddess a chance to establish herself on the continent of Maztica.

**Hoxitl (CE Jagre male Fighter 6/Jaguar Knight 11):** Hoxitl was one of the Fangs, and a high ranking commander in the armies of Nexal. He was responsible for ensuring the capture and sacrifice of Bishou Dominicus. Like most humans in the cult, he assumed he was serving Zaltec in the guise of Mirtek the god of venomous snakes.

Hoxitl performed his task admirably and his unexpected reward was to be transformed into one of the feral Beastmen along with the rest of the cult. Fortunately for Hoxitl, Zaltec was watching events, and was pleased with his faithful even if they had been unwittingly serving another. As a reward he saved a number of his most powerful and faithful minions from the uncontrollable rage that would affect the other Beastmen; he changed them into the Jagre.

Huge hulking behemoths that resembled lion-like ogres, the Jagre retained complete control over themselves and were able to transform into beasts much like the Jaguar Lords and Jaguar Knights that once served Zaltec faithfully in times gone by.

Hoxitl along with the other Jagre now keep the Beastmen in line through fear of pain and death. As the most powerful of the Jagre, Hoxitl is in charge of the cult for as long as he can enforce his rule. He intends to establish a nation of Beastmen and expand it to cover the continent of Maztica so that Zaltec might rule all.

### **Motivation and Goals**

To the lowly Beastmen of Nexal, known as the Talons, the cult exists no more. They can barely control themselves enough to organise breakfast and are concerned only with killing, eating, and breeding.

To the Fangs and the Hood, the Cult of the Viperhand remains as a secret organisation dedicated to preserving the new Beastmen races and to spreading the word of Zaltec.

Hoxitl sees the cult as a new version of the Jaguar Knights that long ago turned from exclusive worship and loyalty to Zaltec. When the number of Jagre and other Beastmen are strong enough he will initiate a war in Zaltec's name to destroy the enemies of his god.

### **Resources**

The technology level of the Nexal Valley never evolved beyond the bronze age of civilisation.

Agricultural methods never advanced beyond planting and harvesting by hand and as a consequence iron was never needed or in enough abundance to lead to the development of steel.

The tools available to the Cult of the Viperhand are the obsidian and copper (or more rarely bronze) tools left behind by the civilisations of the Nexal Valley.

It is unlikely that the Beastmen of Nexal will ever attain the levels of civilisation that their human ancestors did. Most of them lack the self-control to think about such concepts as craftsmanship. Only the Jagre retain the level of intelligence and discipline that they once had as humans, and most of their number are warriors.

Still, a few Jagre remain with skills in pluma and hishna enough to craft new magical tools for the cult,

and four entire cities worth of treasure remains in the Nexal Valley to be recovered, most of which ends up in the hands of the Jagre elite.

The rest of the Beastmen must raid nearby civilisations for tools, and even then most resort to using whatever natural weapons (teeth and claws) that they have been blessed with in their new forms.

### **Recruitment**

The Cult of the Viperhand like the Beastmen themselves have problems in recruiting or acquiring new members. A quirk of the cult's membership and Maztican society in general meant that almost everyone converted into the Beastmen were male.

A few women did have membership in the cult, but these were typically powerful priests and plumaweaver or hishnashapers so they were all transformed into Jagre if they were close enough to be transformed.

The few women from society that had gathered to watch the battle and didn't flee when things started to turn sour were inevitably slain within hours of becoming transformed into Maztican Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls in fights over mating rights as hundreds of the Beastmen women were unwillingly argued over by nearly 20,000 men.

The result was that for several decades following the Night of Wailing membership in the cult declined steadily (sometimes drastically during times of war) as Beastmen died or were killed in battle without anyone to replace them.

Thanks to the female Jagre the members of the Jagre race have begun to increase steadily, they are the true members of the cult, and the only Beastmen capable of carrying on the organisation.

The other Beastmen races have also begun to show a fall in decreasing population, and indeed the numbers have even begun to increase very recently. Many of the nations bordering Nexal believe this to be related to the increase in raids they have been experiencing, with many captives taken. Although whether this is a cause or a symptom of the increasing numbers of Beastmen remains to be seen.

(Note this last paragraph only applies to post 1376 DR after the humans are rounded up and imprisoned beneath Mt. Zatal)

## Deities With a Difference: The Masked Lady

*The Dark Dancer, The Shadowed Dancer, The Rebel*

Intermediate Power of the Demonweb Pits (CN)

**Portfolio:** Surface Drow, Rebellion, Thievery, Drow Males, Assassination, Dance, Swordwork, Moonlight, Beauty, Song

The Masked Lady is a newcomer to the drow pantheon and something of an enigma to the drow. The Masked Lady is actually androgynous in appearance and both Eilistraee's and Vhaeraun's clergy would recognise the Masked Lady as their god, which would no doubt cause chaos and confusion if ever the two groups would talk to one another. Thankfully cooperation and or communication between the two clergies is a rarity so both groups remain ignorant of recent events.

The worshippers of Zinzerena are the primary followers of the Masked Lady, they recognise this masked goddess as their own reborn in a new form and they follow her unquestioningly.

### **History**

The history of the Masked Lady is a confusing mess intertwined with the history of Eilistraee, Lolth, Vhaeraun, and Zinzerena.

Lolth had long been the patron goddess of the Drow, and even when they were the Ilythiir tribe of elves she had taken steps to twist them towards evil by slowly breeding the blood of Wendonai the Balor and other fiends into their bloodline. The Ilythiir were deemed irredeemable by the elves and cast down into the Underdark for their crimes where they became the Drow.

Yet always in the shadows Eilistraee worked to free them from Lolth's influence and show them the way of good as well as evil. Her brother Vhaeraun likewise sought to free them from Lolth's tyranny, but only so he could replace her.

For millennia Lolth stood strong as the undisputed power of the Drow pantheon. During the Time of Troubles Lolth found and destroyed Zinzerena; goddess of assassins and rebellion, taking her power for her own and assuming Zinzerena's guise so that she may answer the prayers of her clergy and gain power from Drow that follow Lolth's rule, and those that rally against her.

Then in 1372 DR, Lolth fell silent. She no longer answered the prayers of her faithful, and the entire society of most Drow settlements were thrown into chaos.

During this silence, Eilistraee, Vhaeraun, and the other gods of the Drow Pantheon battled against each other for the fate of the Drow. Vhaeraun began to answer the prayers of Zinzerena's worshippers who were also affected by Lolth's silence (for Lolth had pretended to be Zinzerena since the Time of Troubles when she killed the drow Demi Power of assassins), using Zinzerena as an alias in the same way that Lolth had done.

Given the new influx of power and worshippers, Vhaeraun decided to once and for all destroy his hated sister so that he might take her power and then challenge his mother for rule of the Drow race, wherever she may be.

The contest between Eilistraee and Vhaeraun went unwitnessed by the rest of Faerûn, and no-one

knows who emerged victorious. What is certain is that a new power appeared in the Drow Pantheon shortly after the conflict, calling itself the Masked Lady and claiming to be Zinzerena reborn.

