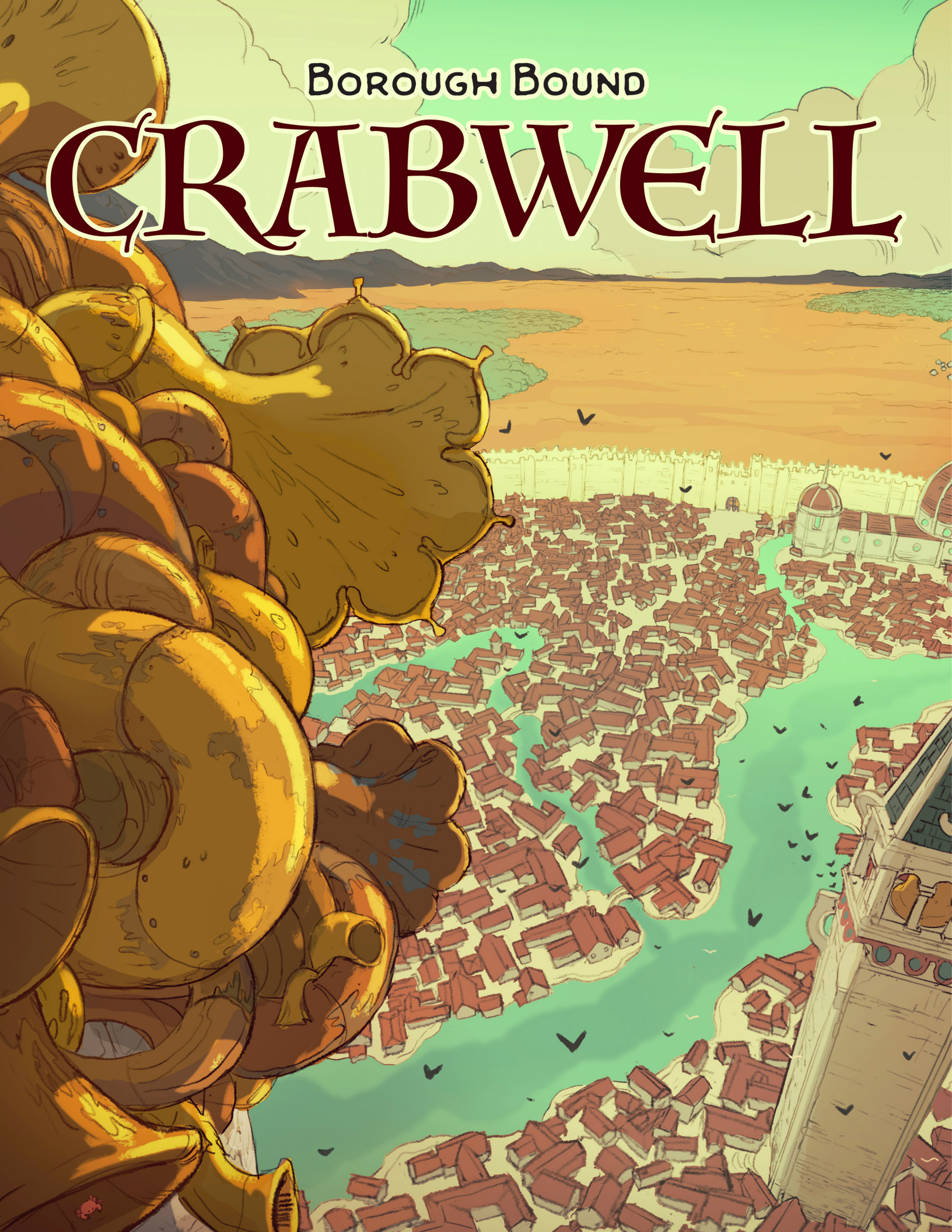
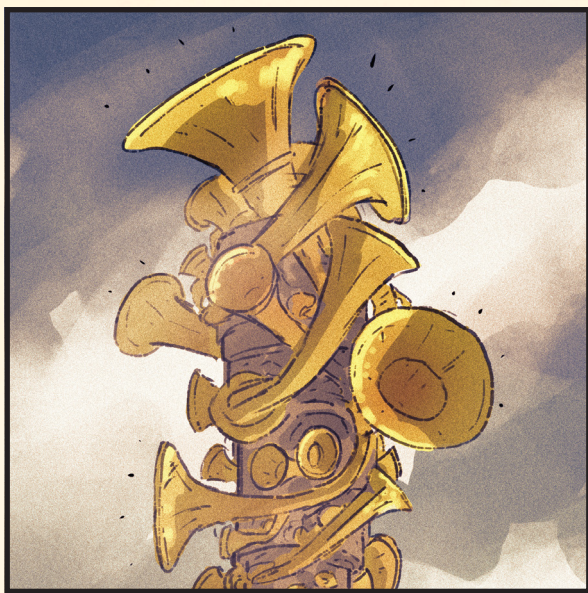


BOROUGH BOUND

CRABWELL





The Omniphone

CITY OF THE ETERNAL VOICE



t Crabwell's center, an immortal tower stands as a monument to architecture, acoustics, and law. This structure—which has “OMNIPHONE” etched into ancient stone—predates all known records. Every night at sundown, Bellringer Simon Thibald rings Vela's Bell, signaling to all that now is the time for silence and attention. Thereafter, a booming and authoritative voice echoes out from the Omniphone, listing new decrees for all to follow. The voice is audible for hundreds of miles, though it resonates at a moderate volume even when standing immediately adjacent to the tower. Scribes furiously jot notes, preparing for their nightly ritual of cross-referencing the new decrees against historical precedent and potential contradictions.

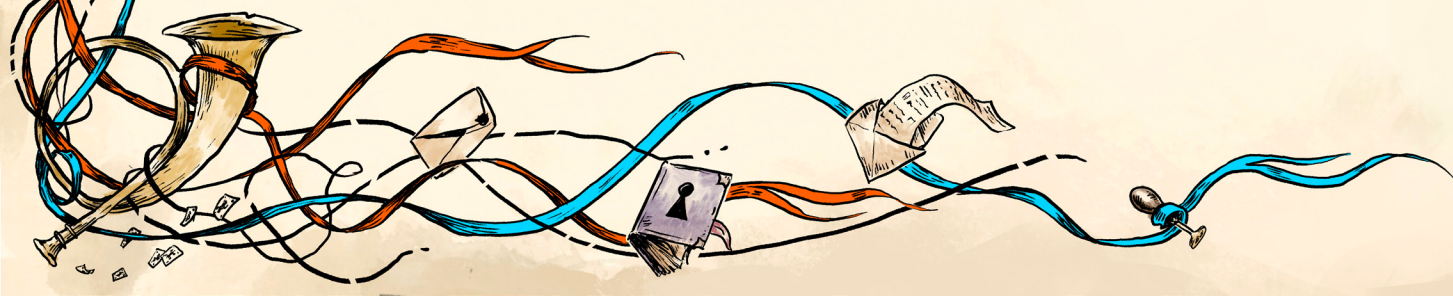
For centuries (millennia?), Crabwell has remained the legal and cultural capital of Naticram. Entac's decrees are followed across the wide continent, and the city has thrived as a beacon of law and moderation, an example for lesser cities to emulate. Those who would rather not follow Entac's enigmatic laws are free to move to the Southern Rim with the ascetics or to meg-

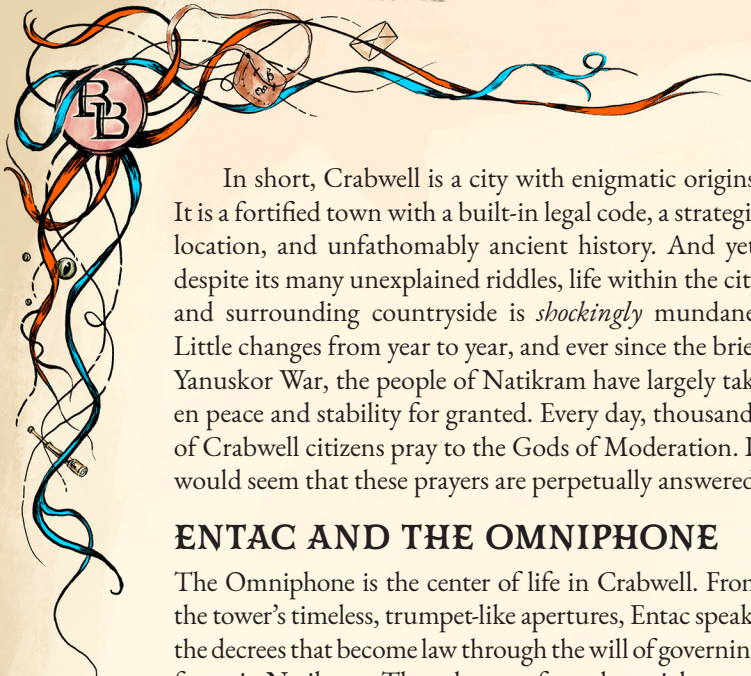
alopolis Svarnahelm, the city-state ruled by ex-Crabwell oligarchs. Most, however, are comfortable living in the relative stability of Crabwell and its surrounding environs. Free from excess, free from strife, and free from political gridlock, Entac's decrees have guided the Naticram people throughout the ages.

No one knows who or what Entac is. The timbre of the voice has always remained constant. Whatever it is must presumably be immortal or unchanging, though no one has ever been inside the Omniphone to confirm. Some suspect it's a magic trick, a means for the elite to control and subdue the population. Some prefer to imagine that Entac is a guardian spirit that protects the city. Others secretly believe it's a God, though decree after decree has demanded that worship and deification of either Entac or the Omniphone shall be punished with death.

Crabwell is an *ancient* city. Even the oldest manuscripts known across Yanuskor refer to the walled city interchangeably as “the old bastion,” “Entac's dominion,” and—perhaps most inexplicably—just “Crabwell.” The origin of the name is a mystery to all. Although the town lies adjacent to the pleasant Asatti River, one is unlikely to find many crustaceans so far from the delta 50 miles downstream. Some surmise its name is an oblique reference to Goddess Thaella who is often depicted sitting at a well. However, scholars suggest that this aspect of Thaellan imagery can be traced to the name “Crabwell” and not the other way around. Some consider whether the geography of Yanuskor was noticeably different when the city was founded, or whether “crab” refers to the stubbornness or tenacity of its people. All of these hypotheses lack concrete evidence. The city is called Crabwell, and that's just that. In recent years, the Crabwell Tourism Board has been strategically breeding crabs in an attempt to create something of a mascot for capital city.

The walls of the city, though ancient, are not presumed to be as old as the Omniphone itself. Inscribed with detailed stone etchings across their entire perimeter, the walls are considered the more impressive architectural feat. Much like the Omniphone, no one is sure who built this imposing sandstone fortification. No one is even sure why the walls' creators put so much effort into its excessive decoration, nor even what most of the etchings are intended to depict. Crabwell residents appreciate the security the walls provide and accept that the city's many mysteries may forever elude them.





In short, Crabwell is a city with enigmatic origins. It is a fortified town with a built-in legal code, a strategic location, and unfathomably ancient history. And yet, despite its many unexplained riddles, life within the city and surrounding countryside is *shockingly* mundane. Little changes from year to year, and ever since the brief Yanuskor War, the people of Naticram have largely taken peace and stability for granted. Every day, thousands of Crabwell citizens pray to the Gods of Moderation. It would seem that these prayers are perpetually answered.

ENTAC AND THE OMNIPHONE

The Omniphone is the center of life in Crabwell. From the tower's timeless, trumpet-like apertures, Entac speaks the decrees that become law through the will of governing forces in Naticram. Though many fear what might come to pass if Entac's wishes were regularly undermined or disobeyed, the people of Crabwell and most of Naticram are happy to live by the rules that Entac sets. Many have tried to pinpoint a precise logic or reasoning behind his decrees, but no scrivener, bellringer, or philosopher has yet succeeded. In truth, the only constant with regard to Entac's whims is that they seem to be ever-changing.

Structurally, there's not much to the Omniphone. Its walls are decorated with the same quasi-hieroglyphic etchings as the ring wall that protects the city. Toward the roof, the structure billows outward in intertwining horns, likely a necessary component of its impressive acoustic range and consistency. The building has no doors or windows, though architectural critics find that the combination of stark elegance and hyper-detailed stonework make for a pleasing juxtaposition. As no one has ever been inside the Omniphone, it is unknown whether the building contains rooms, additional load-bearing walls, or whether any magical accoutrements aid in amplifying the decrees.

Entac's voice is a rich baritone, leading many to refer to the source of the voice as "he." The precise ways in which one speaks or writes of Entac can be revealing. Those skeptical of Entac's omniscience or benevolence prefer to use the imprecise "it." Conspiracy-prone non-conformists may refer to Entac as "they," an allusion to a supposed cabal that magically controls the voice. Those who think of Entac as a God might write "He," while those who understand Entac to be an immortal though not necessarily of divine origin might opt for the lowercase "he" instead. Though Entac has repeatedly expressed the decree

NONE SHALL REFER TO ME AS A GOD, NOR REVERE ME AS SUCH,

this hasn't fully quelled the notion that Entac should be held on the same pedestal as the triple trinity of Gods exalted in Yanuskor. The most common way to speak, however, is to assume Entac is male and at least "human-adjacent." As such, the lowercase "he" is the accepted form.

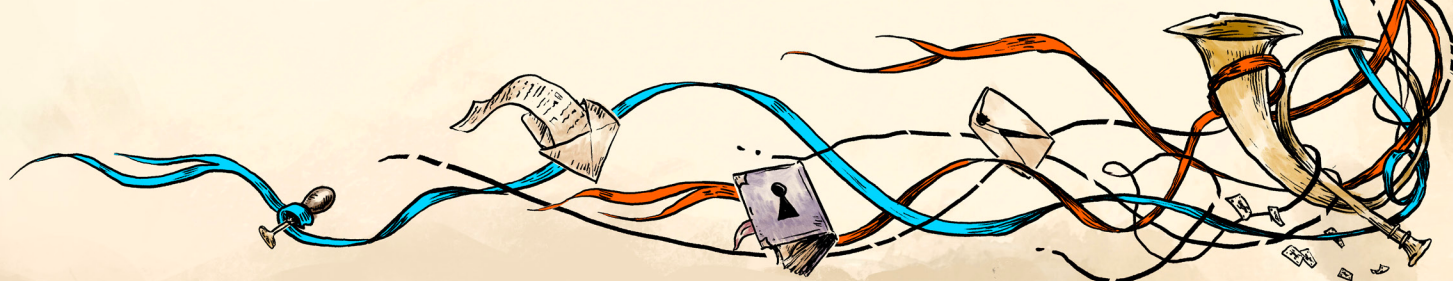
GM Note: Don't worry. Entac's true nature is described later in this chapter, though it may be more fun to devise an alternate identity for the voice or to leave it a mystery if "uncovering the truth about Entac" isn't a goal your players pursue.

The people of Naticram have historically used different strategies to enact Entac's will. According to ancient records, early Crabwell residents lived by his teachings without formal policing, as though he were more of a spiritual guru as opposed to a legal authority. During the Nights of Shadow, the Dreamsand Cults chose their own interpretation of each decree and acted with extreme violence toward anyone who acted even partially against this interpretation. The Nights of Shadow finally ended when the Marginalists took control, leading to the most lenient possible interpretations and policing. During the rule of the Marginalists, society slid into a backspin, and much of Crabwell fell into squalor.

It wasn't until the Bellringer Revolution that the "modern era" of Naticram began. Much as the triple trinity focuses on threes (three orders of three Gods each), Crabwell too is now controlled by a trinity of forces: Entac makes decrees, the scribes archive and interpret his will, and the bellringer determines how best to enact this will with the resources available.

THE DECREES

Each night, Entac provides new decrees. Typically, he announces between three and five, few of which will have much impact on day-to-day life. These decrees might dictate economic policy, guide the morals of Crabwell's people, instruct in the construction of new infrastructure, or reverse the sentiment of prior decrees. Some decrees are extremely vague, while others are exceedingly specific, referencing individual members of the community, precise economic figures,



or exacting specifications about new construction. Often, there seems to be a straightforward logic to the decrees (“y’know, we *do* need a new school after all, so that makes sense”), whereas other decrees may seem arbitrary or altogether counterproductive (“why would we shutter *this* school, just to build a new one right next door?”).