This androgynous goddess referred to as a “she” because of her title, embraced Zinzerena’s followers and formed her church around the individually powerful assassins that Lolthite priestesses had used against one another for years in their power struggles.

While it appears that the Masked Lady’s worshippers are few, her power is far greater because she answers the prayers of and derives power from Eilistraee and Vhaeraun’s clergy, both of whom think their deity is the source of their power. With the worshippers of three churches behind her, and power over drow males, surface drow, thievery, assassination, and acts of rebellion in drow society, the Masked Lady is a strong goddess and she and her faithful are resisting Lolth’s evil.

The Masked Lady’s personality is very chaotic and prone to whimsy. She can demonstrate acts of infinite kindness, as well as depraved cruelty to both her worshippers and her enemies. Her ever changing personality is mirrored by her clergy who at times act as peacemakers between the drow, and then again are known to slaughter entire bands of Lolthites that they encounter.

Her goals both mirror and yet remain distinct from Eilistraee and Vhaeraun. She seeks to deliver the Drow from Lolth’s evil and tyranny, so that she may become Lolth’s replacement, not as a cruel tyrant, but as a nurturing mother. Yet she does not seek to redeem the drow from their evil natures, instead the Masked Lady wishes simply that the Drow be free to live how and where they choose. To further these aims she will fight Lolth, and anyone else that seeks to oppress and attack the Drow, that includes those races on the surface of Toril if they choose to block the Drow’s return to those lands.

### **Relationships**

The Masked Lady is very much a loner. Her church cooperates freely with the churches of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun, often acting as peaceful mediators between the two churches. This has led to unprecedented acts recently where faithful of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun have been seen in close proximity without slaughtering one another (an act usually instigated by Vhaeraun’s followers and gleefully retaliated by Eilistraee’s).

Eilistraee had a close relationship with Corellon Larethian, some other elven deities of the Seldarine, and even Mystra. The Masked Lady however prefers her independence and now that she no longer desires to steer the Drow towards goodness she no longer needs the allies of Eilistraee. She has spurned the Seldarine gods knowing that they will never truly accept her or her people. Her relationship with Mystra however remains unchanged, a development due in no small part to some of Mystra’s Chosen

The Masked Lady does not associate with other members of the Drow Pantheon either. She still despises the wantonly evil nature of Lolth, Ghaunadaur, and Kiaransalee who hinder the development of the Drow people and keep them in perpetual servitude. The Masked Lady will not rest until the Drow have been delivered from the cruelty and oppression of Lolth’s rule and have the freedom to choose their own path.

### **Avatar**

The Masked Lady’s avatar form is that of a lithe, muscular person of indeterminate gender, whose facial



features are hidden behind a half white, half black domino style mask.

This avatar is known as the Dancer, and is armed with a curved scimitar like blade known as the Crescent Blade. The Dancer never wears armour, or indeed any clothes. Instead her form is veiled by a cloak as black as night, and she is surrounded by many persistent illusion and shadow based magics that never allow onlookers to pin-point her exact form, features, or location.

The Dancer is an expert sword-master, and has a whirling dervish style of combat, executing a myriad of strikes as she performs acrobatic feats during her deadly dance. Although she prefers melee combat, the Dancer is also equally capable with ranged and thrown weapons, particularly throwing daggers and hand crossbows

The Dancer is a master of poisons, shadows, and assassination. There are few mortal beings that can remain alive for long once targeted by the Dancer. In her guise as the Dancer, the worshippers of Zinzerena, truly recognise that their goddess has returned.

### **Relics**

As a recent arrival to godhood, the Masked Lady has few relics, the most powerful of which is one that formerly (and secretly) belonged to Eilistraee, and has now been rededicated to the Masked Lady.

**The Crescent Blade:** Long ago during the War of the Seldarine, Eilistraee was tricked by Lolth into injuring her father Corellon Larethian. For her crimes Lolth was cast into the Abyss, and Eilistraee was exiled from Faerie.

Like the rest of the Lords of Faerie, Eilistraee wandered Faerûn for many years, dancing in the glades and honing her skills. She crafted many blades, powerful and deadly, the best of which was a curved scimitar known as the Crescent Blade. While Eilistraee had not truly considered gaining revenge upon her treacherous mother, she recognised the possibility that one day she may need to fight Lolth for the fate of the Illythiir.

The forging of the Crescent Blade was Eilistraee's attempt at preparing herself for that day, and immediately she regretted doing so and hid it in the depths of Arcorar where she hoped none would ever find it. Unfortunately for Eilistraee it was found, by a servant of the enemy and a being of legendary evil and corruption, the Balor Wendonai.

Wendonai was many times the favoured champion and discarded exile of Lolth, for Lolth was a fickle goddess of foul temper. Wendonai was ordered to find the blade, and so when he sent his Drow to the surface to search for it, he set up a power base in Arcorar and was cast from Lolth's favour once again into exile.

Wendonai still corrupted the blade as he was bidden by his former master, but he altered its power so that it might drain the soul of those it slew. In this way Wendonai hoped it might one day be used against his master, souls are currency in the Abyss and the soul of a goddess such as Lolth would be worth much, he might even be able to use it to replace Lolth as head of the drow pantheon.

The chance to use the blade did come, in 1372 DR when Lolth cast off her divinity to become a true demon. Eilistraee recognised her chance; she sent her servants to recover the Crescent Blade and ordered her champion into the Abyss to slay her mother and long-time nemesis. To aid her champion, Eilistraee sacrificed much of her divine power to create a new avatar embodied in the Crescent Blade

itself (a trick used by Mask many years earlier to escape detection). This divine infused weapon would now surely be capable of killing Lolth, no matter what she had become.

It is unknown if Eilistraee knew of the corruption of the blade by Wendonai, regardless of the truth, the Balor's influence on the blade masked it from the senses of Lolth and her servants, giving Eilistraee's champion a chance, however slim, to penetrate the Demonweb Pits and put an end to Lolth's evil.

Unfortunately for Eilistraee, both she and her champion were lost, and the blade was never used for its intended purpose. Recovered by the Masked Lady, the Crescent Blade now is a symbol of the Masked Lady's Power.

The Blade itself is an incredibly powerful artefact, it possesses the ability to overcome all supernatural defences against damage, and upon command can burn with a flame that consumes the enemy from the inside. The blade is capable of wielding itself independent of its bearer and the deadly dance of death of both wielder and sword is truly terrifying. The blade may well have other powers, from its augmentation by Eilistraee as one of her avatars, unfortunately no one ever witnessed its use in the Abyss and so these powers remain undocumented.

The blade itself also contains a portion of Eilistraee's soul; trapped within the deadly blade she created.

### **The Church of the Masked Lady**

The Church of the Masked Lady is still very much in its infancy. At the moment most of her worshippers are former worshippers of Zinzerena. These powerful assassins had for years been used by the priestesses of Lolth to eliminate their rivals.