As far as the scribes can ascertain, this has always been the case. Even the most zealous adherents to Entac’s decrees have trouble justifying some of the more outlandish rules. Many choose to believe that in his complete omniscience, even a small or counterintuitive change to Natikram life might inexplicably prevent catastrophe in the future, though this is difficult to prove

without engaging in endless counterfactuals.

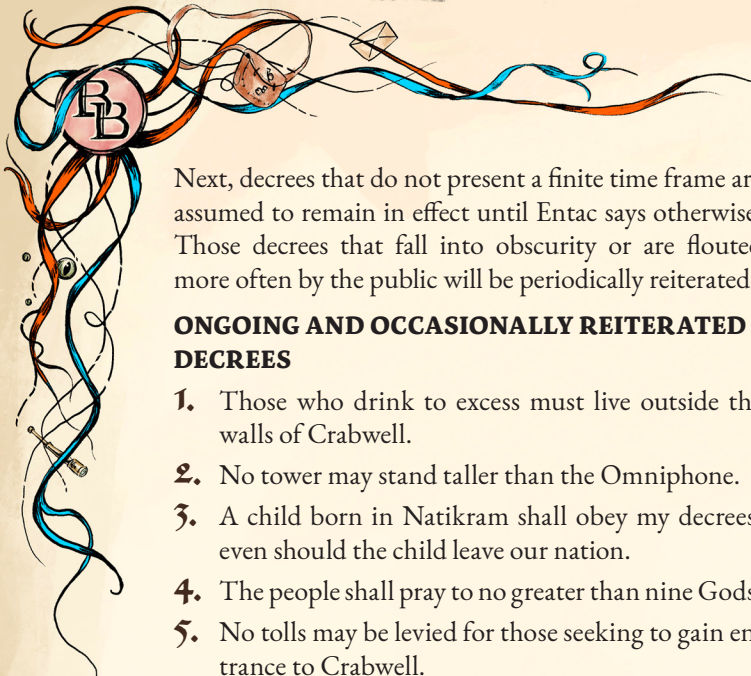
Entac’s decrees, though various and unpredictable, have at least a few common traits. First, all decrees are *commands*. Though statements of facts may be embedded in each decree, there will always be an associated action item. For example, an oft-repeated decree is

YOU SHALL SPEAK OF ME AS ENTAC, FOR THAT IS MY NAME.

Furthermore, decrees will often react to recent events. If an alleged criminal is on trial, Entac will often pass down a ruling and a sentence in one.

INARO THE UNKNOWNABLE IS GUILTY OF ARSON AND DECEIT AND SHALL BE HANGED.





Next, decrees that do not present a finite time frame are assumed to remain in effect until Entac says otherwise. Those decrees that fall into obscurity or are flouted more often by the public will be periodically reiterated.

ONGOING AND OCCASIONALLY REITERATED DECREES

1. Those who drink to excess must live outside the walls of Crabwell.
2. No tower may stand taller than the Omniphone.
3. A child born in Natikram shall obey my decrees, even should the child leave our nation.
4. The people shall pray to no greater than nine Gods.
5. No tolls may be levied for those seeking to gain entrance to Crabwell.
6. None may consume the meat of scaly animals who breathe air.
7. No citizen shall work for greater than 60 hours in a week unless they are farmers.
8. Primacy shall be given to the Gods of Moderation.
9. None shall travel to Svarnahelm.
10. Crabwell shall mint coins of gold, the value of which shall depreciate by two percent each year.

GM Note: Entac's decrees are a convenient way to raise the stakes, add bonus challenges, or enrich the lore of your adventures. Each in-game night, you have the opportunity to fundamentally change the rules of how the party is expected to operate. If they've been spamming a magic weapon, have Entac forbid the use of magic items. If your well-planned economy suddenly breaks, have Entac adjust it. If you need to offer a new plot hook, have Entac put a bounty on someone's head. There are very few limits about what would make sense for Entac to decree, so get creative whenever you need to push the party forward.

Alternatively, if the stress of coming up with new decrees to announce each night becomes grating, your party won't mind if you state "you all listen to Entac's decrees this evening but find them inconsequential to your adventure." Giving the players a respite from new rules to follow will be appreciated.

THE PEOPLES OF CRABWELL

The explored reaches of Yanuskor are far smaller than many other known planes of existence. The world's quaint denizens, however, are largely oblivious to the relatively minuscule size of their accessible territory. Yanuskor is bounded by infinitely towering and impassable mountains on all sides. Though further expanses may lie beyond, permanent, violent storm clouds threaten any party that attempts to cross the peaks.

Natikram's peoples are diverse, and they largely commingle. Though some cities or regions have greater populations of one peoples or another, there are few areas within the realm that are truly homogeneous.¹ Crabwell is no exception. In the city streets, one will find humans, elves, dwarves, halflings, and other members of less populous races: the canine kennelborn, the slow and thoughtful fel'dær, or the scholarly but short-lived chesskæl.

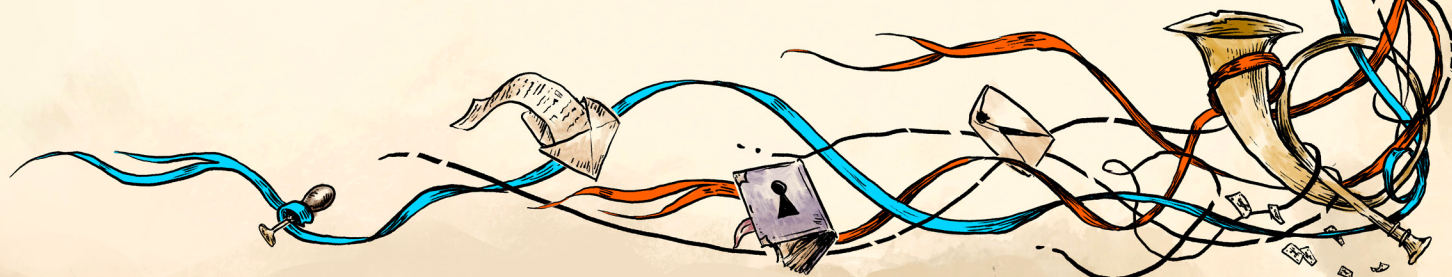
Despite his diverse array of demands, Entac rarely singles out a given race when making a decree. However, the specific diets, lifespans, and cultural heritages of these diverse peoples mean that certain decrees are likely to impact some races more heavily than others. For example, a decree that forbids the consumption of grain outside of feast days will greatly limit the diet of the chesskæl, who are unable to metabolize either meat or legumes. This has occasionally created pockets of dissatisfaction and dissent amongst Crabwell's citizens.

Most humans in Natikram use only given names, with specificity added by clarifying profession. For example, "Thannel" is a common name in Crabwell, but "blacksmith Thannel" would refer to at most one or two citizens. Surnames are typically only used by humans who own land. This practice traces back to an obscure three-hundred-year-old decree that required land deeds to be signed with surnames. Wealthier citizens will often introduce themselves by presenting first and last name, as though their fine dress and soft hands weren't adequate signals of their riches. Nonhumans use a range of different naming schemes.

HAFSWELL PASSAGE

Extending east-west through Crabwell is the great highway of Natikram, a road hundreds of miles long known as Hafswell Passage. Connecting all of the major cities

¹ The reptilian nith of the Kardama Lands to the north are one such exception, but they are almost never seen in Natikram.