The Zinzerenan's were happy to oblige because they were paid well for the task and they got to do what they loved best, kill priestesses of Lolth. However none of them realised that their deity had been dead for many years and they were secretly furthering the aims of Lolth.

When the Masked Lady came into being, she appealed to this disparate order of assassins and they learned of Lolth's duplicity. Now they embrace the Masked Lady and sow the seeds of rebellion wherever they go. They still perform the assassinations for Lolthite priestesses as they always have done, but with much more fervour now that they are no longer Lolth's puppets.

A hierarchy and central church has yet to form, as are the tenets, holy days, and other trappings of organised worship. However it is becoming apparent that the Masked Lady welcomes all into her worship, good and evil, male and female, drow and drider, if they are opposed to Lolth then they have a home with the Masked Lady. She encourages her worshippers to seek out the disaffected in Drow society and have them perform subtle acts of rebellion to secretly undermine Lolth's rule.

The Churches of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun are now nominally under control of the Masked Lady since she is answering the prayers of those worshippers. Her whisperings are mediating the open hostility between the two, and when the followers of Zinzerena (the Masked Lady) are involved there has even been tentative steps towards cooperation against the forces of Lolth (albeit reluctantly). The two churches remain separate from the Masked Lady's church because they still believe Eilistraee and Vhaeraun persist, an opinion reinforced by the spells they receive and the regular sightings of 9 ft tall naked drow dancing in the forest glades of the north, or the muscular drow male with hair and eyes

that change hue with his emotions who lurks in the shadows of drow settlements.

Nonetheless there are a few converts to the Masked Lady within the Churches of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun. Following the contest between Eilistraee and Vhaeraun there was a brief period of unanswered prayers to their worshippers. Within the borders of Undermountain, the Clergy of Eilistraee of the Promenade were under constant attack by the oozes of Ghaunadaur, furthermore their champion, Qilue Veladorn, was absent on a mission from which she is yet to return. In desperation, some of the clergy opened their hearts to anyone that would grant them the power to turn back their foes. The Masked Lady answered and gained a few converts from this group. Shortly afterwards she decided to maintain Eilistraee's worship as a secret alias of herself.

The Clergy of Vhaeraun are likewise turning to the Masked Lady, in increasing numbers thanks to their close cooperation with the former worshippers of Zinzerena. The Dark Dagger is a guild of thieves and assassins that operates in Skull Port, Calimshan, Turmish, and beyond. The assassins of that guild have long venerated Zinzerena and worked openly with the priests and worshippers of Vhaeraun that make up the rest of the guild membership.

This close cooperation has led some to conclude (recently) that the new god the Zinzerenan's worship is actually Vhaeraun in disguise. They are slowly turning towards worship of this new deity who may well be more powerful than they at first thought.

The Masked Lady's greatest number of converts however comes from within the Church of Lolth itself. Long had Vhaeraun sought to implant traitor priests within Lolth's clergy, however he was hampered somewhat by his favouring of male Drow, while at the same time Lolth favoured female Drow. The Masked Lady has no such qualms about gender and as a result of Lolth's Silence, has gained many converts among the priesthood of Lolth while Lolth was unable to answer their prayers.

### **Allies**

The Dark Dagger is a guild of thieves and assassins affiliated with the Church of Vhaeraun. In the Masked Lady's guise as Vhaeraun she is gradually working towards making the Dark Dagger affiliated with her church as well. Already she has a number of priest in the guild (thanks to the converts from Vhaeraun's church) and some of the operations of the guild are now those favourable to the Masked Lady.

As the Masked Lady is no longer fiercely dedicated to a return to the surface world, she is also attempting to expand the Dark Dagger back into the Underdark, with the hopes of one day making the Dark Dagger the backbone of her newly formed church hierarchy.

### **Heresies**

The Church of the Masked Lady has two heresies among her worshippers that relate to her own origins.

**The Moon Dancer Cult:** This group of worshippers of the Masked Lady maintains that during the battle between Eilistraee and Vhaeraun, Eilistraee outwitted her brother and merged with him to become the dominant personality of the goddess known as the Masked Lady. While they acknowledge that this has changed their goddess's outlook, Eilistraee is still very much the dominant force behind the Masked Lady, and once she has defeated Lolth she will return as the goddess they know and love.

Since the Church of the Masked Lady has not yet solidified, there is little in the way of scripture to

disagree with the Moon Dancer Cult's claims. The Cult of the Masked Dancer vehemently opposes this cult, while the Cult of Zinzerena Reborn is indifferent.

This cult is strongest around the Promenade in Undermountain.

**Cult of the Masked Dancer:** This group of worshippers of the Masked Lady maintain that Vhaeraun was the more powerful of the two and slew Eilistraee using shadow and poison. As such Vhaeraun is the power behind the Masked Lady and once he has slain Lolth he will reveal himself.

The Moon Dancer Cult seeks to combat this cult wherever it emerges, while the Cult of Zinzerena Reborn is happy to wait and prove the Cult of the Masked Dancer wrong.

This cult is strongest among the members of the Dark Dagger.

**The Cult of Zinzerena Reborn:** This group of worshippers acknowledges that Zinzerena was slain by Lolth (as revealed to them by the Masked Lady herself). They firmly believe that the Masked Lady is Zinzerena reborn since she resembles their goddess in looks and style and her outlook and goals match many of their own.

This cult is strongest among the Drow settlements ruled by the Church of Lolth, where the assassins of Zinzerena were employed to eliminate rivals. They do not have any qualms about working with the Moon Dancer Cult or the Cult of the Masked Dancer since they know that their deity perished long ago.

## Deities With a Difference: Qotal

*The Feathered Dragon, The Plumed One*

Intermediate Power of Great Skyhome (CG)

**Portfolio:** Aarakocra, Couatl, the Payit, the Itza, Good, Healing, Ideas, Knowledge, Invention, Avians, Shame, Pluma Magic,

Qotal is co-head of the Maztican pantheon with his brother Zaltec. Like the other gods of Maztica he is often depicted as the child of Kukul and Maztica and is venerated along with his siblings by almost every intelligent being in Maztica.

### **History**

The history of the Maztican pantheon is poorly documented and mostly recounted in the myths and legends of the Maztican people. Kukul, Maztica, and the other gods of the pantheon are credited with the creation of humans on the continent of Maztica; after a few failed attempts, and almost immediately following that act the entire pantheon was embroiled in warfare that covered presumably the whole continent.

As a result of that war, Maztica was slain, Kukul disappeared, Zaltec fled or was banished to the shadows and Qotal emerged as the head of the Maztican pantheon. Some time later Qotal himself fled in disgrace for his actions and Zaltec returned to rule.

This was known as the Era of Immortals and almost nothing of that time is known for certain. The myths passed down through the generations are just a pale reflection of the truth.

The war between Qotal and Zaltec did not just involve the gods of Maztica, but also their human servants and their allies.