Kardama Lands

Nine Follies

▲ Merkfur Outpost

○ Last Respite

▲ Pale Sanctum

○ Rodder's Hole

The Severed Prairie

Fel'dar Forest

○ Svarnahelm

Loch Foss

○ Thaellon

The Nascent Shores

Lake Druha

Asatti River Delta

Alydyn Creek

○ Vonnedale

▲ Fort of Order

○ Aldyn

○ Crabwell

Hafswell Passage

Ashen Grove

▲ Mergo's Beacon

Asatti River

Blynka's Knuckles

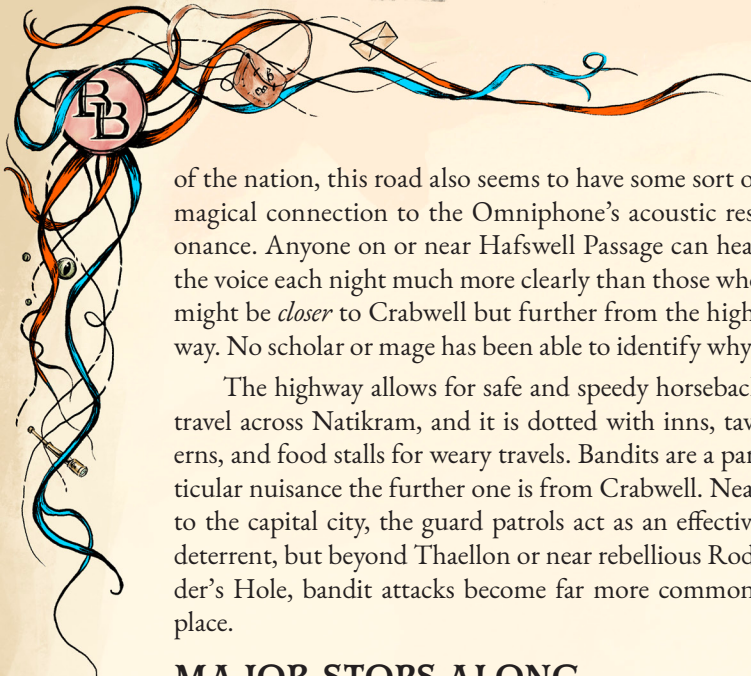
Arkun Woods

Eranosian Caverns

▲ Gell's Monastery

▲ Dewbar

VAKUSKOR



of the nation, this road also seems to have some sort of magical connection to the Omniphone's acoustic resonance. Anyone on or near Hafswell Passage can hear the voice each night much more clearly than those who might be *closer* to Crabwell but further from the highway. No scholar or mage has been able to identify why.

The highway allows for safe and speedy horseback travel across Naticram, and it is dotted with inns, taverns, and food stalls for weary travelers. Bandits are a particular nuisance the further one is from Crabwell. Near to the capital city, the guard patrols act as an effective deterrent, but beyond Thaellon or near rebellious Rodder's Hole, bandit attacks become far more commonplace.

MAJOR STOPS ALONG HAFSWELL PASSAGE WEST

VONNEDALE

Crabwell is surrounded by miles of farmland, but most meat and produce still come from the village of Vonnedale, home to the richest soil and most potent agricultural mages. Elven migrants from Ullha Dore'i make up much of the ruling class, leasing their vast plots of land to sharecroppers. Entac's economic decrees have repeatedly endorsed or validated this predatory practice.

FEL'DÆR FOREST

Hafswell Passage winds its way through Fel'dær Forest, the ancestral home of Yanuskor's fel'dær population. As hunters and loggers from Rodder's Hole disrupt life in the forest, the fel'dær foragers have begun assimilating into urban centers. Travelers on Hafswell Passage are advised to be particularly careful when moving through the woods, as fel'dær woodspeakers will gladly inspire the flora and fauna alike to restrict passage.

RODDER'S HOLE

City Lord Rodder refuses to bow to Entac's will and has built his own town far from the Crabwell Guard. Rodder rules over his town of dissidents with the fervor of a despot. For defensive purposes, the whole town is situated in a man-made crater. As such, it's muddy, squalid, and often devoid of sunlight. For reasons unknown, Entac has decreed little that would stir Crabwell's governing forces to quash this minor rebellion. Violent and lawless, the city's disobedience may portend greater unrest to come.

MAJOR STOPS ALONG HAFSWELL PASSAGE EAST

ALDYN

Sleepy Aldyn benefits greatly from Entac's stabilizing decrees. Idyllic farmsteads and riverside fishing huts dot the landscape surrounding the quaint city center. The grand Cathedral of Arkus is Naticram's largest place of worship, a towering gothic basilica that stands in stark contrast to the charming plaza in which it sits.

THAELLON

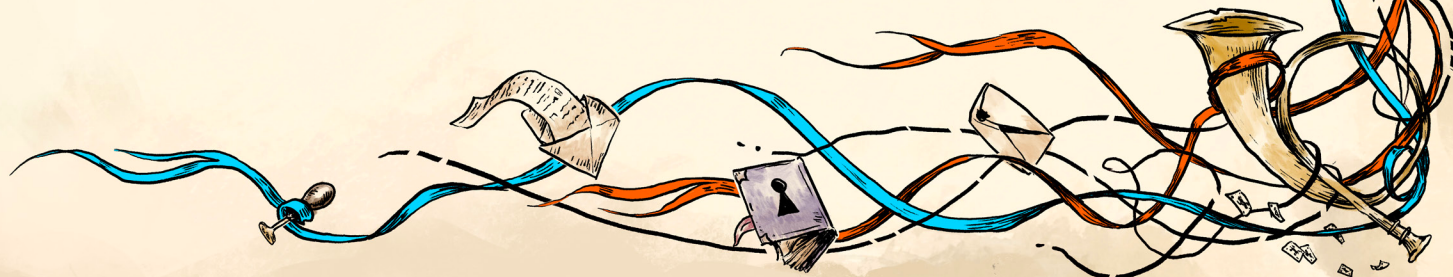
Home to prestigious Velan University, Thaellon is Naticram's hub of magic and research. Many of Naticram's greatest minds spend their formative years in Thaellon, pursuing programs in agriculture, divinity, wizardry, and statecraft. The rabble-rousing Thaellon's Skeptics can trace their origins to heterodox philosophers from the statecraft department, which has also produced the majority of Crabwell's bellringers. Though Naticram is decidedly pre-industrial, artisans in Thaellon are beginning to utilize simple arcane machines to increase their output.

LAST RESPITE

Hundreds of miles from Crabwell, at the far northeastern terminus of Hafswell Passage, travelers will finally arrive at Last Respite. This extensive tavern complex functions as a lawless getaway, a nexus for travelers from across the far-off realms, and the gateway to Naticram's under-explored frontier. Hot spring saunas, minstrel residencies, and endlessly flowing mead make this the perfect home away from home for explorers, traders, and those who simply want to get away.

DECREES ABOUT TRAVEL

1. Those who travel east by horse must bring twice as much feed as they need, and they must provide excess feed to farmers in Aldyn.
2. The gates to Crabwell shall remain closed from dusk till dawn.
3. Faster horses shall pass on the left.
4. Anyone who fords Aldyn Creek shall be hanged.
5. Caravans entering Vonnedale from the east must be inspected for crop-eating pests.
6. Wagons on Hafswell Passage must be no greater than seventeen feet in height. (*note: it is unlikely this decree affected even a single traveler*)



7. Those traveling to Thaellon must wear gloves until the city is within sight.
8. Riverboat hulls must be scrubbed weekly.
9. Those who seek entrance to Rodder's Hole must first sleep in Fel'dar Forest for at least two nights.
10. Highwaymen who rob travelers on Hafswell Passage may be jailed for at most two weeks.



SKEETER ALMINAR: Whenever there is the slightest disruption to trade or travel (a heavy storm, a single bandit raid, the steppebeast migration, etc.), listless twenty-year-old Skeeter Alminar (he/him) is sent east down Hafswell Passage to work at his father's customs checkpoint. *Technically*, this checkpoint isn't accepting tolls for those seeking to enter Crabwell proper, but just to walk the final 5 miles of the journey. Skeeter's father (who has many money-making schemes that take advantage of loopholes in Entac's decrees) gives half of the funds raised from the tolls to the scribes and to the Crabwell Guard to avoid any potential trouble.

Skeeter is maximally unenthused with this line of work. If someone were to walk or trot their horse just a few feet around the checkpoint, Skeeter wouldn't bother requesting that the checkpoint's guards stop them. As such, the checkpoint is barely profitable. If Lord Alminar knew just how lazily Skeeter approached this work, the patriarch would probably try thrusting Skeeter into some other Alminar business venture instead.

THE LIQUID TRUTH

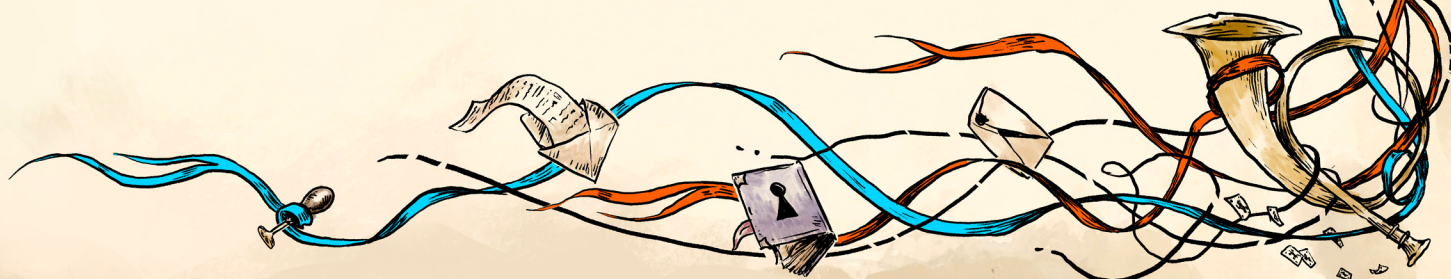
In Crabwell's central square, visitors will likely hear music billowing out from The Liquid Truth at all times of day—so long as Entac hasn't placed limits on public performances. The Liquid Truth is Crabwell's premier entertainment establishment, with multiple stages for theater, music, and pantomime. Bulldog Kennelborn owner Haroun (he/him) has done an extraordinary job establishing the multifunctional tavern as a staple of Crabwell arts and leisure.

Haroun's business masterstroke was to create a tavern that catered to all demographics. Wealthy Crabwell residents attend serial dramas weekly, and those of lesser means enjoy drink specials on feast days. Buskers usher artisans inside for lunch deals, and dedicated "minimal vulgarity" comedies give parents an opportunity to affordably introduce their precocious tykes to the world of theater. With new performances and specials rotating every day, every resident of Crabwell has an incentive to visit the tavern at least once or twice a month, and its central location in the city means no one is ever terribly far from the entertainment hub.

When populating The Liquid Truth with patrons, feel free to roll as many times as needed on the associated table.

d8 **LIQUID**
TRUTH PATRON **BIO**

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | JESSIN
(HE/HIM) | Jessin is a runner for Bellringer Simon Thibald. When Simon needs someone to tackle a minor task between 1 and 20 miles from Crabwell, he'll send Jessin out on foot to take care of it. New decree impacts loggers in Arkun Woods? Jessin takes care of it. Need to find a missing person last seen on the Asatti River? That's a Jessin task too. Anything that can be accomplished by one person without a horse instantly becomes Jessin's responsibility. When in Crabwell, Jessin will typically eat lunch and have a few drinks at The Liquid Truth, as it is so close to his place of work. If prodded, Jessin may reveal his slate of tasks for the coming day. |
| 2 | DEL'NOR
(SHE/HER) | Crabwell residents go absolutely crazy for the hammered dulcimer, and few perform with the showy dexterity of Del'nor. This chesskæl bard is a gifted performer, able to perform virtuosically while singing tales of love and legend. She and her band The D'lights are offered regular residencies at The Liquid Truth, and Del'nor is always probing patrons for tales that she can weave into new songs. |
| 3 | LISSENIA
(SHE/HER) | City elf Lissenia is such a master of stealth that it is unlikely one would notice she's doing anything illicit in Crabwell. Lissenia is a member of the Mercantilites, a loose faction of go-betweens who are attempting to alleviate tensions between Natikram and Svarnahelm. By establishing secret business arrangements between the two rival states, the Mercantilites hope to slowly build long-lasting economic bridges. Lissenia is in town to meet crafters who might benefit from Svarnahelm's spark vial technology. These potent arcane batteries are <i>de facto</i> prohibited in Natikram, but Lissenia is peddling them nonetheless. |
| 4 | CARMAC
(HE/HIM) | Carmac is an agent with Crabwell's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. This Asatti River Delta native has been tasked with locating new sources of healthy aquatic life for Crabwell's fishermen to reel in. With the rise of Svarnahelm's industry, many of Yanuskor's waterways have become increasingly polluted. It's up to Carmac to explore every bog, tributary, and marshland looking for untainted ecosystems. Plenty of other fishermen stop by The Liquid Truth after a day on the river, so Carmac is always in good company. |
| 5 | CHUCCAN
(THEY/THEM) | One might suspect that given their large, calloused hands that fel'dær fine motor skills would be limited, but Crabwell newcomer Chuccan is quite adept with small mechanisms. Chuccan has made quite the name for themself as Crabwell's premier locksmith. Many have asked Chuccan to employ these skills for illicit uses. Chuccan repeatedly turns down these would-be criminals. They are happy just to know that they are providing security for many in town. |
| 6 | YIQO
LEATHERBONE
(HE/HIM) | Yiqo is a slapstick jester, a gnome of noteworthy height and particularly unusual flexibility. Yiqo hosts a weekly variety show on The Liquid Truth's mainstage, contorting and pratfalling <i>ad nauseum</i> while introducing each subsequent act. Yiqo isn't particularly well-liked, but tavernkeep Haroun finds the jester too entertaining to let go. Those who decide to engage Yiqo in conversation after an act are often shocked to discover that he's wildly pretentious about his art and is wholly unable to take a joke himself. |
| 7 | WILLA
MANDOSS
(SHE/HER) | Despite owning her own farm on the outskirts of Crabwell, Willa and her family have found it exceedingly difficult to turn a profit. Without the superior soil of Vonnedale, proper agricultural magic, or a legion of sharecroppers to work her crops, she simply cannot compete with the larger farms. Willa would be happy to farm solely for subsistence, but she has to keep up with property taxes and the money she owes to Blynka's Reserve. Times are tough, and she's taking a break at The Liquid Truth before asking for loan forgiveness from the bank. |
| 8 | EAMON
(HE/HIM) | While Crabwell artisans pride themselves on their craftsmanship, their work is nevertheless far more expensive than the mass-produced wares from industrial Svarnahelm. This provides exceptional opportunities for enterprising smugglers who hope to resell Svarnahelm goods to Crabwell citizens. Eamon has found a niche in bulk cookware. Shrewd Eamon will proudly sell you an entire cookware set at a decidedly modest markup. Make no mistake, however. Eamon is wantonly flouting Entac's decree against doing business with Svarnahelm. |



DECREES ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT

1. All epic poetry shall use dactylic hexameter.
2. The use of siellon berries in the fabrication of paints and dyes shall be prohibited.
3. Theater performers shall pay an additional 3% of their income in taxes to the bellringer.
4. None may reap profit from the performance of purely improvised music.
5. All sporting events shall take place east of Crabwell or west of Vonnedale.
6. Gambling shall be prohibited, except on rivers and lakes.
7. Novelists and memoirists shall be provided with ten pieces of parchment per month.
8. No music shall be performed until the next eclipse.
9. Landowners shall provide housing to troubadours with soiled clothing.
10. The Omniphone shall not be depicted in tapestries, and tapestries that already depict the Omniphone shall be burned.