Qotal's children rode into battle on the backs of giant eagles alongside their avian friends from the forests to the south. Zaltec and his brothers attacked with legions of well trained fighting men armed with technologies long since passed from the New-World. The fighting was fierce and devastating and caused many deaths. From this conflict the origins of the Eagle Knights and the Jaguar Knights begin.

Following the Era of Immortals Qotal fled to lands unknown leaving behind a prophecy that would herald his return. Whether the prophecy was destined to come true or Qotal and his agents had a hand in manipulating events is unknown, but what is certain is that Qotal returned to Maztica amid a storm of chaos and destruction known as the Night of Wailing.

A god of noble bearing would surely not inflict such evils upon his people, and it is likely this act of chaos was the result of another's plan for several other deities are known to have had a hand in the events surrounding Qotal's return. Darien the albino drow was surely in service of Lolth that day, and it was her information (or lies) that resulted in the slaughter at Nexal. Bishou Dominicus was supposedly a devout priest of Helm, but his actions during the conquest can only be described as heretical by Helm's faithful back in Faerûn, who knows which deity may be secretly back the Companions of the One True Vision who believe that Helm is the only true deity and followers of all other gods are heretics to be converted or slaughtered (usually slaughtered) – doctrine that mirrors a recent addition to the Faerûnian pantheon.

There are other gods involved in Maztica's past that are no longer represented in the pantheon today. The aarakocra could be considered native to Maztica having arrived as the Aearee in the long distant past, their ancient deities may have had some involvement in Maztica's past and perhaps present and future.

Qotal himself is in fact familiar in representation to many gods of the Aearee. His appearance of many colours is reminiscent of Syranita whilst the history of the Qotal and the tale of Diamond Eyes is similar in many ways to Quorlinn's betrayal of his father Krocaa in exchange for the mantle of night.

### **Relationships**

Qotal's relationship with the other gods of Maztica is surprisingly strained for the co-head of a pantheon. His rivalry with brother Zaltec is legendary and shows little signs of abating, this has long spilled over to his other brothers Azul, Tezca, and Plutoq who imitate Zaltec in many ways.

His relationship with his sister Kiltzi is strained because of his past actions and she is as yet unsure of him since his return, constantly waiting for him to turn back to the darkness she witnessed so long ago. His other sisters are likewise wary of him in case he turns his attentions to them.

His church is likewise at odds with the churches of all the other gods for his refusal to allow sacrificial rituals, despite the cultural history of such practices that have long been ingrained into society, indeed even a few priests of the more ancient and traditional tenets of Qotal have been known to sacrifice humans themselves.

Qotal has an almost fanatical hatred of Helm and Lolth whom he blames for the Night of Wailing, and this feeling often spills over to the other Faerûnian deities who he refuses to allow entry into Maztica, calling upon his church to muster forces against foreign invaders when they are able.

### **Avatar**

The avatar of Qotal is a gigantic humanoid creature that resembles a cross between a reptile, a human, and an aarakocra.

His face is that of a reptile with an elongated maw and rows of razorsharp teeth. His body is covered with golden scales that shine in all the colours of the rainbow when touched by the sun and are so fine that they are as light as feathers. His body is humanoid in shape with two arms, two legs, and from his back spread two enormous wings with elongated featherlike scales that allow him to fly at great speeds.

In battle, Qotal fights with a staff topped at the end with a clear stone that glitters in all colours in the daylight. The edges of this stone are as sharp and strong as steel and two blades stretch from either end, the blade is capable of being wielded one or two handed with skill.

### **Relics**

Qotal had many relics linked to events in his past.

**Qotal's Talisman:** This relic is only rumoured to exist for it is linked to Qotal's distant past and his dalliance with the being known as "Diamond Eyes". In order to be with her, Qotal placed all of his divinity in this talisman that takes the form of a long flowing cloak.

This made Qotal mortal and he soon found he had been tricked, for Diamond Eyes was none other than the ancient goddess Shar who wanted her revenge on Qotal for unknown transgressions. After an

arduous quest with his brother Zaltec, Qotal recovered his talisman, which was now coloured as black as night, and regained his godhood.

Unfortunately Qotal realised too late that he had been tricked yet again and he was tainted with the evil of Shar forcing him into despicable acts. In shame he fled for millennia, returning to Maztica only later with during the Night of Wailing.

What became of this talisman is unknown. Qotal now appears to be the god of legend, a benevolent being of healing and knowledge that aids the people of Maztica. Perhaps he managed to purify this talisman, perhaps he finally cast it off and regained divinity via other means.

**The Cloak of One Plume:** This rainbow coloured cloak made of a single feather of the god Qotal himself bestows powers of leadership, flying, and resistance to the elements.

It appeared suddenly during the events surrounding the Night of Wailing and disappeared just as suddenly, believed lost and destroyed in the volcanic eruption of Mount Zatal.

In truth the cloak is indestructible, and if not already recovered from Mount Zatal, it surely lies there still, waiting for a servant of Qotal to discover it.

The Cloak is a symbol of the Church of Qotal and designed to unite all the followers of Qotal behind its banner. It has additional powers of healing that have as yet remained secret and should it be worn for long enough, it is rumoured to bestow long life bordering on immortality.

Whispers by the Church of Zaltec claim that there is a ritual to turn the cloak into a thing of darkness able to cloak the wearer in shadows and grant him any form his heart may desire. This cloak surely blackens the soul as well as the body and Qotal's faithful deny any claim that it is the same as the brightly coloured Cloak of One Plume

### **The Church of Qotal**

The Church of Qotal is a relatively recent construct, having arisen as an organisation only since the rise of Payit around 400 DR.

Prior to this date, the Church of Qotal had existed in the past during the Era of Immortals under the guidance of Qotal himself, but gradually disintegrated into isolated temples across Maztica as Qotal fell under a baleful influence and finally fled Maztica altogether.

With the rise of the nation of Payit the Church of Qotal was reborn from the temples of the Payit who sent out missionaries to preach their version of Qotal's dogma, just as Payit expanded its knowledge and influence to unite the continent of Maztica through trade and technology.

The Church of Qotal is governed by the Temple of Qotal in Ulatos under the auspices of Revered Counsellor Qoxtil who also commands the city and nation of New Payit.

### **Allies**

The Church of Qotal is allied with its affiliated organisation the Eagle Knights. This order of warrior-priests was once the military arm of the church but following the collapse of the Church of Qotal the Eagle Knights remained established in the cities across Maztica while the church did not. As a result, each lodge of Eagle Knights pledged themselves to the secular leaders of the cities and became a truly separate organisation from the church.

Nowadays the Eagle Knights follow the dogmatic edicts of the Church of Qotal as best they can, and are used exclusively by the church to guard their temples. In addition the Eagle Knights often pledge themselves to any cause or quest the church announces, providing it does not conflict with their duties to the ruler of the city to which they are pledged.

In many conflicts that the Church of Qotal joins it is not uncommon to find Eagle Knights among its ranks, as well as in the ranks of the enemy. No one of the church or the knighthood ever holds a grudge against the Eagle Knights they face in battle, as long as they are under an oath of service to explain their actions.