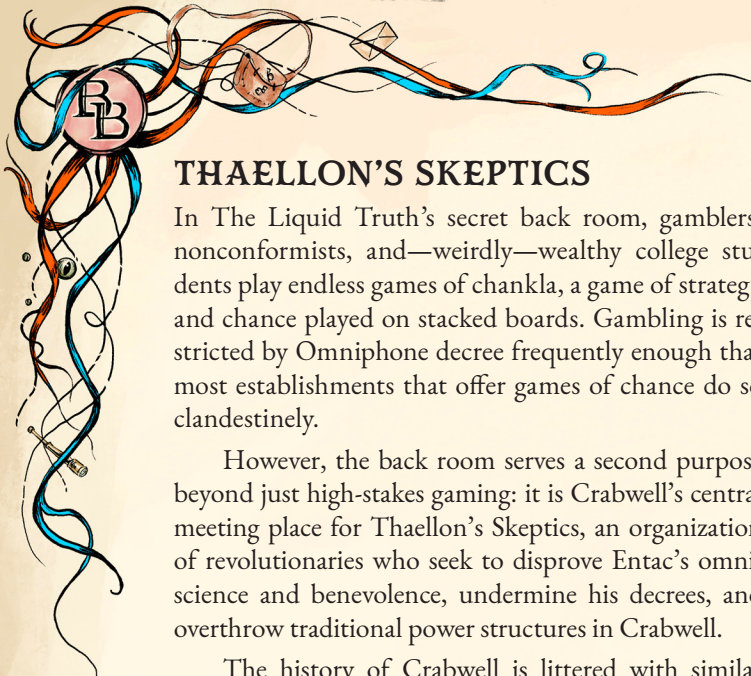
DOULMECQ AND THE WAND OF TACTICS

Every other full moon, a mysterious dwarf with a braided forked beard makes his way to the Liquid Truth without fail. Doulmecq (he/him) is a purveyor of unusual wares, a traveler, a tinkerer, a supposedly wealthy vagabond. Doulmecq likes to take stock of the tavern's patrons before honing in on the most compelling visitors he spies. He will approach, ask them to pay for his drink, and if they oblige, Doumecq will reveal what he has for sale today.

On this particular evening, Doulmecq is selling *the wand of tactics*, a gnarled wooden sprig affixed with an eerily familiar brass horn. The dwarf claims that this wand employs the same magic as the Omniphone. Should its owner use the wand as an amplifier, any number of companions within range will be able to hear the owner telepathically. Wise patrons might object to Doulmecq's claim; after all, that is not how the Omniphone works at all. Entac's voice isn't *telepathic*. Everyone hears it. It's a *real acoustic sound*, right? Doulmecq chuckles. So many understand so little.

When fellow drinkers ask Doulmecq about his origins, the charming dwarf will spin a different yarn each time: he was born atop the Southern Rim, he's the son of a mad professor, he's an astral voyager from the other side of the sun. Eventually, most of his customers learn to either stop asking the man personal questions or else probe him further to prompt his excellent storytelling. Doulmecq refreshes his stock of mysterious goods each time he returns to Crabwell, and those in the know will make a point of perusing his wares whenever he is in town.





THAELLON'S SKEPTICS

In The Liquid Truth's secret back room, gamblers, nonconformists, and—weirdly—wealthy college students play endless games of chankla, a game of strategy and chance played on stacked boards. Gambling is restricted by Omniphone decree frequently enough that most establishments that offer games of chance do so clandestinely.

However, the back room serves a second purpose beyond just high-stakes gaming: it is Crabwell's central meeting place for Thaellon's Skeptics, an organization of revolutionaries who seek to disprove Entac's omniscience and benevolence, undermine his decrees, and overthrow traditional power structures in Crabwell.

The history of Crabwell is littered with similar dissident organizations, though typically their aims are more utilitarian. Businessmen don't like following Entac's ever-changing decrees, and so they decide to rebel. A group of religious zealots praise a new pantheon of Gods and thus disregard Entac's strict religious mandates. Even bandits who flout reasonable laws prohibiting theft, arson, or ransoms are in a sense "revolutionaries" who undermine Entac's will. Thaellon's Skeptics, however, are far more philosophical and erudite in their defiance. The organization's leadership is perennially dominated by students from Velan University who lack a knack for populist rhetoric.

Each member of Thaellon's Skeptics is likely to have their own nuanced beliefs about who or what Entac is. Surprisingly, the order is not particularly concerned with revealing the exact nature of Entac. Instead, the Skeptics prioritize a few more basic tenets:

1. Either Entac is not omniscient, he is not benevolent, or he is neither.
2. Therefore, disobeying Entac's decrees is a moral imperative.
3. Rethinking society begins with renouncing Entac.

In theory, many Crabwell citizens might be sympathetic to these views. A performer who loses their income to an unexpected decree would have plenty of reason to be upset with Entac and would likely doubt Entac's omniscience or benevolence. However, Thaellon's Skeptics use rather unorthodox means to promote their ideology: civil disobedience combined with rhyming couplets. Their mantra is the decidedly un-catchy "His voice is loud forsooth / His words all shroud the

truth," a refrain they repeat whenever they disregard some innocuous or trivial decree. The pithy couplets do little to inspire support from onlookers.

The greatest shortcoming for the Skeptics is their unwillingness to take risks. Most members of their order are university students with promising lives ahead of them. To defy one of the more serious decrees could come with a more grievous punishment: a stint in the Hedral Prison, loss of land or title, or even hanging. Despite their noble intentions, the Skeptics find it difficult to justify risking their stable lifestyles to promote a broadly unpopular agenda.

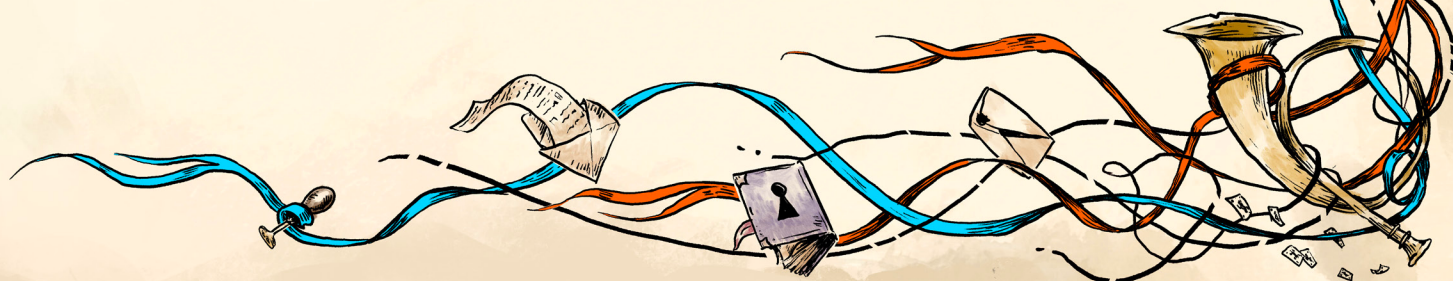
While publicly denouncing the foolish delinquency, Crabwell's elites secretly support Thaellon's Skeptics. Such inept rebellion only serves to cement Entac's authority. Instead of actively undermining the power structures of Natikram, Thaellon's Skeptics minor defiances and embarrassing couplets make disobedience appear infantile. A cabal of aristocrats who have repeatedly benefited from Entac's decrees has even secretly funded the activities of the Skeptics.

VELMIE DARTIN

One of the boldest members of Thaellon's Skeptics is Velan University statecraft student Velmie Dartin (she/her). Velmie is the half-elven daughter of Vonnedale's wealthiest landowner, Lord Nensier Dartin. Despite her incredible means, Velmie has taken an interest in revolutionary politics and hopes to use her degree in statecraft to somehow—somehow!—thrust Natikram into a period of glorious and radical progress.

Velmie's political views are noble, and no one can fault her enthusiasm. Velmie has seen the way her father takes advantage of his sharecroppers and was aghast when she realized that every one of his abusive business practices has been affirmed and reaffirmed as legal by Entac. Would a benevolent ruler allow such wanton injustice to continue unchecked?

Despite her naivety, Velmie has stumbled on a profound truth that shapes the very nature of Natikram society: if Entac's decrees are *truly* random, the net effect will be to reinforce the hegemony of those already in power. On average, a political system with *no* ideological underpinning will never fundamentally undermine existing hierarchies. The unpredictable whims of Entac may occasionally swing far in one direction or another, but in the long run, Crabwell's elites will find that little threatens their continued accumulation of wealth.



Unlike other Skeptics, Velmie is willing to get her hands dirty. In addition to the common defiances (staying out past curfew, buying goods from Svarnahelm, dressing immodestly), Velmie freed a man from a public hanging, armed union strikers, and even attempted to enter the Omniphone with ropes and pitons. Were it not for Velmie's father's connections, the Crabwell Guard would have shot her on sight for any of the three transgressions. As it were, she was escorted to her father's Crabwell manor on each occasion and let go with a slap on the wrist.

If the party of adventurers appeals to Velmie's bold political ideals, she will gladly take them into the fold. The party will be expected to follow the guidelines of the Skeptics (including sharing the awkward rhymes after each act of rebellion), but so long as they share an interest in shining a light on Entac's fallibility, they will be welcomed with open arms.