### **Heresies**

The Church of Qotal has a secret heretical cult that harkens back to the days of Qotal's temptation by diamond eyes

**Cult of the Night Bird:** This heresy originates from the time when Qotal regained his divinity and fell under the black spell of Shar. His actions during this time are questionable in motive, and many of his worshippers abandoned him as a result which ultimately led to the collapse of his church for a time.

Many of those who continued to worship Qotal during this time revelled in the increasingly dark practices of their god and grew to love the elaborate and brutal sacrifices he demanded.

When the Church of Qotal was reborn from the lands of the Payit, the travelling priests recruited many of their priests from among these darker clerics of Qotal that had survived, worshipping in isolated temples. Unwittingly they welcomed these returning priests and their dark practices and so sacrifice became a regular part of the Church of Qotal (although not quite so cruel and regular as before).

Now with Qotal's return, sacrifice is banned, but a number of priests have retained the old ways from their ancient and now departed mentors. They profess to worship Qotal, but in secret their prayers are answered by none other than Shar who still desires revenge on the feathered dragon.



## Welcome to the Jungle: Maztican Beastmen

### **Overview**

Supposedly before the Night of Wailing in 1361, the orc, ogre, troll and other more monstrous humanoid races did not exist in Maztica.

This is of course completely untrue born out of the ignorance and the misconceptions of witnesses present during the Night of Wailing.

Prior to the Night of Wailing orcs have existed in very small isolated pockets in Maztica since the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century DR thanks to portal malfunctions that dispersed great numbers of Mountain Orcs across the face of Toril. Several orcs wound up in the Sea of Azul and swam west to dry land, others appeared suddenly in the sands of Ilzcala and the continent of Lopango.

After several centuries these groups of orcs have either been eliminated or their numbers have swelled to nearly 3000 individuals, barely enough to be noticed on a continent the size of Maztica.

Furthermore the event known as the Night of Wailing is not an isolated incident. The magics that poured from Mount Zatal and twisted a large proportion of the population of Nexal was merely the most recent and largest manifestation of these magics.

Prior to this event small scale transformations have occurred all across Maztica transforming humans and animals alike into twisted versions of themselves for many years.

Finally the creatures that appeared during the Night of Wailing (and prior small events) are not even remotely related to the creatures that Faerûnians know as orcs, ogres and trolls.

The Maztican Beastmen as they have been named were created from nearby humans (most of them members of the Viperhand Cult) that were twisted by magical energies released during the eruption of Mount Zatal.

The least of these humans and those furthest from the eruption were affected by smaller amounts of the transformative magics, their Strength and Constitution was augmented and their aggression was heightened but otherwise their personality and knowledge remained their own.

The strongest, most evil, and nearest to the eruption of Mount Zatal were transformed into twisted monstrosities of with strength many times that of men with a frenzied nature and the ability to drain blood to fuel regeneration of all wounds.

Finally certain deities with a hand in the Night of Wailing used the opportunity to transform many of their favoured servants into forms more appealing for their designs, for instance Zaltec created his Jagres, and Lolth created an army of driders, other deities may have been watching the event as well and created servants of their own.

### **History**

The history of the Maztican Beastmen is short, with almost all of them having only existed in 1361 DR. After many years of raiding and constant acts of aggression against their neighbours, the Maztican Beastmen (and their superiors) discovered something vital to the continued survival of their race. All Maztican Beastmen are male. Whether by a deliberate act or just an unlucky coincidence, the societies

of Nexal were heavily patriarchal and during the fighting many of the women retreated from the trouble, furthermore the Viperhand Cult was exclusively male, so when Mount Zatal erupted and unleashed its magic upon the Mazticans less than a handful of women were affected and they soon perished in subsequent skirmishes.

As a result the only Maztican Beastmen born in the following years were half breeds, their aggression was much reduced, their tendency towards evil was reduced, and many of them resented their position of servitude in the society of Nexal. As a result many of these half breeds fled the Nexal Valley to make their own way in the world.

Following the losses incurred during Nexal's war with New Amn, many thought (including the Beastmen themselves) that the Maztican Beastmen would disappear from history altogether.

Recently however there have been increased sightings of Maztican Beastmen outside the Nexal Valley and they are raiding settlements anew across Maztica. Orcs, ogres, and trolls have been seen and they are not the aged or half breed specimens expected. Somehow the Maztican Beastmen have been able to replenish their numbers.

### **Outlook**

A Maztican Beastman is just as savage and vicious as an orc, ogre, or troll, any disagreement or altercation is likely to end up in a fight as their aggressive nature takes over. In the beginning many of the Beastmen attempted to fight their bestial natures in hopes of obtaining control over their new abilities but for most that goal was unattainable and they have degenerated into particularly articulate savages with an overwhelming desire to kill.

Only fear keeps the Beastmen in check, particularly fear of a powerful superior like Hoixitl and his loyal Jagre.

### **Society**

With regards to society, the Maztican Beastmen live very much like the Mazticans and Nexalans did before. They maintain an organised society with complex social structures, it is just that all of this is marred by their overly aggressive natures that mean the usual response to anything is a fight and quite often they have little patience for anything other than fighting.

As a result the civilisation of the valley of Nexal has degraded into a brute society where the strongest person or persons bully those beneath them into doing whatever they feel at the time.

### **Language and Literacy**

The Maztican Beastman originally spoke almost exclusively Nexalan. Very few of them had the patience or self control to write anything down, or read anything without destroying it in anger. Only the Jagre and particularly enlightened and strong willed individuals are likely to maintain the trappings of civilisation such as literacy.

In recent years a number of Beastmen have been sighted conversing in the other languages of Maztica which has led to much speculation in other nearby nations.

**Religion:** Religion does not play a major part in the life of a Nexalan Beastman, primarily because he lacks the self control to think about anything other than violence. However those Beastmen that

embrace Zaltec have found their aggressive urges lessened and so Zaltec maintains an enormous following among the Beastment.

The Jagre in particular hold all the positions of power in Zaltec's temples in Nexal and they ensure the rest obey the edicts of Zaltec.

The younger additions to the Beastmen races have been seen with talismans of other deities, but no evidence of any organised worship of other deities has been found in Nexal.

### **Maztican Orc**

The Maztican Orc is generally humanoid, about 6ft in height with bulging muscles, enlarged bone structures (such as prominent lower jaws), enhanced aggression, and a skin colour ranging from a sickly green to a dark brown or black. Many of the Faerûnians present at the Night of Wailing mistook these creatures for orcs because of their similarity to creatures from Faerûn and so Maztican Orc was born.

The Maztican Orc was created out of those humans who were furthest from Mount Zatal or who were the least powerful/evil/aggressive in nature and so least affected by the transformative magics unleashed during the Night of Wailing.

**Statistics:** Str +2, Darkvision

### **Maztican Ogre**

The Maztican Ogre is a horribly malformed humanoid standing over 8ft in height with misshapen bulges appearing at seemingly random intervals along their limbs. Their faces are hideously ugly with almost no symmetry to their features. They retain the knowledge they had before their transformation but their anger and rage is so extreme that they struggle to retain any cohesive thought in their head, the anger is so overwhelming that only violence is known to dull the pain caused by their rage.

The Maztican Ogre was created out of those evil humans closest to Mount Zatal and so infused with the most of the alteration magics.

**Statistics:** Str +6, Con +2, Rock Throwing, Rage

### **Maztican Troll**

The Maztican Troll is a ruddy brown, almost red colour standing around 9 ft in height with thick tree trunk sized arms and legs and a huge maw filled with rows of fangs. They were named trolls for their ability to regenerate almost any wound which fuels a desire to consume blood in vast quantities to power their regeneration.

**Statistics:** Str +4, Con +6, Blood Drain, Regeneration

## Welcome to the Jungle: The Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights

Before the civilisations of Maztica were born, the gods of Maztica created life. Their first attempts were less than successful, until the human was born, based on a singular dying slave found wandering the wilderness of Maztica.

The gods doted upon their human children and gave them many gifts. One such gift was the knowledge of magic. Zaltec taught his children the magic of hishna and how to transform themselves into animals such as the noble jaguar.

Unfortunately Zaltec neglected to teach his children self control and many of them delved too deep into the magic of hishna which brought out their evil side and filled them with uncontrolled rages.

One of the results of this was the Jaguar Lord, a group of humans permanently transformed into powerful and intelligent, but thoroughly evil jaguars that sired other jaguar lords and plagued the people of Maztica during the early years.

Qotal too taught his children magic, which he named pluma, and this allowed his servants to take forms that resembled the winged people of the south eastern jungles of Maztica that flew into battle under Qotal's banner.

It is from these origins that the Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights are born.

### **History of the Jaguar and Eagle Knights**

During the war of the gods, Zaltec and his brothers amassed their forces to battle Qotal and his allies for control of the Maztican continent. Zaltec called to his side the Jaguar Lords he had created and they marched on the lands to the east.

These Jaguar Lords were like demons in battle and slew many of Qotal's children and his feathered allies. Such was their savagery in battle that many of the humans following Zaltec were awed and inspired to imitate these beasts of legend.

The Jaguar Knights as they called themselves learned to assume the form of a jaguar for a time, although they were careful not to repeat the mistakes of their ancestors and delve too deeply into animalism.

The children of Qotal fought alongside bird-men of astounding colours and great skill with magic and weapons of war. They adapted to learn the techniques of these avian allies and the best of them became the Eagle Knights.

Following the war, the humans of Maztica prospered and the children of the gods began to mingle in the valley around Mt Zatal. Here they lived together for many years until Qotal fell silent and old hatreds reared their head once again. The Nahuat people of Zaltec fled to the north past the Northern Wilds, the Payit people followed Qotal east as he left Maztica, others like the Dog Folk and Green Folk fled to the far corners of Maztica to escape the brutality of the valley around Mt. Zatal.

The Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights were dispersed across Maztica by the movement of the people and so dedicated themselves to the rulers of the emerging nations for protection of themselves and their new charges. The gods had proved many times in the past that they were not worthy of devotion and the Jaguar and Eagle Knights moved from a religious to a secular organisation.

Thus the Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights as organisations fractured along with the people of Maztica. Now every major settlement in Maztica contains a lodge of Jaguar Knights and a lodge of Eagle Knights where members are recruited and trained, and among the wilderness of Maztica there exist a few isolated lodges where ancient masters live waiting for students to arrive.

### **Organisation**

The Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights are no longer one organisation. In the distant past the two orders were military arms of the churches of Zaltec and Qotal. Following Zaltec's disappearance and Qotal's silence and later departure, the knightly orders lost much of their power as the churches themselves lost power.

The people of Maztica began to war among themselves as vigorously as they had in the past and so the two organisations evolved into secular orders of knighthood that dedicated themselves to leaders of nations and cities.

Now the Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights exist as a disparate organisation split into many lodges loyal to the nations that house them.

Each lodge is loyal to the nation first, the settlement second, the knightly order third, and finally the church of Zaltec or Qotal (depending on if they are Jaguar Knights or Eagle Knights respectively) last.

Each lodge is entirely independent of one another and is ruled by a council of the eldest and most skilled members known as the Itzeco.

Each lodge has a friendly rivalry with other lodges inside the same nation (if any) and lodges from other nations. Members from lodges often meet to compete against one another in friendly tests of skill involving mock battles and other challenges.

Membership exchanges are not uncommon and it is expected that a member conform to the rules of the new lodge while he is resident there (sometimes resulting in him fighting against former comrades).

**The Payit Eagle Lodge:** This lodge of Eagle Knights was decimated by the arrival of the Golden Legion and then found itself without a cause when Caxal was reappointed Revered Counsellor by Governor Cordell. Everyone knew Caxal to be just a figurehead and so he was deemed unworthy by the Payit and the remainder of the Eagle Knights.

Following the collapse of New Amn during the uprising of the Payit people, many looked to the Itzeco for guidance and so a council of rulers evolved in Ulatos. The devout Itzeco were all devotees of Qotal and so the Eagle Knight Lodge in Payit has once again returned to its roots as a military organisation of the Church of Qotal.

This reinvigorated church is looking to expand Qotal's faith west towards the nation of Kultaka (who primarily venerate Zaltec) before deciding whether to eliminate the Beastmen of Nexal or the godless of Newfrun Island.

**The Far Payit Lodge:** Gultec became Revered Counsellor of Tulom-Itzi and Far Payit in the years following the Golden Legion's arrival. He proved himself a wise ruler, excellent general, and master of magic.

Gultec's strength came from his close bond with his mentor Zochimaloc who was a devotee of Qotal

and accomplished pluma-weaver. He taught Gultec to control his nature and through this control Gultec became one of the few to master both hishna and pluma. Through this mastery Gultec was able to assume the form of any animal and discovered a whole world of possibilities beyond that taught by the gods.

Gultec's example allowed him to unite the Jaguar Knight and Eagle Knight lodges of Far Payit and that nation today is ruled by a circle of 12 masters who have learned both hishna and pluma and developed skills beyond that allowing them significant powers over nature.

However the powers of the Circle have not been sufficient to stem the growth of the jungles of Far Payit that threaten to overwhelm Tulom-Itzi, with vegetation creeping into the city ever more each year and strange plants rumoured to eat the unwary making their way into the confines of civilisation.

**The Nexala Lodge:** The Eagle Knights of Nexal were never particularly large, and following the Night of Wailing the remains of their number travelled south towards Tukan. The Jaguar Knight Lodge of Nexal however had its entire membership transformed into the Beastmen of Nexal.

Many thought this would spell the end of one of the most respected and accomplished lodges of Jaguar Knights in Maztica, but this was not so.