PLOT HOOK: VALIDATE THE SKEPTICS

Discovering the true identity of Entac is not necessarily the end goal of Thaellon's Skeptics. Their primary aim is for the people of Naticram to just ignore the rambling voice. However, were Entac's nature revealed, it could serve to justify the Skeptics' doubts. Anything short of a God sitting at the base of the tower would be a crippling blow to Entac's staunchest supporters.

If scrivener archives are to be believed, no one has ever been inside the Omniphone. Its construction predates recorded history, and there is no evidence that anyone has entered it by any means throughout any of the manuscripts and histories they've collected. As such, no one knows what the Omniphone contains. Some theorize that the building is empty and that the tower structure is simply a means to support the massive horns that amplify Entac's voice into the skies of Naticram. Others (notably many of Thaellon's Skeptics) surmise that the rich and powerful have secret access to the interior via underground tunnels. Some think a race of magical beings live inside, others imagine that teleportation circles allow all-powerful mages to enter, and yet more think one of the Gods—Vela perhaps?—has created a demiplanar home for Themself within.

Discovering the truth of Entac will require that someone actually *enter* the Omniphone. Doing so will not be easy. The building's windowless facade provides no means of obvious ingress, and the sandstone from which the walls are constructed has a toughness uncommon to similar sedimentary construction materials. Entering will require an adventurer to commit to one of the following strategies:

- ◆ Descend into the horns from above
- ◆ Destroy a portion of the wall
- ◆ Tunnel from below

DESCENDING FROM ABOVE

The only known openings into the Omniphone are the eponymous horn themselves. If one were to reach the tower's peak and slide down one of the metallic amplifiers, one would pass into the interior of the tower. The Crabwell Guard is well-prepared for this possibility. At all times, archers are stationed throughout the central plaza, atop the Scriveners' Tower and the Great Belltower, and in strategic camouflaged outposts on various rooftops.



They have received orders to shoot to kill anyone who might try to scale the Omniphone or otherwise approach from the sky (by glider? balloon? *catapult?*).

Even if one can avoid an incoming hail of arrows, ascending the wall of the tower would challenge even the most seasoned climbers. No piton will pierce the unnaturally tough sandstone, there are no overhangs or ornaments on which to attach a rope or hook, and though most of the wall is etched with intricate carvings, stretches of perfectly smooth stone will foil attempts to boulder the sheer face. What's more: the wall seems to resist enchantment. A Rimmish dissident once tried to use a *wallwalking* spell to ascend the Omniphone, only for the spell to backfire, launching the sneak into the city streets below.

Should one overcome these obstacles, arriving at the tower's zenith will grant an adventurer a glimpse into the bells of the structure's twisted horns—a view seen by no madman who has ever lived to tell about it. With light shining brightly off of the inexplicably polished metal, it will be nigh impossible to see into these shiny brass apertures. The only choice is to leap in, riding the gently sloping metal down into the bowels of the building. One of the tubes must provide safe passage into the building below, right?

BREAKING THE STONE

Crabwell stonemasons lament that there is no known source of the extra-durable sandstone from which the Omniphone's walls are constructed. These hardened, load-bearing walls defy the known limits of architectural stonework. Perhaps the hyper-compressed silicate was fortified through lost magical arts, or perhaps it was quarried in a distant land of harder rocks and bolder stonecutters. Regardless, the Omniphone's walls will not crumble from any terrestrial battering ram or siege weapon. No, the walls will only fall to tools or spells of otherworldly strength.

Conveniently, if adventurers do feel like testing the strength of the walls, it is unlikely anyone will bother them. Previous bellringers had instructed the Crabwell Guard to disarm and interrogate anyone who attempted to chip away at the walls, but practical Simon Thibald has informed his patrolmen not to bother. After all, in the millennia since the Omniphone's construction, no one has tarnished even a single etching. The Crabwell Guard need not worry about any would-be trespassers attempting to crack the stone.

Nevertheless, the stone is not truly impervious. Enchanted blades, fragmentation spells, and liquefaction elixirs each might be able to succeed where traditional mauls and rams fail. Even a small crack in the walls would allow those in the central plaza to peer into the ground floor, though the Crabwell Guard (under specific decree from Entac) has strict orders to kill anyone able to pierce the outer wall.

Note: If the stone is so hardy as to resist the strongest of tools, how did the ancients produce such meticulous etchings in its facade? Scholars disagree but generally fall into two camps. Some suggest that the stone was once much more brittle and only hardened through the influence of Entac's magic. Others suspect that the first to walk the lands of Yanuskor possessed technology that surpasses even that of distant Svarnahelm.

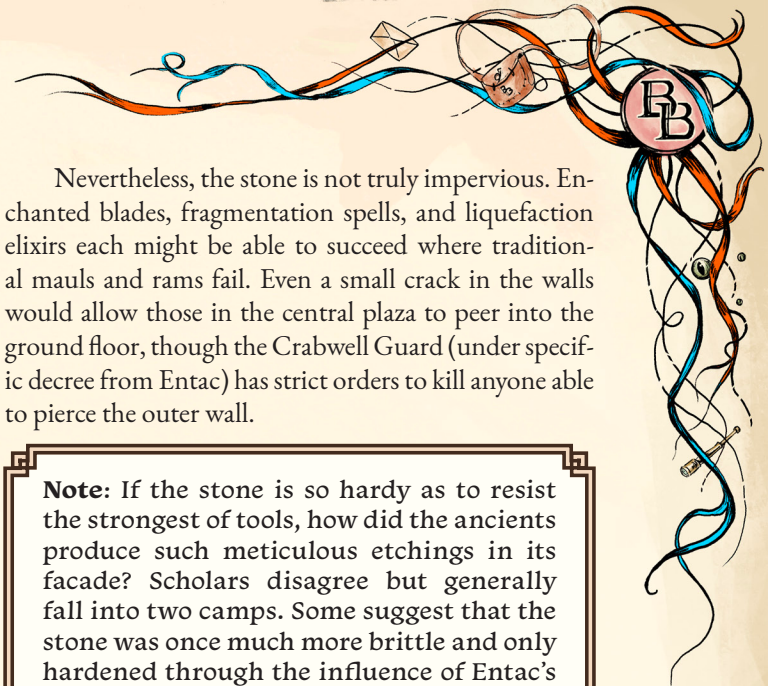
TUNNELING FROM BENEATH

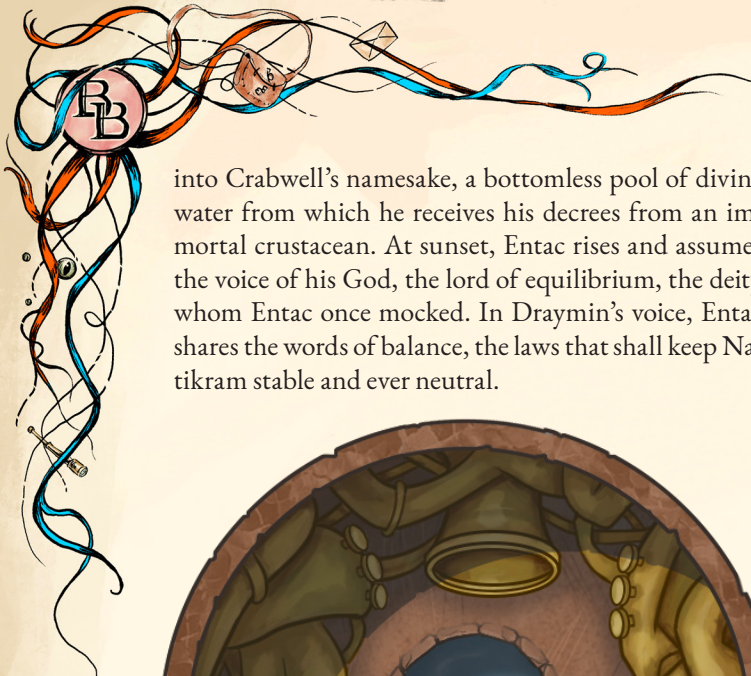
Like many of the great cities of Yanuskor, the residents of Crabwell keep their dead interred in underground catacombs. While residents may not often consider it, many of Crabwell's buildings are built atop winding tunnels of innumerable decaying corpses. Entac has decreed on numerous occasions that it is forbidden to excavate any closer to the central plaza, but the notion that someone might extend such a tunnel underneath the Omniphone is not wholly unreasonable. Clerics of Thaella, Vela, and Arkus wander the catacombs occasionally, providing blessings or interring new bodies, but generally speaking, these deathly halls are free from prying eyes. If an adventurer were to accurately track the regular travels of these clerics, they could evade their attention and command free reign over the catacombs. They could then attempt to dig a discreet tunnel to the theoretical basement of the Omniphone.

Were they to try, they'd strike water.

INSIDE THE OMNIPHONE

The interior of the Omniphone consists of but a solitary vertical shaft: the singular mouthpiece of the various horn twists so as to be accessible by the one and only Entac, who sits in his eternal prison, dimly lit only by the sunlight that refracts through his epic embouchure. In the morning, Entac dips his withered talons





into Crabwell's namesake, a bottomless pool of divine water from which he receives his decrees from an immortal crustacean. At sunset, Entac rises and assumes the voice of his God, the lord of equilibrium, the deity whom Entac once mocked. In Draymin's voice, Entac shares the words of balance, the laws that shall keep Naticram stable and ever neutral.



The interior walls of the Omniphone are smooth, eroded from millennia of caustic breaths of sulfuric anguish. There is no furniture, nor art, nor personal effects. Here, in the center of Naticram civilization, there is only a punished man, the blessed waters of a self-exiled God, and the mouthpiece of a nation.

ENTAC: THE FOOL WHO MOCKED A GOD

Yanuskor wasn't always a realm of nine Gods, discrete nations, and numerous distinct races. In the days of the first light, there were only the humans and the nith. There was one God, and he walked amongst his creations. Draymin was the God of balance, creator of Yanuskor and all it held. Draymin sought to keep the lands in equilibrium, and he frequently interceded, tweaking the nuances of physics, altering the biology of his humble servants, and reshaping the skies and the mud. Yanuskor was an experiment, and the only acceptable outcome was a perfectly ticking clock, a top that would spin in place for eons.

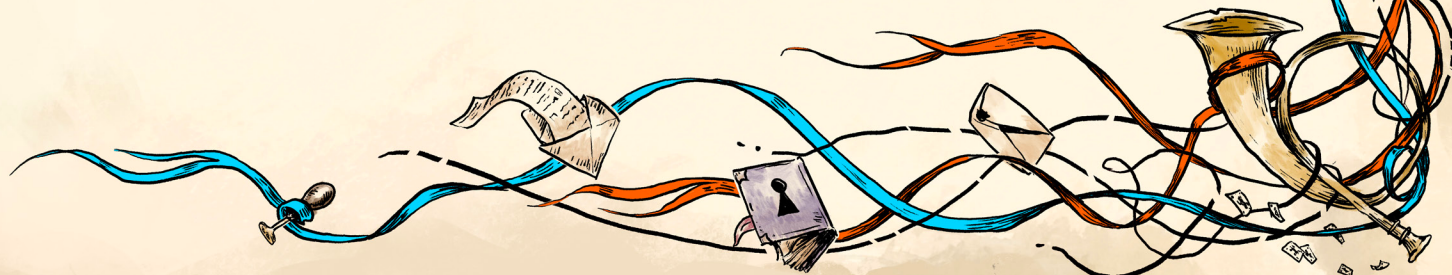
Entac (he/him) was one of the early men, a curious explorer, reverent of Draymin, and appreciative for the gift of perception. He could behold that which Draymin created, and this was a blessing. Like all humans, Entac found balance to be insufficient. "Enough" was never enough. Fairness was never plenty. Justice was never glory. And so, Entac committed the first sin that Draymin could not forgive: derision. Entac put on a performance for his human companions, a one-man farce in which he pretended to be Draymin. He mocked Draymin's voice, he mocked Draymin's mannerisms, and—fatefully—he mocked Draymin's philosophy.

Draymin witnessed this ridicule, for Draymin witnessed all. In that moment, the God of balance knew that his experiment had failed because He could not be an impartial observer. He had to act from behind the scenes. And so, He punished mankind, cursing them to forget his influence. He created new Gods, nine lords to rule in balance over all things. He commanded the nith to dig a well, build a tower, and trap Entac inside for all eternity. He reshaped Entac into the hideous monstrosity that he is now, and He passed judgment.

YOUR SENTENCE SHALL BE COMMENSURATE WITH YOUR CRIME. YOU HAVE MOCKED AN ETERNAL, AND SO NOW YOU MUST BEAR HIS VOICE FOR AN ETERNITY. I SHALL GIVE MY COMMANDS FOR THIS WORLD FROM BEYOND THE VEIL. YOU SHALL USE MY VOICE, AND YOU SHALL GUIDE THE PEOPLE IN THE PERPETUATION OF MY CREATION. I AM SORRY.

Cursed with immortality, a never-ending task, and a disgusting new form, Entac sat as his prison rose around him. He would never leave this place. He would seek death one hundred million times, but Draymin would provide no such respite.

Each day at noon, Entac's only friend, the undying crab that serves Draymin, rises from the well and delivers a scroll with Draymin's decrees for the day. It is this scroll containing Draymin's wishes that have dictated the entirety of Naticram's legal code for thousands of years. Entac then waits until sunset and proclaims Draymin's wishes for all of Naticram to hear. The speaker is Entac, but the voice is Draymin's. The logic of the decrees is that which Draymin believes will bring balance to Naticram. Entac is merely a puppet, but he is the most influential puppet in all the world.





AFTERMATH

If the party is able to enter the Omniphone, they will meet a being who predates every other creature in Yanuskor, an accursed man who predates the triple trinity of Gods themselves. Entac seeks death above all else, but Draymin may not be so generous even after the party enters the prison. The cursed man will share everything, and while it may be difficult for the party to believe or even understand, it should be exceedingly clear that Entac is not lying. His story is strange and ancient, but he tells the truth.

Should the party make it clear that they hope to reveal the nature of Entac, the Omniphone, and the God

of balance to the world, Draymin will not intercede. When He left Yanuskor, he vowed to never directly interfere with his creation again.² He will, however, allow Entac to die before Entac is able to reveal all his secrets to the people of Natikram. The threat of Entac divulging the truth will suffice to grant the tortured man his wish of death.

The truth of Crabwell and its history is so bizarre and unexpected that the party may find that they are not able to convince anyone of what they say. Tales of “the days of first light” or “the fool who mocked a God” may fall on deaf ears. The party will be dismissed as lunatics or charlatans, and the powers of Crabwell will do everything necessary to maintain order and stability. Nevertheless, if Entac dies with the permission of Draymin, the decrees will cease, and society will be altered forever.

People in positions of power will fear the worst, robbed of their veil of legitimacy and of the equalizing laws that keep them enriched. They may attempt a bold power grab during the structural upheaval that is sure to follow.

Thaellon’s Skeptics will vie for power as well, attempting to establish some form of anarchic society in the absence of Entac’s authority. Though they may be backed with sound political theory, they are unlikely to command the manpower or political will to succeed.

Without Entac’s continued decrees, the scribes, the bellringer, and the Crabwell Guard will have trouble maintaining a sense of order. It is *possible* that society may remain stable long enough for a new form of government to arise in Entac’s wake, but it is also *extremely* likely there will be staggering unrest in the meantime.

Ultimately, a party of adventurers who uncover the truth will be unlikely to benefit directly from their actions. As imperfect as Entac’s authority may be, a sudden power vacuum will serve no one but strongmen and bullies. However, should one of the adventurers offer to take Entac’s place, Draymin may allow the tenuous peace to continue. The Godly servant crab will deliver decrees directly from Draymin to Entac’s replacement, so long as they accept the corresponding curse. The sacrifice of this generous martyr will be nearly unfathomable. It may be worth it to ensure that the stability of Natikram will remain unthreatened.

² There is, of course, an incredible hypocrisy on display here. Draymin vowed not to “interfere” with Yanuskor, but still delivers daily instructions for the people of Natikram to follow. Even the Gods are prone to self-delusions of their superior principles.