While the Cult of the Viperhand maintains a stranglehold on the Beastmen of Nexal, a number of orcs, ogres, and trolls have retained their loyalty to their former profession as Jaguar Knights. These once noble warriors have over the decades learned to control their bestial, aggressive nature and through discipline and training have been able to maintain their own sense of self and teach others how to do so.

This small, hidden group within the Beastmen of Nexal holds no loyalty to Hoxitl and his Jagre. They believe he betrayed the Jaguar Knights to Zaltec in order to further his own aims and they plot to bring about his destruction, even if it costs them their own lives in the process.

### **Motivation and Goals**

Honour is what motivates a Jaguar or an Eagle Knight. Despite their origins as servants of one of the gods of Maztica, the knightly lodges hold no such religious adherence now (albeit with a few exceptions). Members of the lodge can worship whichever god they wish, with most choosing Zaltec as the Maztican god of battle. It is understood by all that the Jaguar and Eagle Knights are loyal to their lodge first and will obey the orders of whoever their lodge is pledged to. As a result the motivation of a knight is to uphold the honour of the lodge by serving their lord to the best of their ability.

No shame is attached to following an evil tyrant into battle to enslave or murder women and children, nor is shame attached in being told to retreat from battle by a weak and pitiful king. Slaying knights from the same order but different lodges is allowed and expected during times of conflict between nations. The only way a knight can bring shame upon himself and his lodge is to disobey the orders of his lord.

Should a lodge be disbanded by the local lord, then the knights that remain are truly dangerous individuals, motivated by their own desires and equipped with skills surpassing any other warriors. Typically these rogue knights find themselves a new lodge to join, but at other times they wander into the wilderness and found their own lodges and train prospective knights for their own ends. Occasionally a rogue knight will attempt to seize power in an area for himself and seek to command the

loyalty of all knights within that region.

## **Resources**

The Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights of Maztica typically had the best equipment and resources available to the nation to which they were beholden. As the elite protectors of their nation they wanted for nothing once they had passed their training. This was the price a nation paid in order to have the skills of the knightly lodges at their beck and call.

This practice has continued to the present age. The Eagle Knights and Jaguar Knights are equipped with the armour and weapons of the invaders from Faerûn; those armaments that survive to the present day that is. Typically this might only exist as a single magical javelin or a shiny steel shield, but the best and most accomplished warrior will carry this into battle with pride and to devastating effect on the battlefield.

After nearly a century much of the foreign technology and artefacts from Faerûn is gone, rusted or rotted away with time. The Mazticans are back to wielding obsidian clubs and wearing cloth armour.

Still some of the influence from abroad has permeated Maztican civilisation. The slings used to propel stones through the air have now been modified to throw bronze tipped spears.

Jaguar Knights are now ridden into battle in jaguar form by regular soldiers equipped with spears, and the Eagle Knights are known in eagle form to carry bags filled with shards of obsidian that they shred in mid air and deposit atop enemies or onto areas of the battlefield to prevent cavalry manoeuvres.

Advancements have been made in weaponry to include the materials of plumastone and hisnahide that allow heavier armour and sharper weapons to be made. The lightweight, steely plumastone has even allowed the beginnings of archery to develop, although only using the waste stone left over from crafting greater weapons of warfare.

When in a settlement, a Jaguar or Eagle Knight may rest at any lodge of his order without fear of reprisal, even if he is technically at war with that lodge. All he has to do is reach the lodge and declare his need for rest.

The lodges are stocked with food and water every day by locals from the settlement, this is the price the order asks for defending the nation and its people.

## **Recruitment**

Recruiting an Eagle or a Jaguar Knight simply requires that a prospective student turn up at the lodge and announce his desire to join. If he can pass the tests then he is admitted into the order and upon attaining the necessary level of skill he becomes a full member.

The tests for admission vary for each lodge. For instance the Kultakan lodges require that members live for a year within the salt marsh. The Payit Lodge requires complete devotion to Qotal. The Far Payit Lodge has stranger requirements such as the student must be able to master the seven strands of weaving, and spend a week living groups of various animals in the jungle.

## Deities With a Difference: Zaltec

*The Eater of Hearts, Bringer of War*

Intermediate Power of Great Skyhome (CE)

**Portfolio:** War, Battle, Honour, Rage, Violent Death, Hunting

Zaltec is co-head of the Maztican pantheon with his brother Qotal. Like the other gods of Maztica he is often depicted as the child of Kukul and Maztica and is venerated with his siblings by almost every intelligent being in Maztica.

### **History**

The history of the Maztican pantheon is poorly document and mostly recounted in the myths and legends of the Maztican people. Kukul, Maztica and the other gods of the pantheon are credited with the creation of humans on the continent of Maztica; after a few failed attempts, and almost immediately following that act the entire pantheon was embroiled in warfare that involved presumably the entire continent.

Zaltec's reason for bringing war to Maztica was because of the perceived foreign invaders encroaching upon the continent of Maztica. Following the arrival of the Maztican gods they discovered a singular example of human life that had escaped from jungles in the south of Maztica.

This human did not last long but he told tales of trees a hundred times as tall as a man that could float in the sky, of flying bird-men capable of great magics, of huge flying lizards with great wings.

Upon discovering these new bird-men, Qotal and his people became friends and allies with the avians, and his sisters followed suit, creating kingdoms in the lands to the east and south of Mt Zatal.

Meanwhile Zaltec roamed the lands of the north, ever searching for bigger prey to bring down. There he discovered other minor godlings that the children of Kukul had taken to worshipping. One such being was Mirtek, a reptilian minor deity, who attacked Kukul as he slept, trying to poison him. Kukul slew the godling and took his power and came to the conclusion that the foreign powers were dangerous and were only interested in taking the power of Kukul's children for themselves.

Upon Zaltec's return he noticed a change in his siblings and so declared war on the foreigners in order to keep the children of Kukul pure.

The battle-lines were drawn and the armies of Zaltec and Qotal took to the field. Kukul looked on in despair as his children threatened to destroy one another in pointless war. By the time of the wars end, Maztica was slain, Kukul had disappeared and Qotal was triumphant and head of the pantheon.

This was known as the Era of Immortals and almost nothing of that time is known for certain. The myths passed down through the generations are just a pale reflection of the truth.

Qotal ruled for millennia, gradually changed by the influence of the avian peoples that perished in a civil war shortly after the War of the Gods. He imprisoned Zaltec and his brothers for a time for daring to challenge him. When Zaltec was released he directed his children, the Nahuat people, north where they could be prepared for their destiny as rulers of Maztica. Qotal then tried to take his sister Kiltzi as his wife, realising too late how tainted he had become and so he fled Maztica in shame.



Zaltec rose to become head of the pantheon and ushered in a new era of civilisation for Maztica. His children returned to control the lands of Kukul's kingdom and were powerful and wise for many centuries.

Unfortunately for Zaltec, Qotal the betrayer had long been planning his return, and ever the traitor he brought foreign peoples to the shores of Maztica armed with steel and powerful magic from strange and evil gods.

Qotal unleashed ancient and evil magics that transformed the children of Zaltec into hideous beasts so that he could appear noble and true as saviour of Maztica when Qotal and his children finally appeared to save the land from the Beastmen.

Zaltec now attempts to nurture the Beastmen of Maztica, trying to save them from their bestial natures through his divine servant Hoxitl. His power centre battered and broken, Zaltec is a shadow of his former self, even his own church, now centred in Kultaka works against the Beastmen in the Valley of Nexal. While such battle will empower him for now, in the long term it can only spell disaster for Zaltec.

### **Relationships**

Zaltec despises Qotal and the foreign gods he has welcomed to this land over the millennia. Zaltec views Qotal as the great betrayer and traitor to the Maztican people. All the evils of the past are to be laid at Qotal's feet, and his severed head should lie next to them.

Zaltec's relationship with his siblings varies. He is respected by his brothers; Azul, Plutoq, and Tezca, for his skill in battle and his strength, but they are ever wary of his murderous rages that have grown over the years as he loses ground to Qotal.

Zaltec's sisters are ever trying to diffuse his anger and remain loyal to him despite their differences, for when Qotal turned to evil, it was Zaltec who sheltered them and protected them from foreign powers that sought to take their power.

### **Avatar**

Zaltec superficially resembles a human wielding an oversized maca filled with shards of gleaming metal of unknown origin. Upon closer inspection one can see that Zaltec is not quite as pure human as he claims to be. His skin is finely scaled and his teeth resemble sharpened fangs, capable of delivering a deadly poisonous bite.

Zaltec walks like most humans, but when angry he has been known to hunch over on all fours to run and fight like a wild animal. He is clad in the hides of strange animals of tremendous size that are seemingly impervious to damage.

Zaltec's rage acts like a fuel and propels his immense strength to even greater heights, unfortunately his control is not so strong and allies are just as likely to perish beneath his maca as enemies are.

### **Relics**

**Zaltec's Maca:** This maca was said to be a gift from Kukul himself. It is made of pure obsidian, hardened to make it indestructible. The obsidian was said to come from the body of Maztica and so contains some of her power.

The maca is around 8 ft in length and weighs the same as two giant horse eating reptiles from the forests of Payit. It is impossible for any normal man to wield it, but has been seen in the hands of those blessed by Zaltec's favour.

Impregnated in the head of the obsidian maca is a strange, green tinged metal of otherworldly origin believed to have fallen to Maztica from the heavens in a great ball of fire.

This is the maca that slew supposedly beheaded Maztica herself and as such bears a horrible curse. When faced with battle the wielder of the maca will be unable to distinguish friend from foe, and will not stop fighting until only he remains. Furthermore it is whispered that anyone who possesses the maca is cursed to slay their mother and father and lose the rest of their family to misfortune.

### **The Church of Zaltec**

The Church of Zaltec arose in the distant past of Maztica, primarily among the children of Zaltec, known as the Nahuat. Following the Battle of the Gods, the people of Maztica congregated in the lands formerly belonging to Kukul, near the slopes of Mt Zatal.

It was heard that human civilisation was truly born, watched over by the seemingly benevolent Qotal. As Qotal descended into madness, the people of Maztica gradually fled the valley and spread out across the continent. This diaspora spread the churches of the gods of Maztica to all the nations that would arise in Maztica.

Zaltec's church became the strongest in all Maztica when his children returned from the lands of the north and conquered the Valley of Nexal as they named it, becoming its undisputed rulers.

Here the church truly coalesced into one organisation ruled from a central point, the city of Nexal. Revered Counsellor Naltecona issued proclamations that all other worshippers of Zaltec were to obey.

The destruction of Nexal by Qotal the Betrayer fractured the Church of Zaltec.

The worshippers of Zaltec in Nexal were either changed into Beastmen, slain in the chaos that followed, eaten or sacrificed by the Beastmen shortly after, or finally imprisoned beneath Mt Zatal in a gigantic larder for the Beastmen.

Kultaka being the next strongest bastion of Zaltec's worshippers declared itself the centre of Zaltec's faith and Revered Counsellor Tokol became head of the Church of Zaltec. At first this branch of the church downplayed the sacrificial aspect of Zaltec's dogma in favour of warfare (influenced in no small way by Cordell and New Amn which outlawed sacrifice and were allied with Kultaka).

Meanwhile the Beastmen of Maztica still venerate Zaltec, many hoping that he will abate the fury that dominates their minds, and they consider themselves the centre of Zaltec's faith in Maztica. The more controlled members of the Beastmen races have preserved Zaltec's worship and have growing congregation from some of the newer additions to the Beastmen races.

The two sides of the church were strongly opposed to one another, the humans of Kultaka viewed the Beastmen as abominations, corrupted by foul magic from the foreigners. They were the guardians to stop the wave of Beastmen from overwhelming the rest of Maztica. Meanwhile the Beastmen of Nexal viewed themselves as the favoured servants of Zaltec, once they learned to control their nature with Zaltec's help they would regain their position as rulers of Maztica.

Cordell was manipulating this the whole time by influencing Tokol, ruler of Kultaka and head of Zaltec's church. Tokol respected Cordell for his ability as a leader and warrior, and he was also secretly glad that Cordell had decimated the homelands of Qotal's children, while New Amn was content to remain on its side of Maztica, Tokol was content to remain allies.

Towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century however, New Amn began to exert its power, and once Cordell died of plague, the relationship between Tokol and New Amn deteriorated as he could not abide the priests of foreign gods, like Bishou Devane, who were responsible for many evils visited upon the Maztican people.

After Hoxitl approached Tokol personally, the two forces forged a temporary truce so that they could both extinguish the threat of New Amn and force the foreigners to leave Maztica forever.

The two nations achieved their goal and gained a newfound respect for one another that kept open warfare between the Beastmen of Nexal and Kultaka to a minimum while Hoxitl and Tokol survived. Now in the modern era, following Maztica's return, Nexal's power is growing and raiding its neighbours for sacrifices, skirmishes between the two powers is growing more and more common and it will not be long before Maztica finds out who is stronger; the human or the Beastmen.

### **Allies**

The Church of Zaltec has a friendly relationship with the worshippers of the other gods of Maztica; except for Qotal's church where relations remain frosty at best.

## Credits

Alternate Dimensions Presents: Maztica	G.Dallison and T.J.Hild
The Rogues Parade	
- The White Widow	K.Fabacher
Welcome to the Jungle: Cult of the Viperhand	G.Dallison and T.J.Hild
Deities With a Difference: The Masked Lady	G.Dallison and T.Sammarco
Deities With a Difference: Qotal	G.Dallison
Welcome to the Jungle: Maztican Beastmen	G.Dallison
Welcome to the Jungle: The Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights	G.Dallison
Deities With a Difference: Zaltec	G.Dallison
Background and Artwork	S.K.Rush

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## **Final Word**

Just to note that this is in no way to be considered canon material; it is a fan-made representation of different versions of the Forgotten Realms. It uses some canon information as a base but may remove some pieces of the Realms, alter others, and add many homebrew ideas to develop it further.